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Delivering Effective Local Public Services: The Case of Local Area Agreements

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

by

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Abstract

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This thesis investigates Local Area Agreements as a tool for the effective delivery of local public services focusing on three main areas:

- Centre-Local Relations and the Vertical Governance of LAAs
- Intra Local Relations and the Horizontal Governance of LAAs
- Learning from LAAs to improve the future practice of local public service delivery.

In exploring these areas, the thesis draws upon several academic theories; principally the Strategic Relational Approach and New Institutionalism.

These themes are explored in a two-tiered methodology. The first is a national overview survey of LAA practitioners which then informed the second stage; detailed interviews across two case study areas (Liverpool and St Helens) as well as with civil servants and elected politicians from national government.

In relation to vertical-governance, the thesis discusses the national indicator dataset and the ability for areas to adequately focus on local policy priorities, the top-down governance of LAAs and a discussion about the role of Government Office for the regions in negotiating and delivering LAAs. In relation to horizontal governance, the research identifies both stronger and weaker actors within the local governance process, discusses the value of differing actor approaches, investigates how internal accountability affects the relationship with a wider partnership and discusses the role of elected members. The final section discusses how practitioners feel that LAAs could be improved, before discussing how current Coalition policy addresses these concerns, before drawing some final conclusions about the relative success of the LAA project.

The findings show that despite initial overtures of greater local discretion over setting priorities, strong central control remained. In particular, this was seen through the indicator selection process, with areas adopting indicators that were not seen as local priorities. At the local level it is shown that a long or short term operating horizon affected how actors worked with the LAA and that those actors that traditionally operated on shorter time scales (i.e. police, fire and rescue service) were more likely to register frustration with longer term bureaucratic processes. It was also found that those actors that viewed partnership working on LAA targets as an investment for long term results were viewed as being more effective than those which simply saw it as a cost.

In terms of Coalition policy in the post LAA period, it appears that many lessons have gone unheeded, particularly around the components of effective partnership working. However, the new City Deal programme presents a renewed sense of optimism for effective (and locally responsive) local public service delivery.

Acknowledgments

world of governance and government and without this generosity of spirit the research would not have been to draw upon the swathes of data that they provided. Within this, I would especially like to thank Andy Snell and Carol Perry from Liverpool First and Cath Fletcher from St Helens Council whose views during the formulation of my research questions were particularly helpful, and whose assistance in attaining so many interviews across the case study areas proved to be vital. In this vein I would also like to thank my MP Derek Twigg, whose assistance in arranging interviews with the Parliamentarians holding responsibility for LAA delivery deeply strengthened the arguments I was able to make.

There are a number of individuals who provided practical help who should not go unnoticed. I am particularly grateful to John Sturzaker for providing some helpful comments on the thesis text, as well as general practical advice on the thesis preparation. I'd also like to thank some of my fellow PhD students during my time in Civic Design; Mat, Lynne, Ste, Ayu and Phil for sharing their own insights on the process. That is not withstanding the wider PhD student community in the department who contributed to a fantastic environment in which to study.

Simply put, without the love and support of my parents this would not be possible. Notwithstanding their support throughout my life so far (for which - like most sons and daughters - I don't thank them enough), their early encouragement for me to apply for the studentship and their advice and best wishes across the four years has never been anything but fantastic. I'd also like to pay particular thanks to my brother Peter, who between brotherly jibes has been a constant source of good advice.

A poet once said 'I'll get by with a little help from my friends' and although four years can see events come and go, sometimes it is those friends who help to carry the day. I feel it would be remiss of me not to thank my friends Ben, Paul and Kenn – all of whom have amused, inspired and enlightened throughout.

That is not to mention the many friends – too numerous to name here – who have all played their part.

At times it would appear that I spent much of the last three and a half years chained to a desk in the basement of the Department of Civic Design, but along the way sections of the work have been inspired by a snowbound Seoul, a sweltering Helsinki, in Victoria Harbour in Hong Kong as well as the hundreds of hours and thousands of miles that I have spent on my bicycle, trundling around the roads of Northern England, running over passages in my head, formulating questions and analysing their answers. By mentioning this, I seek to reflect on the experience of doing a PhD – a period which I have found amongst the most challenging, but most enjoyable of my life so far.

In summation, all I can say is that I hope that you enjoy reading this work as much as I have enjoyed producing it – and that if you have an interest in improving governance, or delivering effective public services that you find its contents interesting, informative and helpful.

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List of Acronyms

ABG   Area Based Grant

BIS   (Department for) Business Innovation and Skills

CAA   Comprehensive Area Assessment

CLG   (Department for) Communities and Local Government

CS   Community Strategy

DoE   Department of the Environment

DETR   Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions

DTLR   Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions

DTI   Department for Trade and Industry

IDeA   Improvement and Development Agency

IMD   Index of Multiple Deprivation

LAA   Local Area Agreement

LDA   Local Delivery Agreement (See also. LSA)

LDF   Local Development Framework

LEP   Local Enterprise Partnership

LGA   Local Government Association

LSA   Local Service Agreement

LSB   Local Service Board

LPSA   Local Public Service Agreement

LSOA   Lower Super Output Area

LSP   Local Strategic Partnership

GOR   Government Office for the Regions

NID   National Indicator Dataset

ODPM   Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

NRS   Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

RDA   Regional Development Agency

SOA   Single Outcome Agreement

SCS   Sustainable Community Strategy

Chapter One – Introduction

This thesis investigates Local Area Agreements and their effectiveness as a vehicle for the delivery of effective local public services. This formed one of the latter stages of New Labour's local government modernisation agenda (LGMA) – a broad programme of policy reform covering the institutions of local government.

Between its inception in 2004 and its abolition in 2010, the LAA served as the delivery document for a Sustainable Community Strategy which, in turn, was a long term vision for an area, setting out the policy goals for a period of 20 years. The priorities of the SCS were defined by a partnership of local actors and stakeholders known as a 'Local Strategic Partnership'. This partnership was comprised of a variety of public and private sector actors as well as representation from the voluntary or 'third' sector. These organisations were of various capacities, with some having had experience of previous public service delivery schemes, while some had little to no experience.

The LAA itself represented a three year 'contract' between Central and Local government, whereby each area selected up to 35 indicators from a suite of 198 national indicators. Progress against these indicator/target selections was then monitored. This agreement was 'signed off' by the Government Office for the Region, which acted as the representative of central government. The GORs were given this role due to their increased knowledge of the local areas, which allowed them to be more locally responsive.

Once the LAA was in place, the local actors worked together to deliver the 35 priorities via an executive board (covering the whole LAA) and a series of thematic partnerships – which were more specialised in nature and involving only the relevant actors for each theme.

As will become clear, this process raised a multitude of questions about centre-local relations and local governance relations. In particular questions arose

about how national policy priorities were reflected through the LAA and whether this actually limited a local area's responsiveness. This also placed a focus on the role of GOR and the extent to which they were locally responsive in their dealings throughout the negotiation process. At the local level, questions arose about how actors of various capacities could work together – particularly focusing on those actors with greater capacity and past experience, and how those actors with little prior experience of local public service delivery at this level could engage with the LAA.

However, in order to reflect events, this thesis has had to adapt in nature. In 2008 when the research began, the LAA was an active government policy, in place in 152 authority areas across England. However, from May 2010, following the election of the Coalition government, the LAA was abolished, thus becoming a comparatively short exercise in the delivery of local public services. Consequently, while the initial aim was to explore the issues around LAAs in order to provide some policy recommendations that could improve its future practice, the focus had to shift slightly in order to consider the ways that LAA lessons could generally be applied to the future practice of local public service delivery.

Owing to the way that the research was funded – as a joint venture between the University of Liverpool and Liverpool First[1] – the research objectives were initially defined during the project's genesis. Therefore, it seems logical to discuss them in this fashion, before moving on to how they were subsequently refined. Upon beginning the research in October 2008 the parameters of the project, as defined in the initial project bid document, were:

- *Through detailed analysis, to explore the broad governance and accountability mechanisms of LAAs, including the degree to which*

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[1] Liverpool's Local Strategic Partnership

they have been shaped, managed and delivered through 'top down'
or 'bottom up' approaches;

- *Through stakeholder analysis, to explore the relationships and*
accountabilities within and between LAAs and public, private and
voluntary and community sector interests operating both locally,
regionally and nationally and the implications that arise for service
delivery;

- *To identify the extent to which engagement mechanisms appear to*
be supportive of both wider stakeholder involvement and local
interests, and the implications for local prioritisation of needs through
LAA-type arrangements;

- *To assess the influences and accountabilities of relevance to*
decision-making and the broader implications for centre-local
relations, the devolution of power and responsibilities to localities to
deliver public services and the implications for future interventions
therein.

These initial themes were to be conducted under the two broad arches of
governance and accountability, with the ability to decide which themes would
take greater prominence as the research developed. This process of refinement
took place over much of the first year of the PhD, reflecting a period of detailed
literature review and lengthy discussions with the funders, before a final set of
research questions was defined (see chapter three). Reflecting this, what follows
is an introduction to the research that was undertaken and an outline of how
these initial research objectives were developed in order to best scrutinise the
LAA model of local public service delivery.

Before setting out what each chapter will focus on in more detail, a more general
discussion of the thesis and its structure is helpful (a diagram outlining the
structure of the thesis as a whole can be viewed in figure 1.1, at the end of the
introduction). The chapters are clustered into three sections. The first is a

literature review charting the development of local public service delivery in the post-WWII period, drawing upon academic and government documents. The second section covers the theoretical and methodological considerations of the research. The third section focuses on the research findings and analysis.

Chapter Two provides an account of the policy environment during the 20th century, briefly covering the periods before and after World War II, before moving to explicitly consider the Neo-Liberal period of the Thatcher/Major governments. The chapter concludes by discussing the emergence of the 'Third Way' period of the Blair government and the development of New Labour's public service delivery policy. This chapter begins to establish some of the main research questions, particularly around top-down control over local policy and the power shifts and interactions of local partners within a shifting policy environment. By charting the development of New Labour's urban policy the chapter provides an account of the policy environment which led to the establishment of the LAA and thus also provides an early indication of the policy problems for which the LAA was meant to find a solution.

Chapter Three continues by explicitly focusing on the LAA itself, exploring both the government rhetoric and guidance around LAAs and comparing/contrasting it with the academic literature. These initial research objectives formed the foundation of this process, serving as the lens through which the research would focus on the LAA. Once again the chapter highlights trends around the issue of top-down control and the ability for LAAs to be locally responsive, as well as the local governance of the LAA and the implications that good partner interactions could have on an LAA's effectiveness. As part of this, the chapter considered wider international examples from the devolved UK, Europe and North America to see if similar issues emerged. This chapter culminates in an expansion of the initial research objectives, with the definition of more detailed research questions. These questions, reflecting the findings of the previous two chapters were categorised into three main themes;

- Vertical (Top-Down) Governance
- Horizontal (Local) Governance
- Improving Future Practice

Following this, Chapter Four then sets about defining the theoretical framework, or frameworks, that could be useful in exploring these issues further and helping to better understand any findings. In particular, this chapter focused on Jessop's (1990) Strategic Relational Approach which considers the notion of a strong state and its 'privileging' of actors through the designation and allocation of policy. The chapter also identified a number of other theories which were of use in analysis including New Institutionalism, which focused on the role of agencies/partners and the ways in which they interact with any particular scheme.

Chapter Five sets out the dual-methodology that would be used in the research. The first part outlines a national overview survey that would be sent to every LAA manager in England, with the aim of exploring the initial research questions and to obtain a sense of whether they held relevance in practice or not. The subsequent analysis then provides a reconsideration of the research questions in the light of the overview findings, jettisoning some, and expanding others. The methodology then outlines the criteria that will be used for selecting detailed case study areas so as to provide the best platform from which to analyse the research questions. This process led to the selection of Liverpool and St Helens in the North West of England as the two case studies, given their historical context, close socio-economic similarities and the range of responses they provided within the overview.

The next three chapters then outline the results to arise from the case studies, particularly drawing upon interviews with the key actors involved with the LAA in those areas, and from a national level.

Chapter Six focuses explicitly on the vertical governance of LAAs, looking at the nature of top-down control. It first looks at the National Indicator Dataset, exploring issues of homogeneity and the ability for areas to be locally responsive through their indicator selections or whether the NID represents the imposition of a centralised policy agenda. It then goes on to explore the role of GOR in the LAA process, in particular exploring two competing models to explain how GOR operated – one of which contends that the effectiveness of GOR approach was based around local actor's understanding of GOR's role, the other that GOR's effectiveness is based on their ability to fully involve and engage with the area.

Chapter Seven focuses on the horizontal governance of LAAs, looking at the interactions of the local partners within each of the case studies. This explores issues around stronger and weaker actors, to discover whether agencies have a tendency to dominate proceedings, or if any agencies particularly struggle to engage. This chapter also considers the nature of internal agendas, to assess how well agencies have aligned their own internal programmes with that of the LAA and issues arising from this. This chapter also examines the LAAs accountability and governance structures – notably the Executive Board and Thematic Partnerships. This considers how effective they are as a vehicle for delivering LAA business, and the extent to which they represent good partnership working and reflect the working principles of the LAA.

Chapter Eight has two roles. The first is to provide a consideration of the effectiveness of the LAA model overall, considering its strengths and weaknesses, as viewed by those tasked with delivering it, before moving to assess whether or not the LAA has been a success in terms of achieving its stated aims. The chapter then moves to provide a consideration of how the lessons of the LAA can be transferred to future practice. This begins by discussing how actors felt the LAA model could have been improved. The chapter then provides a consideration firstly of how the LAA might have developed under a hypothetical fourth term Labour Government, before

discussing the Coalition policies that replaced the LAA. In doing this, the chapter provides a short assessment of how each scheme would prove successful or otherwise in addressing these shortfalls.

In concluding, the final section draws all the finding chapters together, before making a final move towards considering the relative success or not of the LAA and the importance of lesson learning from past practice in order to inform and improve the future practice of local service delivery.

Figure 1.1 - Overview of the Thesis Structure

	Introduction

Chapter Two	**Policy Overview** – Setting out the development of the delivery of Local Public Services from the turn of the 20th Century until Local Area Agreements.
Chapter Three	**LAA Overview / International Examples** – Detailed literature review around the development of Local Area Agreements in England. Also covers schemes of international comparison. This chapter also raises research questions of pertinence.

Chapter Four	**Theory and Conceptualisation** – Focuses on which theoretical and conceptual approaches would be most pertinent to analyse the research questions.
Chapter Five	**Methodology and Case Study Selection** – First sets out the national overview survey of LAAs, which in turn was designed to help identify appropriate case studies. This contains brief results of the survey.

Chapter Six	**Vertical Governance** – Focusing on the centre-local aspect of LAA governance, particularly town down control around indicator/target selection and the role of GOR.
Chapter Seven	**Horizontal Governance** – Focusing on the inter-partner relationships at the local level, outlining the concept of strong/weak actors and the balancing of internal and external agency agendas
Chapter Eight	**LAAs and the Future** – Focusing on the critique of LAA working, suggestions for future working, and post-script around LAAs under the coalition government.

	Conclusions / Policy Recommendations

Chapter Two – The Development of Local Governance and the Delivery of Local Public Services in England

2.1 Introduction

The search for good governance in the effective delivery of local public services is not a new one (Darlow et al: 2007). This begs the question about what precedents there are – a question that forms the purpose of this chapter This search has been shaped by the respective governments of the day and the changing view of the role of local government in delivering these services.

Between 2005 and 2010 Local Area Agreements sat at the forefront of local public service delivery in England. Designed as three year contracts between Central and Local Government, which identified priorities and set accompanying targets for delivery, these agreements raised numerous core themes revolving around the relationship between the state and local areas, as well as the impact on partnership working on a local scale.

However before moving to consider the most recent efforts to deliver local public services in England, it is crucial to set this work within an appropriate context. By charting the development of local public service delivery prior to Local Area Agreements, one can gain a deeper understanding of the policy environment from which the LAA emerged and the problems - both of a practical and governance nature - that LAAs were intended to tackle.

In particular, given that many policy issues regarding public service delivery are enacted by Whitehall and then implemented in the localities, policy changes can have serious implications for central-local relations. Thus, one of the key themes of this chapter will be to consider how the relationship between central and local government has changed over time.

By undertaking such an exercise one can assess the extent to which the issues and themes that were of relevance to LAAs have previously been faced and addressed. In doing this, one can gain a sense of the key policy lessons to be taken from past practice and whether LAAs appropriately reflected and sought to learn from those lessons.

Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to chart the development of local public service delivery in the United Kingdom and specifically England, while identifying the key governance issues along the way, particularly of relevance to central-local relations and the devolution of power away from the state.

2.2   Pre World War Two

The first significant move towards the forms of local governance that exist today came through the Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894, which introduced elected local authorities across England, operating on a two-tier county and district model, with the exception of major cities which were exempt from county jurisdiction (Leach and Percy-Smith: 2001), in an electoral format which is still recognisable today. These new authorities became responsible for a 'range of major functions' (*ibid* p50) with governance split between county and town halls. This system slowly replaced the ad-hoc system of single-purpose bodies that characterised the Victorian period. (Ashworth: 1954 cited in Mawson: 2009).

The creation of this new form of local government required an element of vertical interaction between Central Government and the newly created localities which had never been seen before. Thus, as a by-product of this system there emerged an issue that is still remains a key factor in modern day local governance: central-local relations.

2.3   Post World War Two

Post-war Britain was characterised by a period of extreme change but also consensus about the nature of this change. The urgent need for post-war

reconstruction to rebuild cities and infrastructure led to the adoption of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act – laying the foundation for the modern planning system - yet Taylor contends that post-war Britain was largely governed by 'consensus politics... characterised by both radical and conservative ideas to construct a "middle-way" between the extremes of liberalism and socialism' (Taylor, 1998: 21). This is a view that is shared by Cullingworth (1975) suggesting that if the Conservative Party had formed the post-war government rather than Labour it is likely that they would have enacted a similar set of policies.

This period of uncontentious top down policy creation (largely driven by necessity) would not continue for very long, however. Indeed, Darlow (2007) identifies a trend beginning in the 1960's of a mounting challenge to Local Government as a provider of services, starting with the Royal Commission Redcliffe-Maud Report (HMSO: 1969).

The Redcliffe-Maud report was a major study undertaken into the appropriate scale at which to deliver local public service. The changing demographic structure and distribution of English population, the requirements of citizens, and tellingly the increasing role of central government in economic matters and urban regeneration were all cited as being drivers behind the study (Wise, 1969), noting that this changing face of England made the delivery of local public services such as planning and transport 'impossible' (HMSO: 1969). The report proposed the scrapping of the two-tier council system, replacing it with a series of unitary areas with a population between 250,000 and 1,000,000. In all it proposed the creation of 58 new unitary authorities, based largely around major towns, however there was an awareness of the distinctiveness of the issues that faced urban and rural areas, which also influenced this selection (Wise, 1969).

The Redcliffe-Maud Report proposed a new tier of government grouping known as 'Provinces' (HMSO: 1969) which opted to split several of the traditional county

areas, but also were, interestingly, grouped along very similar lines to the Government Office Regions introduced in 1994 (see Figure 2.1).

This report marked the first major shift in central-local relations since the 1894 Act, with the proposed change in local government being instigated from Westminster. This was in acknowledgement of the fact that the existing scales of working made it difficult for the developing role of the state in the localities (i.e. planning) to be effective. This proposed change was designed to improve the efficiency of public services at the local level, but was done in a way so as to make the state's role in delivering them easier, rather than to reform the actual public services in order to make them more reflective of local need. Therefore, it could be argued that the Redcliffe-Maud report represented one of the first significant moves by the central state to alter an aspect of public life to better suit its own purposes, as opposed to the purposes of those that were directly affected by the reforms.

THE NEW PROVINCES AND PRESENT ECONOMIC PLANNING REGIONS

Figure 2.1 Provinces as envisaged in the Redcliffe Maud Report (HMSO: 1969)

Ultimately, the recommendations of the Redcliffe-Maud report were not adopted directly, in part due to the 1970 general election in which the Labour led Government of Harold Wilson lost to the Conservatives led by Edward Heath. However, they went on to significantly inform the Local Government Act of 1972, which carried out significant changes to local government boundaries, and in turn the methods of governance (HMG: 1972). The key difference between the 1972 Act and the 1969 report reflected the fact a two-tier approach to local government was still favoured. Consequently, local government was organised as such, with predominately rural areas taking on a county and district model, and the major urban centres being classified as metropolitan counties, with a number of districts or boroughs beneath. This new system of working raised similar questions to those initially cited within the 1969 Redcliffe-Maud report about whether the reforms were designed to benefit the state, or the localities. This was also coupled with a new tension within the county and district model over the governance arrangements within this two-tier structure and issues about the levels of control over local services.

2.3.1 Inner City Partnerships

With the publication of the 'Policy for the Inner Cities' White Paper (DoE: 1977) the Labour government developed a scheme that would introduce two new concepts into local governance and service delivery. The 'Inner City Partnerships' that would emerge were the first schemes to explicitly focus on inner city urban areas and the first to introduce the notion of partnership to public policy. This new concept of partnership was defined as 'all public agencies and authorities whose policies are of importance to the inner city… brought together to initiate a co-ordinated strategy' (Nabarro: 1980, p25).

Run by the Department of Environment, through its guidance – which was not mandatory – the scheme encouraged local areas to assess the situation within their respective inner city area and the policies they had in place that related to it.

After then identifying any policy gaps they would specify a course of action, including spending priorities for a period of three years. This three year time horizon to deliver improvement, as will become apparent, became a recurring theme within public service delivery, especially with the LAA.

In an initial assessment of the scheme, Nabarro (1980) pointed to areas struggling to fully grasp the nature of these new partnerships and the governance arrangements that they entailed. This in turn led to a low 'buy in' from senior public officials whose presence and support was considered necessary for success. As the next section will make clear, the writing proved to be on the wall for Inner City Partnerships, with many of the schemes producing their first three year partnership budget to take effect in April 1979, only one month before the general election. However their legacy, both in terms of explicitly focusing on inner city areas and introducing the concept of partnership working, is one that would continue to resonate through the coming decades of policy around local public service delivery.

2.4   1979-1997 – Conservatives and Neo Liberalism

From the mid 1970s public policy began a process of centralisation, starting with the scaling back of local government grants by the Labour Government (Savage, 1994), however this process accelerated in 1979 with the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative administration. Up until this point, local public services were still largely delivered at a local authority level, with the only significant alterations coming from amendments to local government boundaries, which were intended to help these services be delivered more efficiently. The period following 1979 saw the local public service become increasingly influenced by a neo-liberal model of delivery (*ibid*).

The emergence of the neo-liberal model of governance led to a dramatic shift in the priorities and direction of central government. This was characterised

primarily by a desire to boost economic development above all other forms of development, under the principle that economic prosperity would drive improvements in other areas. Confirming this, Robson (1988) identifies the Department of the Environment (DoE) as having a specific 'presumption in favour of projects that have as their objective the stimulation of economic activity in their area' (In Robson: 1988 p99). As well as the shift in favour of economic development, throughout this period, Leach and Percy Smith (2001) noted a shift across government policy that saw the drastic taking back of central government control and a significant reduction of power for local areas, with top down governance characterising Whitehall policy throughout the 1980s, with increased controls over the nature of funding and greater involvement in state actors within schemes relating to local areas.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw a change in policy. For example, in the context of regeneration – and arguably across public services more generally – there was a greater emphasis on partnership working and community involvement in shaping and delivering public services (Clark & Stewart 1999).

2.4.1 Partnership authorities
One of the first major initiatives to embody the new neo-liberal principles was the establishment of Partnership Authorities. This expanded upon the earlier moves towards partnership in local public service delivery with actors from central government (Department of the Environment (DoE), Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) and Department for Education (DE)) and local (local authority) working together under the leadership of the DoE (Robson: 1988).

These 'public-private partnerships' were seen as the first step in delivering a private city, free of state/government influence, yet as a result of this view these schemes were heavily criticised (Boyle and Rich: 1984). One reason for this was down to the increasing bureaucracy of governance through the creation of extra committees, rather than reducing it as intended. However the severest criticism

related to how private sector enterprise was now able to influence the direction of local governance. Following its neo-liberal ideology, Whitehall was keen to encourage private sector led enterprise, which in turn served to marginalise local authorities, affirming the contempt that they believed central government held them in. This made maintaining an effective relationship between central government and local governments increasingly difficult.

2.4.2 Urban Development Corporations

Whilst the development of a 'best value' agenda and the growth of public-private partnerships saw the seeping away of local authorities' functions to the private sector, the government also began introducing a number of new agencies which quickened and deepened the effects of this process. The most significant of these were the Urban Development Corporations (UDC) established by – then Secretary of State for the Environment, now Lord - Michael Heseltine in 1980.

These were designated areas located within a local authority that were given powers to assemble and regenerate derelict land whilst also planning for its subsequent use – seen as a 'direct assault' on local authorities and their planning powers as they stood at that time (Robson, 1988). This was done in response to concerns in government that local authorities didn't embody the neo-liberal values of Whitehall in that they were 'too slow, too lacking in commercial interest, and too trammelled with the dictates of local democracy' (Robson: 1988, p126) and thus only by allowing the private sector and market led principles to guide regeneration could these local areas obtain the regeneration that was required.

The UDC scheme began with two areas, the London Docklands Development Corporation and Merseyside Development Corporation. London's scheme was the larger of the two, comprising of 5100 acres of land, which contained some 15,000 dwellings of which 95% were council property. In contrast Liverpool's UDC comprised 860 acres and contained no private residences (Robson:1987).

Both schemes were responsible for development schemes which are still in place today (LDC: Canary Wharf and London Docklands Railway, Liverpool: Albert Dock and Tate Modern North). In terms of the more general success of the UDC their fortunes were rather different, owing to the idea that each scheme would seek to draw in private sector investment to (at least) match that which was put forward from the public purse. In London this proved to be a resounding success, with the scheme leveraging private funds at a ratio of 1:6 (Public: Private), whereas Liverpool could only generate a ratio of 1:0.5 (Robson: 1988, p127), meaning, in the first instance that it turned out to be substantially publicly funded – against the principles in which the scheme was established – which in turn limited the capacity of the Liverpool UDC to deliver.

During their development the schemes proved to be unpopular with local residents, particularly in London, where concerns were raised through resident forum groups about the improvements making housing in the area unaffordable, coupled with the unattainable nature of the jobs being created in the area (Robson, 1988).

Indicating the top-down nature of Whitehall policy at the time, the Urban Development Corporations were criticised as giving the perception that the Conservative administration was taking action in cities desperate for regeneration. However, this was on their own terms rather than by acting upon specific demand from those cities (Goodwin and Painter: 1996). Indeed, Goodwin and Painter go on to contend that the UDC simply formed part of a wider strategy of using regulation as a political tool against the Labour party (which controlled the councils of most inner urban areas at the time) and local government, while elsewhere they were described as undemocratic, leading to the 'undermining of local authorities (Ho: 2003).

As an addendum, Lord Heseltine spoke anecdotally[2] of how the first two UDCs were established to circumvent planning laws that were in place and to avoid a time consuming and potentially unfruitful period of passage through the House of Commons. Originally the plan was to introduce one scheme: The London Docklands, but by introducing two schemes, Parliamentary procedures could be avoided as the scheme would be administered through special ministerial initiative. Consequently, Liverpool – deemed to be the second worst performing area in the country at the time and thus more likely to benefit from the scheme[3] – was included as a second area. This indicates that policy development is not always carefully planned, with the case of Liverpool illustrating that areas can inadvertently benefit from schemes designed to improve other parts of the country.

2.4.3 Task Forces

The next major policy initiative to be brought forward were City Action Teams (CAT) and Task Forces, originally established in 1985 as a way of co-ordinating the activities of the numerous central departments activities in relation to urban renewal and job creation in the localities. The aim was to end the element of disjointedness that existed between Whitehall and the localities in delivering these projects by creating stronger links between the two tiers of government, however there were concerns surrounding the danger of 'parachuting' central government departments into the localities with minimal understanding of local priorities or working cultures (Robson: 1988).

Five CAT areas were originally established in the partnership authority areas of Birmingham, Liverpool, London, Manchester and Newcastle – with Leeds and Nottingham added to the scheme in 1988.

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[2] In a speech to the Town and Country Planning Association in Liverpool, 9th November 2011
[3] See footnote one

The Task Forces operated on a small geographical scale - similar to that of the UDC - with the aim of stimulating local economic growth through job creation. However the limited funding available led to the schemes being seen as largely cosmetic in nature and to accusations that they raised hopes only to subsequently dash them – particularly in ethnic minority communities (Robson: 1988) and the scheme's outright emphasis on economic regeneration led to strong and sustained critique from academics, voluntary groups and local activists (Ho, 2003).

They were also hampered by the fact that many inner city areas were predominately controlled by Labour run councils which, at the time, sought to resist the control of the Thatcher government.   One way they did this was to refuse to fully engage with the schemes, thus preventing them from developing in the way that the government envisaged.   This lasted until the 1987 general election win for the Conservative Party, after which the Labour stance was softened.

2.4.4 Local Government Reorganisation

In 1985 the Government published the 'Lifting the Burden' White Paper (DoE: 1985) which proposed the relaxing of regulations around planning and other aspects of local governance that could lead to economic development. This, in turn, was seen as laying the foundations for one of the most overt assertions of central control over the localities – the 1986 local government reorganisation. This was a major reorganisation of local authorities[4], sweeping away the Greater London Authority and the Metropolitan counties, giving their composite districts unitary authority status.   The reorganisation, in turn, was justified as a cost saving measure (Stewart: 2003), removing what was said to be a costly and bureaucratic layer of government.

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[4] Although it only affected the Metropolitan areas

However, it has previously been mentioned that Government sought to use its ability to define the parameters of local authority power in order to suppress the Labour controlled councils (Goodwin and Painter: 1996, Ying Ho: 2003). Indeed, the 1986 re-organisation was widely seen as being a continuation of this and a direct challenge to the Labour controlled Greater London Council, which had been in direct conflict with the Whitehall administration for a number of years. Similarly, the reorganisation was seen as an effective way of limiting the powers of other Labour run councils, particularly in Liverpool where the Militant Labour movement also clashed with the government, particularly over budget setting, in the early 1980s (Parkinson: 1985). This analysis is strengthened by the fact the re-organisation ran counter to the recommendations of the Redcliffe Maud report on local government, recommendations which were fully accepted by the Conservative government of Edward Heath at the time of their publication.

2.4.5 Neo-Liberalism under Major: City Challenge

In 1990, Margaret Thatcher resigned as Prime Minister, being replaced by John Major. Major, with former Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine as his Deputy, set about delivering a new package of local public service delivery policy which, whilst still remaining true to the principles of neo-liberalism, marked a shift from the top-down control shown throughout the 1980s.

One of the most significant schemes to emerge from this period was established in 1991 – City Challenge. The scheme was one which placed an emphasis on citywide regeneration, whilst simultaneously using this work to improve the worst performing areas. The Department of the Environment (DoE) envisaged that the project would achieve success by:

- Developing disadvantaged areas which have significant development potential for the city and are a major constraint on a city wide development
- Providing disadvantaged residents with access to opportunities produced by regeneration through specific measures

21

- Linking disadvantaged areas and their residents to a city's mainstream economy

(DoE 1991 para 1.2)

Originally the project was planned to encompass 10 local authorities, for a period of 5 years, with a budget of £37.5m each. However after the initial bidding process, 11 'pacemaker' authorities were designated from the 15 that bid (Ho: 2003).

The intention was that these schemes would be led by the local authority, acting as the head of a Public-Private Partnership. These 'City Challenge Partnerships' were governed by a board of directors comprising all the key agency members in the area, as well as representatives of business groups and the voluntary sector.

In terms of the delivery of the project itself, it was identified that difficulties could arise due to the fact that those who were responsible for negotiating the initial targets in the original City Challenge plan would not necessarily be the same people who were tasked with implementing it (Ying Ho: 2003).

However, while there may have been a shift away from the paternalism of the 1980s, there was still a strong culture of central control woven into the fabric of City Challenge. Indeed, it was to incorporate a four tier hierarchy of agencies that would be echoed by LAAs some 10 years later. The DoE were at the top of the hierarchy, with Government Office for the Regions (established in 1994 as the representatives of Whitehall in each of the regions) overseeing the process. In turn, each locality was represented within this hierarchy by its City Challenge Partnership and those responsible for delivery. This hierarchy illustrated that whilst the City Challenge areas were allowed to lead their own schemes they were still subject to significant top-down oversight from central government with each scheme being led by a Minister from the Government, as well as review

and vetting from GOR (the former aspect is one that would be replicated later in the LAA).

The City Challenge was also one of the first schemes to include a significant monitoring element to it, where continued funding was based on the strength of achievements within the scheme. Each City Challenge was required to set a number of targets, which would be activity orientated and quantifiable – e.g. job creation. However, it became clear that the purpose of this monitoring process was principally for the benefit of Whitehall's agenda and its progress rather than the progress of each individual scheme (Ho: 2003).

Furthermore, the official evaluation report of the City Challenge cast greater doubt over the efficiency of the monitoring process, noting little/no correlation between the target setting and attainment and drawing into question the usefulness of such a procedure as a predictive tool – particularly where incentives are attached (Russell et al: 1996). Questions were also raised as to the efficiency of the target setting system, particularly relating to when an area was deemed to have over-achieved against any particular target. The evaluation identified the difficulty of ascertaining whether progress on a target was due to the success of the scheme or down to simply underestimating the target. This same principle would also apply to targets that had failed to be achieved. Whilst this clearly created problems for the incentive process, this may have been avoided through use of improved baseline data. Indeed, evidence bases would go on to carry much greater significance in many of the schemes rolled out under New Labour.

Ultimately however, the evaluation only added to the criticisms that the City Challenge did not alleviate previous allegations of top-down control from central government. A significant criticism was that the monitoring was overly bureaucratic in nature, and that as a result it added little to improving the best practice of the localities. Thus it was of little relevance to local areas, whilst

offering more benefits to Whitehall in terms of monitoring the performance of the scheme and by extension their policy priorities.

2.4.6 Area Based Initiatives: Areas for Improvement

Reflecting upon the relative successes of the various Area Based Initiatives to have been implemented in Britain, Matthews (2012) points to an academic consensus that considers these schemes to have been largely ineffective. In particular, Matthews cites studies which find;

- a succession of policy changes and parallel schemes have left areas unable to make consistent progress (Tunstall and Coulter: 2006)
- a failure to target funding on those most in need (Dabinett et al: 2001)
- a failure to take a strategic view of the wider economy of the area and its implications (Carley and Kirk: 1998, Gripaios: 2002)

(Cited in Matthews: 2012, p148)

As well as these shortcomings, there was also a general consensus that successive schemes, particularly in the 1980s, undermined the strength and confidence of local government in the UK, rendering local actors less able to devise and deliver effective responses to the needs of their areas. Consequently, it is now time to discuss the way that New Labour, in the period following 1997 sought to respond to these criticisms and the success that they had in doing so.

2.5   1997 - New Labour – New Policy Environment?

In the period from 1997 onwards, following the election of a Labour Government, a new set of policy developments were brought forward, aimed at changing the way local decisions were made and public services delivered as well as the relationship between central and local government. However, this process of change did not start begin immediately.

2.5.1 Academic Forerunners

In the years leading up to Labour's return to office in 1997, much work was done by academics which went on to create the foundation what became know as 'The Third Way'. The most notable of these academics and one of the principle architects of The Third Way was the sociologist Anthony Giddens. Although he tended towards broader ideas rather than specific policy prescriptions, Giddens set out many of the principles which would impact on local governance procedures in the coming years.

Giddens first defined the new challenge of operating in a peacetime world, post World War and post 'Cold War' as a 'State without Enemies' which whilst not facing external threats, still faced legitimate dangers in this new policy landscape and thus had to seek out new sources of legitimacy. (Giddens: 1998)

Setting out the defining principle of the Third Way, Giddens sought to reconcile the market led principles of neo-liberalism expounded under the Conservative government of the 1980s with the statist principles of Social Democracy which stood as the other significant political viewpoint of the time. It was felt that neo-liberalist market led principles were still relevant to economic policy, particularly noting the view that "Government is mistrusted because it is cumbersome and ineffective, business can change rapidly… [but government] still has much to learn from business best practice including target culture, efficiency and auditing" (Giddens: 1998 p75). As a result Giddens felt that "by lacking market discipline state institutions become lazy and the services they deliver shoddy" (Giddens: 1998. p75) and thus opening the state up to market led principles would deliver greater efficiency. However, whilst seeking to maintain the general market led principles through which Thatcher and other neo-liberal governments sought to modernise the institutions of governance, Giddens' model saw value in maintaining the principles of social democracy including the "deepening and widening of democracy [through which] Government can act in partnership with agencies in civil society to foster community renewal and development."

(Giddens: 1998, p69). Giddens felt that the shift of power away from Whitehall and increased self governance could lead to regeneration of cities, although he did acknowledge that this approach could lead to heightened inequalities as some areas would grasp/be better equipped to grasp these opportunities more than others, worsening 'the marked regional inequalities that already exist in the UK' (Giddens: 1998, p78).

Summing up the basic principles of the Third Way model, Massey (2001) argued that the direction of New Labour policy was similar to Conservative principles, just simply repackaged, whilst Wilks-Heeg (2009) went further, arguing that 'the Third Way constituted an implicit acceptance of key Thatcherite principles… [coupling them] …with more nebulous ideas of 'renewal', 'modernisation' and 'social inclusion' (Wilks-Heeg: 2009, p24). As became clear during the following years, many of these principles became core aspects of New Labour policy. Most notably the development of target culture and devolution of power away from Whitehall to the UK states and communities became key themes of the New Labour policy approach.

The 'Third Way' was not without its early critics, however, with Midwinter (2001) noting that under Tony Blair, New Labour's stance towards local government became less sympathetic. The most obvious manifestation of this was the change of tone in the policy rhetoric, with the emphasis being placed on 'modernisation' to cope with market principles as opposed to more local autonomy – something that traditional social democracy would argue for (Wilks-Heeg: 2009) and many Labour Controlled local authorities were disappointed to see these relations formalised, rather than repealed. (Leach: 2010).

2.5.2 Lord Rogers – Towards an Urban Renaissance
Following Labour's return to office, the Government set up the Urban Task Force led by Lord Richard Rogers, 'to identify causes of urban decline and establish a vision for our cities, founded on the principles of design excellence, social

wellbeing and environmental responsibility' (Urban Task Force: 2005, p2).   In 1999 Lord Rogers delivered the Task Force's final report 'Toward an Urban Renaissance'.

The task force identified the importance of good governance and social well-being in their vision for successful urban areas. One of the key principles they felt was essential in delivering the concept of an Urban Renaissance was an increase in the investment in Urban Government. This included a change from paternalistic top down government to a more participatory system involving local citizens in the decisions which affect them.

This principle also included firm support for the notions of partnerships. This renewed partnership movement would lead to flexible, city wide policy and a providing a clarity of vision with joined up policies across the area (Rogers: 1999). The Task Force outlined specific management structures which they felt where necessary to deliver on their vision for the urban renaissance. This was centred around a single management framework, which tied all the relevant partners to one organisation, established a visible presence in the area and provided a senior manager with the authority to effect delivery (Rogers: 1999). These principles bear a strong resemblance to the Local Strategic Partnership structures.

The task force also advocated the use of a set of national indicators which could then be used to compare performance with similar urban areas as well as to establish instances of best practice.

Like the broader theoretical work of Giddens, The Urban Task Force's recommendations would prove to be highly influential. Indeed, the framework it sets out can be clearly identified as Labour moved towards implementing these academic exercises and policy reviews into the practical aspects of its emerging urban policy.

2.6 **From Theory to Practice: The Emergence of Labour's Urban Policy**

From 1998 onwards, Britain saw numerous policy initiatives introduced which set out Labour's vision for the development of urban areas, covering practical planning issues (e.g. through updated Planning Policy Statements (PPS) - replacing the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) introduced under the Major Government) but also relating to the governance of localities and urban areas.

2.6.1 The Local Government Modernisation Agenda

All of these schemes were implemented under what became known as the Local Government Modernisation Agenda (LGMA) – a broad policy umbrella aiming to update the institutions and governance structures of local government to bring them in line with the new 'Third Way' political philosophy which was informing Labour's policy outlook.

Downe and Martin (2006) identified five main stages of the LGMA (see table 2.1) of which the LAA forms the final part. Whilst some of stages will be expanded upon in the coming sections, it is helpful to consider the LGMA in light of the theoretical principles outlined earlier.

Table 2.1 - The Five Stages of the LGMA

Phase	Description
I *1997-1999*	- Largely based around efficiency and 'best value'
II *2000*	- Introduction of the Local Government Act (2000) - Separates executive and non-executive functions - Embraces concerns about democratic accountability
III *2001-2002*	- Rescuing the improvement agenda from best value - Too many best value reports produced than inspectors could handle - Proposed 'Earned Autonomy' – I.e. Best performing councils would receive less inspection
IV *2003-2005**	- Heightened interest in Local Authority's community leadership - Formation of LSPs - Introduction of cross-cutting initiatives designed to give local authorities more policy freedom
V* *2006-2010**	- Improved Performance Management - Local Area Agreements

Adapted from Downe and Martin: 2006

*Author's analysis

In essence it can be split into two key sections – focusing on the establishment of Third Way principles through policy, followed by implementation. What becomes clear however is that as the LGMA develops, it is almost as if the two sections moderate each other to maintain the third way and prevent a shift to full social democracy or neo-liberalism.

'Stage I' clearly embraced the market led efficiency drive with the development of 'best value' schemes whilst 'Stage II' indicated a development of the social-

democratic aspects with the Local Government Act and the beginnings of local government institutional reform. Indicating the need for constant moderation, 'Stage III' seeks to intervene in the competing interests of Stages I and II, with Downe and Martin (2006) indicating that the deepening of social democracy needed 'rescuing' from the market driven efficiency agenda which threatened to swamp progress with excessive bureaucracy.

Stages IV and V sought to continue the development of the Third Way reform model by beginning the processes of devolving power away from Whitehall, with the development of LSPs and subsequently LAAs.

It is important to consider, as these policy developments from 2000 onwards are outlined in more detail, that they represent a continuous moderation of two competing political philosophies i.e. market led neo-liberalism and social democracy. As such it is essential to keep in mind how they embody each of these aims and the implications that each competing direction can have on the effectiveness on the local public services that are delivered under this policy umbrella.

2.6.2 Modern Local Government, Local Government Act and the Urban White Paper

The first practical move of the LGMA came with the 1998 White Paper 'Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People' (DETR: 1998). Amongst the key aspects of this, the White Paper proposed significant changes to the way elected officials led councils, the establishment of Regional Development Agencies and most importantly the introduction of performance management. This performance management would be achieved by utilising a set of national performance indicators measuring 'efficiency, cost and quality' to ensure best value for local citizens (DETR: 1998, p5). The principle behind this was that councils could subsequently identify and improve their worst performing areas in order to raise overall performance. The other significant introduction was that of

a 'single capital pot': a concentrated source of local funds intended to allow more flexibility to define priorities and plan for their delivery over a longer period, in a way that best suited local actors.

Ultimately, although the 1998 White Paper was criticised for failing to offer a significant degree of local autonomy (Wilks-Heeg: 2009), it still offered significant concessions to local areas to allow them to define their priorities and spending – something that was considerably limited under previous schemes.

In 2000, building on the recommendations of the Rogers Report (Rogers: 1999) the government passed the Local Government Act (HMG: 2000). The act mandated each Local Authority in England to produce a strategy for "promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their area" (HMG: 2000 section 4 para 1), known as a 'Community Strategy.' These were later changed to 'Sustainable Community Strategy' reflecting the Government's sustainability agenda as outline in the 2003 Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM: 2003).

This strategy would be delivered by a 'Local Strategic Partnership' dubbed 'The Partnership of Partnerships' (Morphet: 2008). This LSP was led by the local authority and was comprised of other key actors responsible for local public service delivery from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors (DTLR: 2001a). During the LAA pilots, the LSP was to be led by a party designated by each LSP (with the Local Authority suggested), but Morphet (2008) pointed towards a distinct unease around the ambiguity of leadership, with local authorities feeling they should be the natural leaders – this was rectified in 2005 with the designation of local authorities as the lead partner within the LSP structure (ODPM: 2005a).

The role of the LSP would be expanded upon in the Urban White Paper – 'Our Towns and Cities: The Future' (ODPM: 2000). Acknowledging the central role of

the new LSPs in improving urban areas, the LSPs were intended as a way of streamlining the processes of local governance by reducing overlap and ensuring a harmony of approach amongst local actors, in turn reducing the need to find a trade off between the various aims of local actors (Tewdwr Jones et al: 2006). This bore a striking similarity to some of the schemes that were present in the 1980s, but Importantly the White Paper also noted that LSPs would not be another level of governance to sit on top of existing structures but instead would 'rationalise and co-ordinate existing partnerships' (ODPM, 2000, p44).

Developing the policy further, each LSP would require accreditation from GOR in order to become fully functional. To attain this accreditation required six criteria to be satisfied;

(1) *Strategic*. They are effective, representative, and capable of playing a key strategic role;

(2) *Inclusive*. They actively involve all the key players, including the public, private, community and voluntary sectors; at the strategic level; more widely; with community and voluntary sectors; with black and ethnic minority communities; with the private sector;

(3) *Action-focused*. They have established genuine common priorities and targets, and agreed actions and milestones leading to demonstrable improvements against measurable baselines;

(4) *Performance managed*. Members (organizations) have aligned their performance management systems, aims and objectives, criteria and process to the aims and objectives of the LSP;

(5) *Efficient*. They reduce, not add to, the bureaucratic burden;

(6) *Learning and developmental*. They build on best practice from successful partnerships by drawing on experiences of local and regional structures, and national agencies.

(NRU, 2001)

Whilst a general shift away from service management to community involvement was noted as a key theme of Labour policy (Painter and Isaac-Henry: 1999), the early LSPs were criticised for failing to include enough members of the voluntary and community sectors (LGA: 2001). Bailey (2003) anticipated the move towards LAAs noting the danger that the early LSPs could fail to act strategically, instead operating as a 'parallel' local authority simply distributing funds rather than delivering local public services in, and of, itself.

Seeking to address some of the issues around centre-local relations Stoker (2005) identifies two models that any LSP leadership would take. The first was one where the local authority would exercise strategic community leadership, with considerable political autonomy and representing communities within a wider partnership context. The second model emphasised discretion, offered decentralised local government management but with central government setting the political agenda. Stoker's two models – which apply no less to the LAA as the delivery document - summarise the essence of this thesis, which ultimately intends to provide some inclination as to which of these prospects found more traction in the policy reality of delivery.

2.6.3 Local Public Service Agreements
One of the other significant projects to emerge during Labour's first term in office – and in essence acted as a precursor to the LAA - was the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA). The similarities between the LAA that replaced it are striking: This was an agreement between central and local government to deliver specific improvements in performance and was agreed for a period of three years (Sullivan and Gillanders: 2005), offering financial rewards for those areas prepared to deliver improvements beyond those that would be normally expected (Martin: 2005). This would be achieved by monitoring across some 1,200 national indicators. Given the number of these indicators and the fact that ultimately, the LPSA was designed to focus on the outcomes that a local area was producing as opposed to the processes of delivery itself (DTLR: 2001b) this

represented a significant move towards overt performance management in a way that had not previously been seen in UK public policy.

During its implementation it was shown that there was a divergence in aims between those responsible for leading the LPSA and those tasked with delivery meaning that changes in management could lead to significant shifts in direction (Sullivan and Gillanders: 2005).

In assessing the LPSA Sullivan and Gillanders (2005) go on to suggest that they were developed in time of considerable change to centre-local relations and that as a result there was no definite centre-local power dynamic in the way that became clear during the 1980s in particular. However, this can be contested as - in an indication of the strength of Whitehall - the ability for the scheme to deliver national policy priorities at the local level, the same study reported that Whitehall departments found the LPSA to be an excellent way of delivering departmental policies. Similarly, in an indication of the wariness around centre-local relations still held by local authority members, Millward (2005) indicates than initially many local authorities eagerly accepted the language of the LPSA (and the wider LGMA) in order to be seen to be on board with central priorities, whilst simultaneously securing themselves the breathing space to best position their authority and its response to the scheme.

The LAA, which was introduced shortly after, was intended to be the natural evolution of both the LPSA and the LGMA of which it was a part. Therefore, the extent to which the LAA sought to respond both to the LPSA's policy strengths and weaknesses, but also to continue redefining this central-local power dynamic is clearly of relevance to this study.

2.6.4 Strong and Prosperous Communities: Introducing LAAs

In 2006 the Government produced another White Paper - Strong and Prosperous Communities – (CLG: 2006) amending some of the structures surrounding local governance. It also outlined some of the measures that were being introduced to improve accountability as well as measures to streamline the existing LSP process. This White Paper marked the introduction of the Local Area Agreement as the delivery document for the Sustainable Community Strategy (following on from the pilots undertaken in the period from 2004).

Prior to the White Paper, the national indicator dataset, from which all local areas reported involved as many as 1,200 individual indicators of which around 80% of those were being reported for central purposes rather than for the benefit of the locality (Davies: 2008). This was reduced to 198 national indicators, of which each Local Strategic Partnership/LAA was obliged to choose 35. While they would still report back to central government on progress against all 198 indicators, the locality would then be assessed on its performance against those targets.

In order to allow measurement across all areas, the government included a number of compulsory targets. However, to provide a greater degree of flexibility to the localities, local areas were allowed to choose their own targets from the dataset, based on the issues that they felt were of the most relevance to them. These targets would then be agreed upon with central government. In order to ensure that targets were given the full attention that they required, the White Paper introduced the 'Duty to Have Regard' (CLG: 2006 p105). This noted that some targets will be the sole duty of the local authority to implement (e.g. education) while in other cases targets will require partnership action. While the White Paper noted that the 'local authority cannot impose a target without showing due regard to any partner's commitments or priorities' (CLG: 2006, p105), once the targets have been agreed, the Secretary of State can direct all the relevant parties to show due regard to the implementation of them. However,

questions remain as to how this will work in practice given that, as Davies (2008) points out, a partner can illustrate they have considered another partner's commitments, and then dismiss it entirely.

The White Paper outlines some of the accountability measures that are available to central government to ensure that local areas meet their obligations. While the courses of action are numerous, including Statutory Improvement Action, Referral to the Secretary of State and Improvement Notices, details remained scarce at the early stage.

In contrast to with the conciliatory tone of the previous White Papers, which made overtures of partnership, Davies highlighted a 'moralising' tone to this White Paper which exhibited 'control freakery' and made no guarantees that the LAA would avoid 'back door centralisation' i.e. the imposition of central control under the guise of greater localism (Davies: 2008, p3). Reflecting many of the trends identified throughout this chapter, Davies pointed to the Lyons inquiry into the reform of local government which was published shortly after the 2006 White Paper, and his note that:

> *'The history of the last 30 years is marked by a series of well intentioned devolution initiatives, which have often evolved into subtle instruments of* [central] *control.'*

(Lyons: 2007)

This, coupled with Martin's (2005) assertion that the sheer volume of schemes facing local authorities, has the potential to distract them from the business of delivering effective local public services.

Now, the next chapter, and the rest of this research will explore the contrast between government rhetoric and policy reality in substantially more detail, focusing specifically on the Local Area Agreement and the extent to which it

reflected Davies' concerns, or could seek to avoid replicating Lyons' and Martin's respective assessment of previous schemes.

2.7 In Summary

At this point, the work has outlined some of the policy history surrounding local public service delivery since 1945, particularly focusing on the period following 1979. This has drawn out several themes including the nature of centre-local relations and central control and the varying methods and fortunes of partnership working at a local scale.

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a discussion of the environment that led to the development of the Local Area Agreement as a performance management mechanism for this local public service delivery, so as to better understand how the LAA came about and the issues it attempted to address. Now that this has been outlined, the next chapter will discuss the LAA in much more detail, drawing out academic criticism and outlining a series of research questions which explore the LAA and its effectiveness as a policy tool.

Chapter Three - The 'Rhetoric and Reality' of Local Area Agreements

3.1   Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore in detail the issues around Local Area Agreements. This will continue where chapter two left off, discussing the development of policy instruments designed to deliver local public services in England since 1945. Chapter two built up to the introduction of the LAA as the latest method by which local public services would be delivered.

This chapter will begin by drawing upon official government documents outlining the principles behind Local Area Agreement Implementation. In doing so, the chapter will chart the development of the LAA, including a discussion of each stage of their development, the key actors and examples of similar schemes from outside an English context.

Within this, the chapter will also draw upon and review the academic literature surrounding LAAs. Academic literature provides a helpful counterbalance to the official LAA literature allowing for greater scrutiny of policy rhetoric and in turn assisting with the identification of research questions which can be used to analyse LAAs. This in turn can add greater depth to the body of academic knowledge surrounding LAAs and their implementation and the wider subject of public policy and local service provision.

3.2   Local Area Agreements

Local Area Agreements were first piloted in 2004 as part of the continuing local government modernisation agenda, before being formally rolled out in 2006. The emergence of the LAA represented one of the final stages of the LGMA outlined at the end of the previous chapter, indeed Downe and Martin (2006) identify LAAs as being part of the fourth and final stage of the LGMA (see table 2.1).

LAAs were introduced as a performance management technique to better deliver the aims of Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). These SCS were criticised from some corners as being akin to motherhood and apple pie and for using 'depressingly predictable' abstract language by Pratchett and Leach (2004) that was 'very vague and wishy washy and not explicit… to sort of try to keep it all embracing… not too explicit so somebody will take offence to it' (Davies: 2009, p89).

By way of addressing these concerns, and to make these SCS more quantifiable, the LAA was brought forward as a delivery vehicle for which the SCS was to serve as 'the foundation for the aspirations that the area [would proceed to develop] through the LAA process' (ODPM: 2004a, p 15).

At the most basic level, a local area agreement constituted a 'three year agreement setting out the priorities for a local area, agreed between central government... and local government' (ODPM: 2005b, p6).

In their 2004 prospectus, outlining the basic principles of the scheme, the ODPM described Local Area Agreements as 'a real opportunity to improve the relationship between central and local government by providing a sustained and informed dialogue between central and local government, and its major delivery partners' (ODPM: 2004a p12). The government's intention was for the new agreements to be 'outcome' based whereby the success or failure of an LAA was assessed against its ability to attain the goals that it had set itself. The LAA was also intended to 'reflect national priorities and local priorities' (ODPM: 2004a, p14). In line with these ambitions, local areas were asked to formulate their approaches to their area within three main thematic policy 'blocks', they were;

- Children and Young People;

- Safer and Stronger Communities; and

- Healthier Communities and Older People

(ODPM; 2004)

The blocks were set in place for the first round of LAA rollout indicating the main government priorities to be tackled through the LAA and were developed in supplementary guidance to the prospectus. The blocks were aimed at consolidating and streamlining many of the funding streams that were already in place as well as complementing existing schemes such as the Public Service Agreement and Best Value Practice Initiative (ODPM: 2004).

The Children and Young People block placed a significant emphasis on education provision and the lead into work. The Safer and Stronger Communities block placed a mandatory responsibility on any LAA to increase community engagement within its area (ODPM: 2004c). The Healthier Communities Block required a particularly close working relationship with the Primary Care Trust. However, during stage one of the LAA process, many health targets would not be held accountable to the LAA, but rather internally to the PCT, due to the number of documents that the PCT was already committed to (ODPM: 2004c)

In guidance for the second phase of LAA rollout in 2006, the ODPM expanded the number of broad policy blocks used to guide the process, adding a fourth 'Economic Development and Enterprise' block to the original three (ODPM: 2006).

This expansion covered a variety of themes, designed to support the initial three blocks. In particular the aim of the economic development block was to 'improve the economic growth and productivity of a locality, addressing market failures that prevent sustainable economic development, regeneration and business

growth (ODPM: 2006, p23). As part of its inclusion, the impact of economic development on health was also noted, indicating that the economic development block was designed to better support the initial three blocks.

Reflecting the nature of sustainable development, there were a number of themes which worked across policy blocks (i.e. young people and health or community safety), highlighting two issues. The first is that each block was not intended to stand in isolation. Secondly, the notion of thematic crosscutting raised the prospect of interagency cooperation. As each of the policy blocks were interrelated, there must be a significant level of cooperation between the agencies involved in delivering these targets.

These thematic blocks and the crosscutting emerged as a clear attempt to break down the silo-mentality identified as being a significant governance issue at both a central and local level (Geddes et al: 2007, Sullivan: 2008), indicative of a situation where each agency operates within its own boundaries, often not consulting or cross-referencing work with other agencies.

As well as breaking down the silo mentality of government, the design of LAAs was intended to counter what became known as the 'Humpty Dumpty' effect (Audit Commission: 2004) occurring when central government policies were split up and delivered through different departments across a multitude of schemes as indicated in chapter two. Consequently, these numerous policy initiatives were transferred down to the locality where local partners would have to reassemble them as a coherent set of local policies that accurately reflected central government aims (Audit Commission: 2004). By seeking to rationalise and streamline a fragmented policy delivery system, the Local Area Agreements were intended to introduce a common set of policies and courses of action to local partners. This would be achieved by encouraging partners to work together through pooled resources and shared responsibility in order to achieve shared outcomes.

3.3   How the LAA Works

As stated earlier, the LAA was introduced as a performance management exercise to monitor the delivery of the aims set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy. This monitoring was carried out using an extension of the existing National Indicator Dataset, utilised within the LPSA and originally consisting of over 2000 indicators. This was used to monitor a multitude of schemes and organisations including PSAs, Primary Care Trusts and Police. Since the LAA was part of the move to streamline local public service delivery, reduce burdensome monitoring and increase the joint working between the various public sector agencies, the Indicator Dataset was drastically reduced to 198 indicators (CLG: 2008) . This was reduced further to 188 indicators, following consultation in 2009 (CLG: 2009a). These indicators related to wide ranging issues such as worklessness, health and education, reflecting national targets placed within the bounds of the four thematic blocks.

This reduced National Indicator Dataset (NID) would form the basis of each LAA. When producing their LAA, each area was invited to identify up to 35 targets from the NID. Those that were selected would closely mirror the aims and objectives of the SCS and thus the key priorities for the area. To decide upon which indicators to incorporate the LSP conducted a detailed period of negotiation with all the relevant bodies involved with the LAA.

Once the nature of the 35 indicators had been agreed the next step was to negotiate targets for improvement against each of these indicators. These targets would be bespoke, informed by an evidence base of the latest data from the area. The use of the evidence base was to ensure that each area set targets that reflected the issues they faced (and similarly to protect them from accepting overly ambitious targets that they could not achieve). This also allowed for the setting of baseline figures for each indicator.

Rather than negotiating directly with Central Government, these indicators and targets were negotiated with the appropriate Government Office for the Region, acting as representatives of central government. Progress against these agreed 'improvement targets' would be monitored every six months by the GOR.

To provide a wider level of monitoring progress against all 198 indicators would be monitored in each LAA area to assess general progress, but crucially the LAA would only be held accountable against the 35 indicators that they selected through the negotiation process.

Set alongside this process, from April 2008 the selection of 35 indicators was widened to include 18 statutory education indicators which central government felt were appropriate for inclusion in every LAA. This development was one of the first clear contradictions to the LAA's aim of giving local areas a greater say on the issues that affected them. The addition of over 50% more mandatory targets to the LAA represented a significant top-down move to deliver upon national policy priorities at the local level, rather than letting the areas themselves decide if they were the most important policy priority.

One of the key tenets of the new Local Area Agreement scheme was flexibility, particularly in the ability to specify local priorities which may require attention within a particular area. Beneath the maximum 35 national indicators, LAAs were also permitted to produce a number of local indicators. These indicators allowed for a greater degree of local flexibility, as envisaged through the LGMA. Each LAA would be allowed to specify a number of improvement targets which further developed the national indicators, in order to tackle issues which were specific to their particular area. The LSP would monitor progress of these indicators internally, but they would not be subject to scrutiny from central government.

3.4 **The Performance Management Model: A Critique**

As hinted earlier, the indicator dataset can potentially stand counter to claims of independence for local areas. The National Indicator Dataset contains 198 priorities which central government wished to see monitored in all LAA areas. The very fact that the Government required monitoring of these targets indicates that progress against these indicators was a national priority. Therefore, while the LSP would have the freedom to select relevant indicators within any theme, there are significant questions about this process. Particularly, these questions revolve around whether indicator selection merely represented the ability to choose which aspect of a central government agenda was most pressing to your locality, as opposed to truly selecting targets that reflected the needs and requirements of an area.

Indeed previous studies have indicated that this element of performance assessment does suggest tendencies towards centralisation (Stewart: 2003, Travers: 2004, Wilks-Heeg: 2009). Somerville and Haines (2007) explicitly challenge the notion of the devolution of power to the localities noting an ambiguity within the entire policy agenda, implying that citizens/localities hold more power than the state, something they contest to be unlikely, while Johnson and Osborne (2003) have also highlighted their concerns about performance indicators, suggesting that while targets are important, they can fail to reflect the concerns and needs of localities and potentially seriously limit the ability to conduct serious community involvement. Indeed Davies (2008) identified that when performance management targets were utilised, some 80% were designed to be reported solely upwards to the state rather than for the benefit of local areas (i.e. monitoring their own performance).

One of the central themes of LAAs was the fact that they comprised a 'three year contract between central and local government'. However Gillanders and Ahmed (2006) question the extent to which this is the case, highlighting a difference in perception. They note that the local authorities saw the LAA as a 'commitment to

dialogue', which allows room for flexibility and negotiation, while conversely, the central government perceived it increasingly as a 'contract' - a much more binding definition which commits localities to delivering their agreed targets (Gillanders and Ahmed; 2006, p750). This leads to questions about how seriously central government took the role of LAAs in delivering a locally responsive policy agenda. The use of the term 'contract' implies a will to bind local areas to action on central government agendas as opposed to granting freedoms to identify specific issues, which in turn leads to questions about where the power within an LAA lies? Downe and Martin (2005) provide an alternative hypothesis for this notion, contending that the LAA provided a sense of ownership to local areas. The convergence of policy initiatives as outlined earlier allowed the actors within the LSP to identify and take action against the issues which affected them, as opposed to working with a plethora of schemes. Naturally from here, questions can be posed as to which of these theories is more indicative of the reality of LAA delivery.

Building on the earlier themes raised by Johnson and Osborne (2003), one telling statement within the LAA policy guidance is that 'LAAs will deliver national outcomes in a way that reflects local priorities' (ODPM: 2004a). This is a key statement in many ways. First, it provides scope for a limit on the abilities of local areas to identify and act upon the issues which affect them, while at the same time adding some weight to Gillanders and Ahmed's (2006) contention about top-down perceptions and expectations surrounding the LAA. By framing a national policy agenda at a local scale, local areas could have their time and resources tied up to such an extent that they would be unable to commit enough resources to a local issue that falls outside of this national remit. While the LAA did allow for the provision of local indicators (something that will be expanded upon in the coming pages), it is conceivable that a smaller local authority area may lack the capacity to commit to a wide range of local indicators, whereas other areas may face a stern challenge in meeting national targets alone. Indeed, Darlow et al (2007) present the notion that LAAs could be seen as a

method for the pursuit of central government policy on a local scale. If the LAA must conform within a nationally defined framework then the possibilities for action that are available to them become severely limited. Questions can be asked as to the extent to which Darlow et al's notions are representative of LAA implementation? If this is the case it could be argued that the limitations placed on the ability to set the agenda for an LAA does not represent a relocation of power to the localities. Instead it would indicate the opposite – i.e. that Whitehall retained this element of control.

Pearce and Cooper (2011) touch upon this issue as part of their investigation into how LAAs responded to climate change. They note the expectation (in compliance with the wider sustainability agenda outlined earlier) that each LAA would make some overture towards climate change, and that DEFRA in particular was keen to see at least one improvement target relating to climate change in each LAA. This led to some local practitioners feeling that they were seeking to make the targets mandatory (*ibid*). While this is a laudable aim, nonetheless this clearly demonstrates how an area's allocation of targets could be swiftly used up by central priorities that may not necessarily be held by the local decision makers. To illustrate the level of central dictation of priorities, it is then identified that 97% of the 150 LAAs had adopted a target of this nature (*ibid*).

Following on from these two closely related arguments is the actual locus of power and who benefits from it. Johnson and Osborne (2003) identify that the policy prescriptions around LAA implementation challenge the traditional gatekeeper roles surrounding local governance leading them to pose the question 'who will benefit from these shifting sources of power?' (Johnson and Osborne; 2003, p152) This represents a core research question. While the earlier questions in this area have emphasised a potential conflict in the role of the local and central state in the process, it is equally as important to discover who the real winners and losers are from this relationship.

The central question to arise here is built around the negotiation process and who is most likely to see their agenda reflected. Is it a question of reasoned and considered negotiation which sees a realistic balance between central and local priorities, or is it, as Pearce and Cooper (2011) put it, simply a matter of 'who can shout the loudest, longest and hardest?'.

3.4.1 Outside influence

As well as the strong developing themes around paternalistic control from Central Government, the LAA has also shown that it can become victim to circumstances outside the control of the state. This was clearly illustrated in February 2009 CLG issued a set of guidance for a number of indicators that were explicitly affected by the global recession (CLG: 2009a). This only served to show that both the NID and the three year timeframe of LAAs can be exposed as weaknesses by external factors. The housing indicators in particular indicated that ambitious targets could be rendered unachievable following a recession. This raises questions about how the long term goals and ambitions of the SCS and the shorter operating window of the LAA relate to each other. In particular this leads to questions about how much consideration there is for potential 'blips' in an otherwise longer term programme of delivery.

3.5   The LAA as a Means to be Locally Responsive: An Initial Analysis

Through some simple documentary analysis, it is simple to get a sense of whether the performance management nature of the LAA did reflect these concerns about centralisation and local responsiveness. This can be achieved by examining a variety of published LAAs to see what indicators were adopted and the extent to which the indicator targets allowed local areas to focus on

issues of importance. To achieve this, a 'typology' of indicators is required – in this case, deprivation.[5]

In order to assess how deprived an area was, and to subsequently assess how they used their LAA to respond to the extent of the deprivation faced, the analysis utilised the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The IMD 2007 brings together 37 indicators covering specific aspects or 'domains' of deprivation: Income, Employment, Health and Disability, Education, Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living Environment and Crime. These are weighted and combined to create the overall IMD2007 (CLG, 2007c). The IMD 2007 itself is based on the small area geography known as Lower (Layer) Super Output Areas (LSOAs). LSOAs have between 1,000 and 3,000 people living in them with an average population of 1,500 people. This unit of measurement is smaller than wards, thus allowing the identification of small pockets of deprivation. There are 32,482 LSOAs in England. The LSOA ranked 1 by the IMD 2007 is the most deprived and that ranked 32,482 is the least deprived (CLG, 2007c).

This analysis utilised the eight English core cities (Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield) which represent the major population centres outside of London. They have collaborated on issues such as economic performance but, given a past experience of industrial and economic decline, these areas can offer insights about responses towards tackling deprivation. As such they provide a useful base from which to study the extent to which the National Indicator Dataset has allowed local areas to focus on a specific problem affecting them. Given the importance of London on a national and global scale it was also considered important to provide a context of how these efforts to tackle deprivation were taking place in the Capital.

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[5] The subsequent section and analysis draws upon a paper first published in the Journal of Urban Renewal and Regeneration in 2010 (Nurse and Pemberton: 2010) (Full Paper can be found in Appendix III)

Consequently, as the most deprived authority area in London[6], the Borough of Hackney was also included.

The next stage was to consider how the LAA indicators from the suite of 198 tallied with the 37 indicators used to measure the IMD. Consequently, by looking at the uptake of these indicators, one could have an indication of how LAAs in deprived areas were utilising the indicators to focus on issues around deprivation. In all, 33 indicators[7] from the National Indicator Dataset were deemed to match those in the 2007 IMD, considering the caveats outlined below.

1) the national indicators that were selected have an *explicit*, rather than *implicit* relevance to the IMD indicators (e.g. *NI152 Working Age People on Out of Work Benefits* directly relates to the *IMD 2007 indicator measuring Adults and Children in Income-Based Job Seeker Allowance Households*);

2) several national indicators were included on the basis of their broader relevance / potential impact on the deprivation indices (for example, *NI116 Proportion of Children in Child Poverty* and *NI153 Working Age People Claiming Out of Work Benefits in the Worst Performing Neighbourhoods*);

3) a small number of national indicators were included even though they measured participation rather than non-participation as by proxy they could then highlight the latter issue – for example, *NI91 Participation of 17 year olds in Education or Training* is inversely related to the IMD 2007 indicator measuring the *Proportion of Young People not staying on in School or Non-advanced Education above the age of 16*);

4) some national indicators were covered more than once as they apply to more than one deprivation indicator; and

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[6] At the time of selection, drawing upon the 2007 IMD (CLG: 2007c)
[7] Which can be found in table 6.2

5) several of the national indicators were not subsequently considered as they were statutory education-focused targets and as such would therefore need to be included within every LAA.

These urban areas were then analysed to consider what percentage of their SOAs fell within the most/least deprived SOAs on a national scale, as well as considering their overall national deprivation ranking (Table 3.1). This was to provide an indication of the depth and scale of deprivation in each of the areas. What emerged was a two-fold typology which could be used to analyse how the LAA was used to focus on the issues of deprivation that were evident.

Table 3.1 - Core City LAAs and Multiple Deprivation

City	Overall IMD Rank	% of SOAs that fall within					
		Most deprived			Least deprived		
		Up to 5% most deprived nationally	Up to 10% most deprived nationally	Up to 50% most deprived nationally	Up to 50% least deprived nationally	Up to 10% least deprived nationally	Up to 5% least deprived nationally
Birmingham	10th	25.90	39.63	86.4	13.6	0.62	0
Bristol	64th	7.54	15.48	67.4	32.6	1.59	0
Hackney	2nd	19.7	55.47	100	0	0	0
Leeds	85th	8.40	20.17	54.2	45.8	6.72	3.15
Liverpool	1st	44.33	55.67	90	10	0	0
Manchester	4th	30.5	52.12	91.1	8.9	0	0
Newcastle Upon Tyne	37th	17.92	24.86	64.2	35.8	4.62	1.73
Nottingham	13th	15.3	31.8	89.8	10.2	0	0
Sheffield	63rd	13.27	23.89	61.1	38.9	5.90	1.77

Source: CLG: 2007c

3.5.1 Group One: 'Collective Game Raising'

The group one cities were Birmingham, Hackney, Liverpool, Manchester and Nottingham. They are characterised by deprivation that is highly concentrated, whilst also being widespread across the urban area. In these areas 30 per cent or more of the super output areas were located in the 10 per cent most deprived nationally, whilst a minimum of 85 per cent of super output areas fell within the 50% most deprived in the country.

Given the scale and depth of the deprivation issues facing these areas, it would be expected that the LAA targets that were selected would focus on 'collective game raising' i.e. the selection of indicators which would tackle deprivation across the board, as opposed to purely focusing on areas of the most concentrated deprivation, given that improvements on any level would have a significant impact.

3.5.2 Group Two: 'Addressing Inequalities in the Concentration and Extent of Deprivation

The second group of cities consisted of Bristol, Leeds, Newcastle Upon Tyne and Sheffield. Whilst these areas are ranked lower compared to the group one cities in terms of deprivation, and have lower overall concentrations of the most deprived areas, they are characterised by still having a substantial percentage of their SOAs ranked as the most deprived in the country. What separates this group from group one is that they also have a significant number of the least deprived areas nationally as well.

This would lead to an expectation that the LAA and its targets would attempt to focus on lifting the performance of the most deprived areas to reduce the 'deprivation gap', whilst also seeking to improve the prospects of individuals and groups which live in the less deprived areas of those cities.

3.5.3 What the groupings show

The next stage was to analyse which of the 'deprivation indicators' were selected by each of the cities to see how well the indicator take up matched the broad typologies and the extent to which they varied their approaches to deprivation. The 'deprivation indicators' that were selected by each area can be seen in table 3.2 below.

What emerges is that those in the first group (i.e. the cities involved in 'collective game-raising') have placed a significant amount of focus on a number of themes, notably the economy, crime, housing and health. For example, all of the group one areas have selected NI15 and NI16 which focus on serious violent and acquisitive crime respectively, indicating a high priority on reducing crime rates in these areas due to relationship with deprivation in the worst performing areas. Addressing Child Poverty (NI116), those 16-18 year olds not in Employment, Education and / or Training (NEETs – NI117), Mortality rates (NI120) and Improving the economic performance of the areas were also seen as high priorities, and with all five areas selecting NI151 focusing on overall employment rate. Housing (NI154 and NI 156 respectively) and education were (NI63) were also deemed to be important.

However, analysis of the indicator selection within the LAAs of the second group (i.e. cities with both reasonable proportions of both deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods) reveals some significant similarities with the first group (for example, the selection of NI16, NI117, NI152-155 – economic focused - and NI163). This starts to draw our attention to the lack of breadth / opportunities for local flexibility through areas *having* to select the same type of indicators/targets for improvement from the national set. However, there is a certain degree of variation evident, with the cities in the second group being much more likely to prioritise efforts to reduce assault (NI20) rather than serious violent crime (NI15) through their LAA, whilst at the same time being less likely to prioritise child

Table 3.2 - Indicator Take Up by Area

National Indicator	GROUP 1					GROUP 2				Total National Uptake (Out of 152 LAAS)
	Birmingham	Hackney	Liverpool	Manchester	Nottingham	Bristol	Leeds	Sheffield	Newcastle Upon Tyne	
15	X	X	X	X	X				X	48
16	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
20			X			X	X	X	X	83
28										1
29	X		X							3
30	X	X	X	X			X	X		85
32			X			X			X	79
34										0
47	X						X	X		49
48										3
76								X		1
78										9
84										0
91										8
106		X							X	9
116	X	X	X	X					X	45
117	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	118
120	X	X	X	X			X	X		88
121				X	X	X	X			51
122				X						6
151	X	X	X	X	X					34
152		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	76
153	X	X	X			X	X		X	62
154	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	107
155	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	102
156		X	X	X						37
158		X			X		X		X	24
161										18
162										15
163	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	97
173										6
187					X		X		X	41
194										1

poverty (NI116), overall employment rates (NI151) and numbers in temporary accommodation (NI156).

The nature of deprivation in the second group of cities – both deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods are apparent - may actually be informing this pattern of selection but in overall terms there is a similar level of uptake of these deprivation-related indicators regardless of group. Moreover, if the analysis is broadened out to include the LAAs that have been agreed across the rest of England (n=152), we can note similar patterns of selection in terms of these deprivation-related indices, and with only NI161 (Level 1 literacy) and NI162 (Level 3 numeracy) being prioritised over and above those by the core cities (and Hackney) to any significant extent (18 and 15 instances respectively).

Hence despite one of the key elements of the LAA system being the opportunity for local areas to select targets relating to the issues which affect them (ODPM, 2005), the outcomes noted above indicate broadly similar choices being made, regardless of the levels or patterning of deprivation within urban areas. This, in turn, inevitably leads to questions about the ability of the national indicator dataset and LAAs to deliver locally responsive solutions, and to address concentrations of deprivation therein. Similarly, apart from NI153, which explicitly focuses on reducing numbers of individuals claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods, there appears to be little opportunity for areas to select indices from the national set around reducing disparities in performance between the best and worst performing areas.

3.6 Is the LAA Subject to Gamesmanship?

Coulson (2009) has criticised the performance management style of the LAA, noting that a system of indicators and targets utilised by the LAA can lead to deviant behaviour known as 'gaming.' In essence this involves a manipulation of the system by those which have responsibility to deliver on any particular indicator in order to make it appear that the indicator is performing better than it

is in reality. This can manifest itself in a variety of forms. The first is focusing on short term 'easy wins' instead of long term issues that require strategic effort and may not yield early results. The second revolves around the distortion of target definitions in order to devote resources to something that is achievable at the expense of more substantive efforts. The final method would be presenting data in a misleading form or omitting data that would indicate failure or incur penalties.

In particular, the concept of 'easy wins' at the expense of long term gains is one that should be explored at a case study level, when discussing how the LAA in each area was formed. Whether an LAA was used in good faith to address the long term challenges facing an area, as opposed to focusing on short term gains is a pertinent question. This could include the selection of indicators that an area knew they would meet yet might not be a policy priority, as opposed to an indicator which would stretch an area. However, even when an indicator was selected that may challenge policy delivery, gaming still applies to the target setting aspect as well. Would the area be more likely to accept a target that stretches their resources, but delivers long term benefits, or would they be more likely to push for a target that they knew was deliverable, thus avoiding any risk to reputation.

The extent to which gaming occurred was also reliant on other actors, particularly the Government Office for the Regions (GOR), which held responsibility for signing off each LAA. The extent to which they allowed local areas a free hand to set their own indicators and targets was to be central to this. Furthermore, the role of some of the actors at the local level will come under scrutiny, particularly those with a significant number of internal targets and accountability structures such as health and police. Again, the nature of these issues will be discussed in significant detail further into this chapter.

3.7   Implementing the LAA within structurally different local environments

Although the format of any LAA was uniform, due to the complex nature of local government in the UK, and the way that local authorities are organised, there are two differing sets of environments in which the LAA was agreed upon and delivered: the presence of either a single or two-tier local authority.

3.7.1 Single-Tier

Single tier authorities comprise Unitary and Metropolitan Boroughs.   In this structure, there is only one LSP. This LSP was responsible for producing the SCS for that area only.   The LSP, along with statutory partners was then responsible for producing the LAA, again relating to that specific area only. Therefore, single tier local authorities have arguably the least complex task in defining and enacting their Local Area Agreement. This is because the LSP has to produce, and conform to, one set of documents, produced by one group of actors, concerning only one administrative area.

3.7.2 Two-Tier – County and District

There are many local authorities in the UK which operate on a two-tier, county and district system.   Under these governance arrangements, the process can become considerably more complex.

In these instances, all the district local authorities within a county council structure were still required to have LSP structures in place, as well as a SCS for the area. In this, a two tier structure does not differ from a metropolitan or unitary authority.   However, the notable difference arises when producing the LAA. Unlike their single tier counterparts, each LSP was not required to produce an LAA for their individual area. Instead a single LAA was produced covering the entire county council area.   This process took into consideration all the various community strategies produced, to make one coherent set of priorities to serve the entire county council area.

In its first advice note the ODPM acknowledged that the two-tier system could make the production of an LAA more complex (ODPM: 2004b, Annex 1), although it was felt that the process would improve dialogue between a county and district level. The effectiveness of this dialogue and the way difference in priorities are managed is one of the main causes of complexity. First, the act of consolidating several Community Strategies which have been carefully prepared to reflect local aspirations, into one coherent agreement representing an entire county area is not easy. This must be a careful balancing act which considers all the needs of an area rather than simply focusing on headline challenges which may only affect a small part of the county.

The second issue is closely linked to this - priorities. It is plausible that the County Council authorities may have a different political will or agenda compared to some of its district counterparts. This may mean that aims which have been identified at a district level as being important to an area may not be afforded the same consideration. This may create resentment amongst the districts if they feel that their priorities are neither sufficiently represented, or that they are overlooked in terms of receiving support from the LAA, which, in turn, then has the potential to reduce their willingness to cooperate with the document and its goals.

This process is not without its benefits. The act of producing one LAA across several district authority areas has the potential to both drastically reduce, yet simultaneously improve the potential for involvement of key partners, particularly agencies such as the Police and Primary Care Trust, whose influence may cover the entire area in question. If they only have to become involved with only one LAA, agreeing and delivering on one set of targets, albeit covering a larger geographical area, then they could be potentially more likely to involve themselves owing to a decrease in bureaucratic output and conflict with their own targets.

In the 2004 advice note, it is envisaged that the county-wide LSP would lead negotiations for the countywide LAA, after consulting extensively with its constituent district LSPs (ODPM: 2004b). The county LSP therefore faced a crucial task in both effectively consulting and involving the district LSPs, reflecting their aims in an appropriate manner while simultaneously producing a document which reflects countywide aims and aspirations.

3.8   LAA Rollout

The LAA model was implemented over three stages, developing from a pilot stage involving a few actors before finally being adopted by every local authority in England by 2008 (Figure 3.1). A fourth stage instigated by a partial reorganisation of local government took place in 2009, causing a few changes to the number of LAAs.

Each stage of the rollout modified the LAA slightly, with some of the changes discussed earlier including the adding of the 'Economic Development and Enterprise' thematic block during stage two, as well as the addition of statutory education targets.
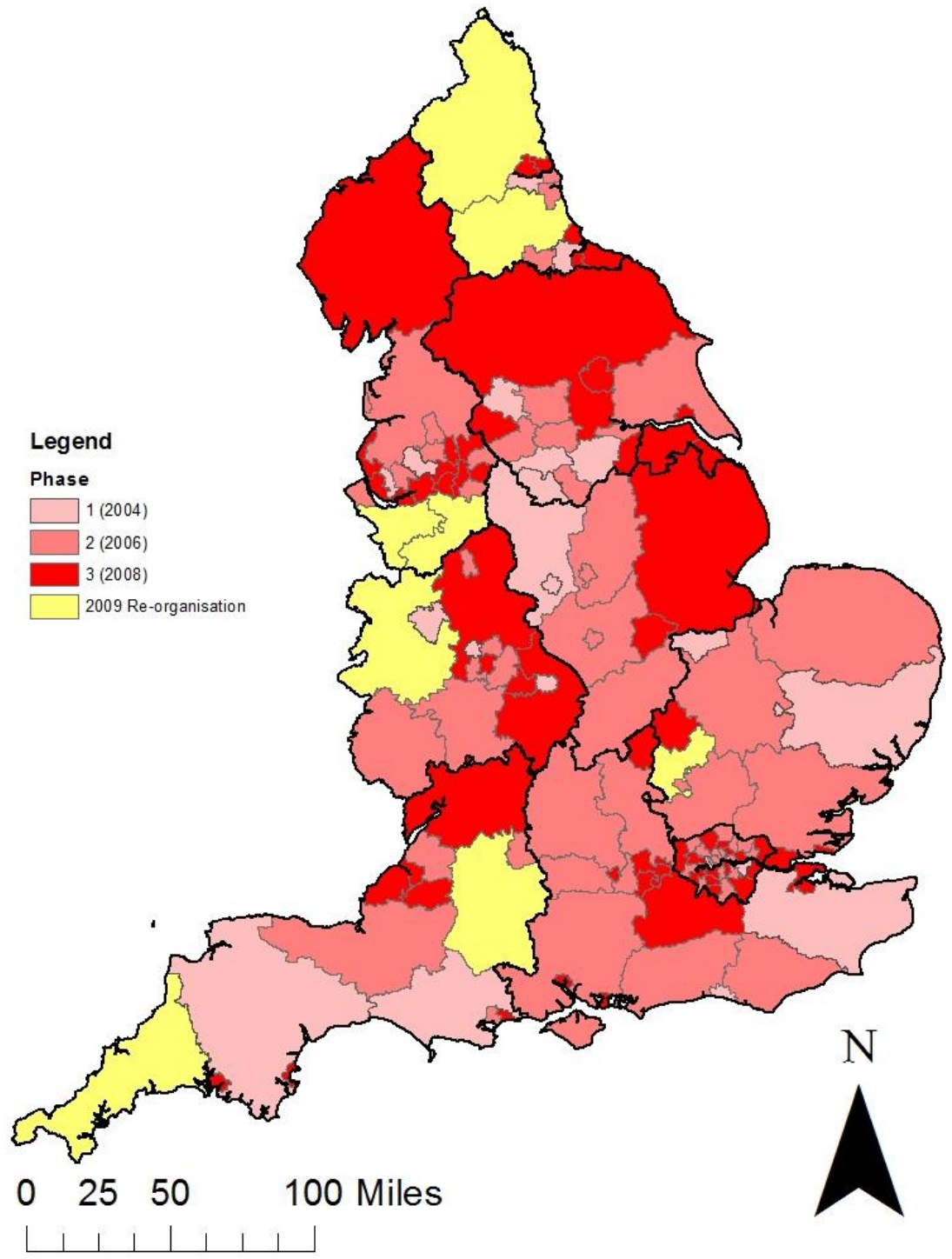
Figure 3.1 - LAA Rollout by Phase

Legend

Phase

- 1 (2004)
- 2 (2006)
- 3 (2008)
- 2009 Re-organisation

0 25 50   100 Miles

N

Stage One: Following the publication of the LAA prospectus in 2004 (ODPM: 2004a), LSPs were invited to enter into negotiations to produce a pilot LAA. 21 Authority areas took part in the pilot (see inset).

Stage Two: In 2006, following the successfully signing off of the 20 pilot LAAs, DCLG produced amended guidance for LAAs, modifying the process based on lessons learnt from the pilot stage. This included the expansion of the thematic blocks as discussed earlier. This period saw a further 66 areas produce and sign off on their LAAs.

Stage Three: The third rollout of Local Area Agreements saw the remaining areas sign up to produce an LAA, bringing total geographic coverage across England and resulting in 150 LAAs.

LAA Pilots: 2004
• Barnsley • Bradford • Brighton and Hove • Cornwall • Coventry • Derbyshire • Devon • Doncaster • Dorset • Gateshead • Greenwich LB • Hammersmith and Fulham • Kent • Knowsley • Peterborough • Sheffield • Stockton on Tees • Suffolk • Wigan • Wolverhampton • Telford and Wrekin

Stage Four - Reorganisation (2009): On April 1st 2009 many of the two tier authorities were abolished, becoming unitary authorities. In the areas that underwent this change, the district areas, which in turn contributed to make up the county merged to form one administrative unit. In most cases the new authority accepted the boundary of the former county to become a unitary authority. However, in two examples, the county was split into two areas which would function separately as two unitary authorities. Table 3.3 below outlines which counties were affected by these changes, and how.

Table 3.3 - Local Government Reorganisation 2009 (Administrative Changes)

Original Authority	Districts	New Authority
Bedfordshire County Council	Bedford	Bedford UA
	Mid Bedfordshire	
	South Bedfordshire	Central Bedfordshire UA
Cheshire County Council	Chester	Cheshire West & Chester UA
	Ellesmere Port & Neston	
	Vale Royal	
	Congleton	Cheshire East UA
	Crewe and Nantwich	
	Macclesfield	
Cornwall County Council	Caradon	Cornwall UA
	Carrick	
	Kerrier	
	North Cornwall	
	Penwith	
	Restormel.	
Durham County Council	Chester-le-Street	Durham UA
	Derwentside	
	Durham	
	Easington	
	Sedgefield	
	Teesdale	
	Wear Valley	
Northumberland County Council	Alnwick	Northumberland UA
	Berwick-upon-Tweed	
	Blyth Valley	
	Castle Morpeth	
	Tynedale	
	Wansbeck	
Shropshire County Council	Bridgnorth	Shropshire UA
	North Shropshire	
	Oswestry	
	Shrewsbury and Atcham	
	South Shropshire	
Wiltshire County Council	Kennet	Wiltshire UA
	North Wiltshire	
	Salisbury	
	West Wiltshire	

Source: CLG: 2009b

This process of reorganisation, including the creation of four new LAAs in Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Cheshire West & Chester and Cheshire East resulted in the number of LAAs increasing from 150 to 152.   By consolidating five of the County and District style councils into Unitary Authorities, this meant that the process of consolidation of several SCSs into one LAA would no longer apply in any future LAA negotiation.   Following the reorganisation, each new unitary authority was subsequently charged with creating a new LSP representing its area and with producing a new LAA.   While this process would take place along the lines of existing Unitary Authorities as outlined earlier in this chapter, the new LSP would be responsible for producing and implementing a SCS and LAA that would (theoretically) adequately reflect the aims of each of the areas that comprise the new authority, as opposed to only one area.

However, throughout this process Chisholm and Leach (2011) pointed towards what they perceived as 'dishonest' behaviour on the part of central government. In particular they highlighted disagreements over how different parties defined technical language and the methods of both reporting and dealing with responses to consultation which, Chisholm and Leach contended, failed to accurately reflect public opinion.   Ultimately they questioned the extent to which the reorganisation was in the best interest of the local authorities, which raises even more questions about the top-down control of the local government process.

Understandably, this change in the organisational structure raises several important questions about the LAA process in the new authority areas.   In many cases these questions are similar to those that could be asked about the old two tier structure.   The first issue is one of compatibility: how does the SCS for a wider area reflect all the pertinent issues for a number of areas which may have widely differing situations (i.e. economic issues, health, education)?   Immediately linked to this, is the extent to which the LAA is capable of implementing these needs using a limited number of indicators?

There are also several questions which can be asked of each level of the various partner agencies within this process (local, regional and central). At the local level, it can be asked as to whether this consolidation of authorities provided them with more scope to take action against the most relevant issues? If it is the case that this reorganisation weakened the power of the localities to make decisions on issues that affect them, then an immediate follow up question would be to discover where this power went?

The many statutory partners also have questions which can be asked of them as a result of this process. Did being involved with one LSP, rather than multiple LSPs, improve or hinder their ability to deliver their main policy initiatives? While the commitments to the LAA (since it remained a one area document) remain similar, did the reduction on responsibilities represent a reduction in local responsiveness and as such a shift in power towards the centre?

3.9   A New Role for the Regions

Traditionally, as chapter two has shown, policy for the delivery of local public services has rested on the relationship between central government and local government. However, the 2004 LAA prospectus intended that GOR would be afforded a 'key role in Local Area Agreements' (ODPM: 2004a p11). This key role did not advocate the advancement of a regional agenda, however. Instead, the GORs were intended to act as negotiators, acting on behalf of central government.   The move to place a regional actor, rather than central government, in the negotiating role was taken citing the belief that regional government offices would have a greater knowledge of local areas compared to their central counterparts. This would place them in a better position to assess and agree upon the targets put forward by the various LAA proposals, and in turn lead to more appropriate results.

GOR's role was envisaged to support the process, encouraging LAAs to produce the best outcomes for their area, but also to serve a challenging role whereby they push for the best possible practice, rather than an LAA adopting targets that they would have met ordinarily. Ultimately the GOR would have responsibility for signing off each LAA, after being satisfied that these procedures had been completed. It was also envisaged that the government offices for the regions would play a significant oversight role within the LAA process, making the best use of their ability to sign off individual LAAs. This feature gives some insight into early accountability issues surrounding LAA implementation. As well as the role of negotiator, central government also delegated the ability to recommend the signing off of LAAs to the Government Offices for the Regions. In the first guidance note it was intended that they would not recommend that any LAA be accepted until they were fully satisfied that all the relevant partners had been fully engaged with the process (ODPM: 2004b).

Yet, questions remained about how the GOR would discharge its duty as the proxy for the central state. In particular, there were questions about the extent to which the GORs would encourage local individuality, and how they were perceived by the localities that they worked with. Mawson (2007) pointed towards a 'lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities' of the regional structures from their inception (Mawson: 2007, p 551) while Goodwin et al (2006) expand these worries surrounding the placement of GOR priorities, noting that the majority of interviewees from GOR identify themselves more closely with central government and their aims rather than to the localities they are negotiating with. This highlights a potential duality of purpose for the GOR. On one hand they are seen by localities as being more aware of their circumstances, and therefore more able to negotiate bespoke solutions. However, their own loyalties indicate stronger links to the state and therefore an increased encouragement of state policies through negotiation. Pearce and Cooper (2011) gave an indication of the difficulties that could arise during this process if

Whitehall departments represented at regional level would refuse to cede ground on an indicator they were interested in, and insist on its inclusion within an LAA.

There are also issues raised about GOR's ability to negotiate fairly, compared to a straight negotiation with national government. Since it is argued that each GOR is more attuned to local needs, consequently (and hypothetically) all LAAs within a region would experience a high quality, locally reflective negotiation period with their GOR. However, this process could be disrupted by a number of factors. The size of an area, the problems that it faces, negotiation skills and past experience may all be key factors in the extent to which a LAA is allowed to become bespoke. Consequently, issues may arise on an intra-regional basis, whereby LAAs may have a differing experience in their negotiation with GOR. Similarly, they may find that the GOR impose the selection of particular indicators against the wishes of the LAA, but in line with government priorities, thus reducing the local selectivity that is encouraged within LAAs.

Beyond this, there are also inter-regional disparities that may arise. This could occur due to a particular GOR being more aligned in its outlook to central government, and thus more likely to impose its policies on localities. Conversely, a GOR may be more distant from central government and allow LAAs a greater flexibility in selecting their indicators. The extent to which these inter/intra-regional disparities exist and the impact that this has on LAA delivery will form a central theme of the governance aspect of this research and one that will be explored in subsequent chapters.

3.10 Local Actors: A Multi-Agency Policy Environment

3.10.1 The Role of the Local Authority

The inclusion of GOR in the LAA process creates the impression of the state pulling back from local governance, yet simultaneously raises questions about the extent to which the state is controlling the process. Similar questions begin to emerge when the LAA governance procedures are examined at the local level.

At first glance the LAA procedures (coupled with the LSP structures behind it) stood to significantly improve the status of the local authority by designating it as the lead partner in the process. This afforded the local authority a convening function, compelling the various actors to become involved (post 2007 Public Involvement in Health Act). The LAA then provided a vehicle for steering meetings between partners.

Occupying this role of lead partner raises several questions about how the Local Authority discharged its duty, and the extent to which the ways in which they did this either helped or hindered LAA delivery.

The first issue surrounds the capacity of the local authority to act as lead partner, both in terms of the ability of those already designated as leaders (i.e. chief executive and officers responsible for working on the LAA) and the levels of resources that it can expend on LAA delivery. Closely linked to this is the ability of the local authority to fulfil its duty as lead partner in an environment of well resourced actors who are well versed in the demands of public service delivery (see the 'stronger actors' section later in this chapter). For the local authority to be effective, it is necessary for it to manage these groups in a decisive manner, and for the role of each actor in this process to be clearly defined. If the local authority failed to do this, and thus lost/failed to retain the respect of the other actors in the process, these actors may fail to buy in as a result. This, in turn, could place significant difficulties in the path of the LAA delivery.

Sweeting et al (2004) neatly conceptualise this problem through their 'Diamond of Leadership' model (See Figure 3.2), illustrating the four factors which will impact on the effectiveness of leadership, citing institutional arrangements, the policy environment, personal characteristics of the leaders and their relationship with their followers).

In this model the 'Institutional Arrangements' that can limit the effectiveness of leadership are instruments of state organisation that must be dealt with, which within the UK context as chapters two and three have raised, are largely paternalistic in nature and can act as a brake on the extent and style of leadership.
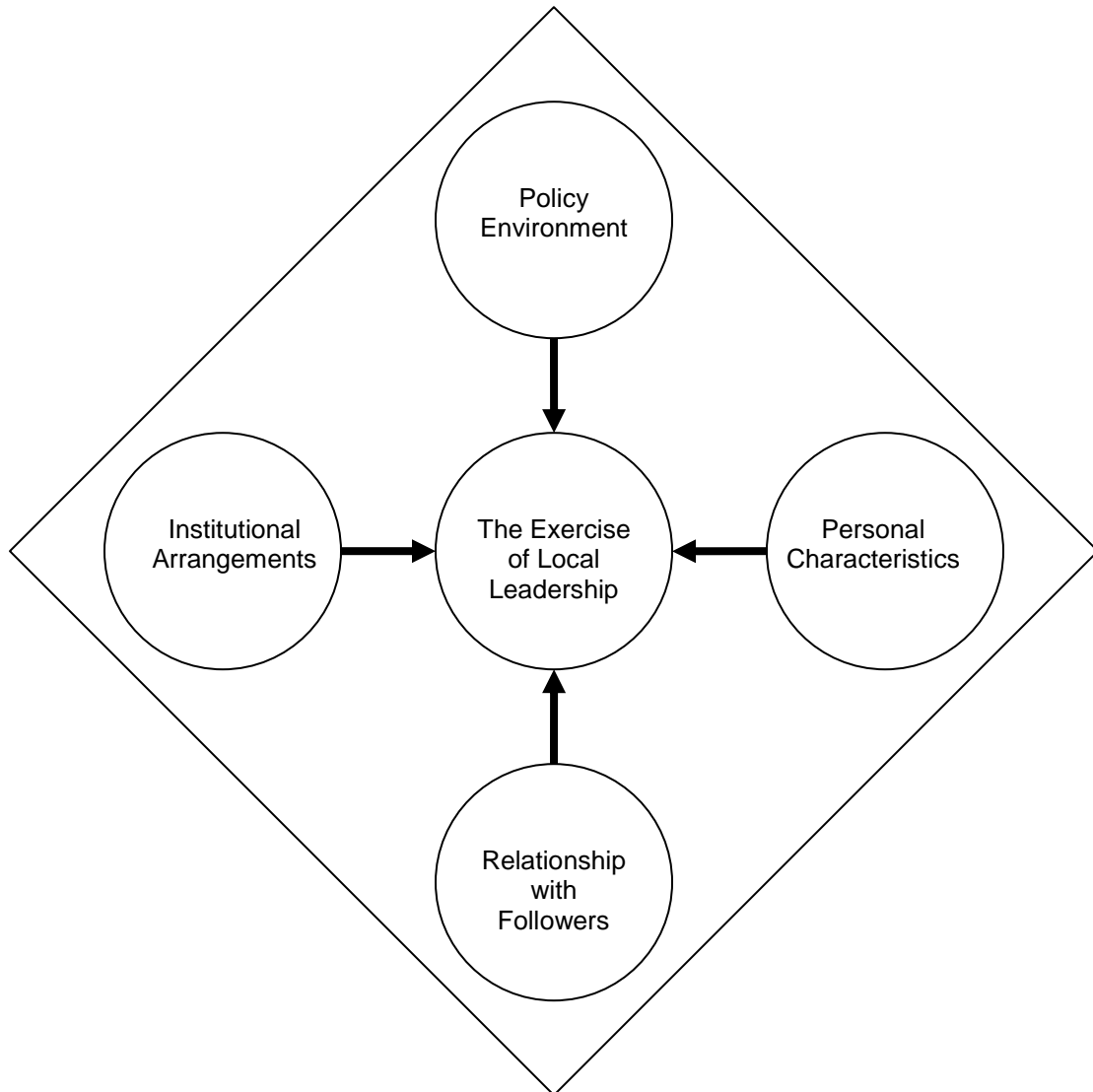
Source: Sweeting et al: 2004, p351

Figure 3.2 - The Diamond of Leadership

Closely linked to this is the '*policy environment'* in which the leader must operate, which again, given the strongly centralised nature of UK public policy, is highly influenced by Whitehall and can restrict the style and extent of leadership within the institutional parameters of the LAA. As indicated earlier in this section, this is also dependent on the resources that are available to the local authority to deploy on the LAA, either in terms of funding or manpower – both of which can have a significant effect not just on the LAA's success but how the other partners perceive the LAA and thus how much credence they afford it.

The other two aspects within this diamond i.e. '*personal characteristics*' and '*relationship with followers'* present new avenues to explore in the search for effective leadership of the LAA delivery process. In particular the role of personal characteristics is one that should be explored in more depth to ascertain the extent to which LAA success is due to the leadership of the local authority and the presence of the statutory partners or if it is actually as a result of the individuals who hold those jobs. Similarly, the relationship with followers (i.e. those actors hierarchically beneath them within the delivery agency) and their ability to marshal those resources is a key factor in the success of the work of the LAA, to ensure that all aspects of the organisation are working towards a common goal.

Whilst these principles of leadership mostly apply to the local authority as the designated leader of the LAA, nonetheless they are also relevant to the other actors within this process. This is particularly true of the heads of agencies and how they work together through the partnership process. Therefore Sweeting et al's model (Sweeting et al: 2004) should also be considered in relation to the other partners involved in the LAA process.

The extent to which the local authority sought to create an ethos of independence in its leadership of the LAA is also a key factor. Although there is likely to be a very high degree of convergence between LAA activity and the

policy aims of the council, there will probably be a significant amount of council business that lies beyond the 35 performance indicators selected by the LAA. The extent to which the local authority could be seen to be 'exploiting' this position as lead partner to drive through discussion on activity that is external to the LAA could been seen as going against the spirit of the LAA itself, even if it is beneficial to the area.

It is important to note that local authorities are led by those with the clearest mandate to govern, i.e. through regular elections. In turn those councillors, as representatives that are elected to represent local citizens, are likely to be held accountable for any scheme delivered by the LAA. This is even if, as Sullivan notes, an electoral mandate is not enough to consolidate leadership and must be augmented by support from all involved (Sullivan, 2007). Therefore, the role that elected representatives play within the LAA process can be crucially important. Questions could be posed around the methods by which local elected representatives involved themselves in the LAA process, and where leadership is located particularly against the background of increased local power and involvement within the decision making process. Investigations could also focus on the methods that are employed by local elected officials on behalf of their constituents to hold the LAA policy process and outcomes to account in an appropriate manner.

3.10.2 Statutory Partners

One of the key differences of the LAA system that distinguishes it from many of the preceding local government policy interventions is the involvement of a wide variety of partner agencies. Indeed, the prospectus for the new LAAs indicated that the full engagement of the necessary partners in the policy process was a prerequisite (ODPM: 2004a, p15). The ODPM define the police, the Primary Care Trust and Job Centre Plus, as well as the local authority as the key agencies within the LAA. Apart from these defined actors representatives from

fire and rescue service, housing trusts and the voluntary sector were to be involved in LAAs.

Given that the local authority is set up as the lead actor, they could be seen as de facto the strongest actor, particularly given their knowledge of the LAA programme and ability to set the agenda. However it is possible that other local actors may in fact be the strongest actor. This could arise due to their funding streams – which can often be significant – making them less reliant on the LAA funding of the ABG.

Furthermore, in most instances these agencies will have internal policy agendas, as set by central government. This could include specific priorities in reducing crime or health disparities. Furthermore, as well as national priorities, organisations could have more locally specific initiatives, particularly on a regional level. These central agendas could lead to the larger actors dominating the indicator selection, seeking to use the LAA as a vehicle to solely focus on their initiatives and goals at the expense of others. Naturally, questions arise about the ability to prevent this from happening in order to achieve an indicator selection that represents local priorities, or whether it simply represents a way of delivering central policy at a local level.

In some instances these policy agendas could overlap or be superseded by other more pressing issues. Downe and Martin (2005) and Gillanders and Ahmed (2006) both note a potential, yet recurring, conflict between the central government departments and the localities arising where a department's most pressing policy agendas were not shared by the locality. Similarly, the statutory requirement of the agencies to participate could be challenged through the use of pooled funding. This could occur if, for example, health service money for drug treatment could also be used to tackle alcohol abuse, which although related, would not be a specific target of the funding.

The relationship between policy agendas is covered within the LAA literature through the concept of due regard. While the partners are expected to show due consideration of the policies of the LAA within their actions, the LAA is also expected to consider and reflect the existing policies of partner agencies when agreeing indicators. This could be police targets that may be higher or lower than those the LAA may wish to set, or health initiatives that might fall outside of the focus of the LAA. This raises questions, further to those raised earlier, about the ability of LAAs to be locally reflexive, if they must reflect an external policy agenda.

3.10.3 Stronger Actors and Internal Accountability

In an article setting out key research questions surrounding central-local relations and local governance, Laffin (2009) touches on a central aspect of any successful LAA: holding the various partners to account - pointing to the added complexity that partnership creates in the policy process. The LAA was implemented within a multi-agency policy environment with each of these actors already subject to complex internal relationships, often in addition to the relationship forged by the LSP/LAA process. This is coupled with the fact that many agencies will have their own internal accountability measures to enforce, alongside any commitment made to the LAA. This reflects Glasbergen et al's notion, describing how, within a partnership, each partner stands for its own rationale, and defends its own interests (Glasbergen et al: 2007) as opposed to Waddell's (2005) notion that any partnership is balanced by the various interests of the actors that are involved.

Consequently, there are legitimate questions to be asked of the partner agencies within the LAA, both in terms of the mechanisms under which they are held accountable, and to whom? The notion of a 'direction' of accountability is raised by Gillanders and Ahmed (2006). Agencies can either be upwardly accountable to their superiors or downwardly accountable, to the citizenry. There is also a third horizontal direction of accountability i.e. to actors within a partnership

structure. Barnes et al (2005) observe that this direction is often upwards rather than sideways or downwards. In this scenario, those central actors would show more affinity to their internal targets and structures – and therefore less affinity to others. This could lead to an organisation which doesn't 'fear' the accountability structures of the LAA, which in turn could have implications for target delivery, particularly. In particular these issues could arise if the LAA were 'stretched' through negotiation, and thus were more ambitious than the internal targets of the partner agency.

This lack of 'fear' in the accountability system is also raised by Geddes (2007), who notes that, in a survey of LSP partners, 35% considered existing accountability measures to be 'deficient,' generating further questions surrounding LAA actors' ability to take seriously a system which they view not to be working effectively.

This plethora of issues raises two important questions about the governance of LAAs and the relationship between the centre and local. Firstly, what are the implications for the implementation of a LAA if a central department's stated goals are not shared or seen as a specific priority within an LAA context? Will the agency concerned still continue to provide full support for the policy agenda, with all the resources available? Following on from this, much is made within the LAA literature of the Duty to Co-operate by partner agencies (Davies: 2008). However, if the scope of a particular LAA does not fully align with the stated policy aims of a partner agency, there could be significant issues for the LAA itself. In particular what are the ramifications for the success of the LAA, its implementation and how it is viewed by other actors if a key partner agency doesn't provide a full level of support? Will reduced support inhibit the ability to delivery against any particular indicator and what will be the impact of the wider credibility of the LAA as a result?

3.10.4 Weaker Actors

Although there is significant potential for stronger, better resourced actors (both institutionally and financially) to dominate proceedings, there is also a need to focus on those smaller actors that traditionally (see chapter two) struggled to find a role in the local governance process in a way the stronger actors have. Indeed Matheson et al (2011) note a significant gap in the literature, which has previously focused on authority/community relations rather than partner relations.

Apostolakis (2004) also identifies the potential for under resourced or sceptical partners to generate 'pockets of resistance' to partnership working whilst emphasising the need for tangible benefits for partners to secure their involvement. In particular, Matheson et al (2011) go on to identify the fire and rescue service in particular as an agency that fits this description, often struggling to stretch its resources across numerous operational areas. Matheson et al also highlight Crawford's (1999) concept of the 'criminalisation' of social policy whereby social policy has shifted its rhetoric to focus on issues such as crime and social disorder, and thus priorities have shifted to tackling disorder (i.e. reducing anti-social behaviour leading to fires) rather than traditional prevention, forcing agencies such as the fire service to change their methods of working.

The LAA offers an opportunity to explore the role of some of these agencies and how they impact upon this process of local public service delivery. There are two key areas of interest in this regard. This first is one of how these traditionally 'weaker' actors chose to take up the opportunity presented to them and involve themselves in the LAA and its various initiatives as well as the relationships that they sought to build with other actors. This also should consider how these organisations sought to 'future proof' themselves, by challenging and changing perceptions so that, should future schemes not explicitly involve them, they would still be held viewed favourably by other agencies.

The second aspect focuses on how the traditionally 'stronger' actors react to the presence of organisations that they may not be used to be working with so closely. Any potential conflict arises from the fact that these newer institutions would be impacting on the stronger actors' spheres of influence, but also drawing upon funding and resource streams. The question is would the stronger actors treat them contemptuously or would they take a view that spreading resources across more organisations may lead to a longer term benefit for all concerned?

3.11 Accountability Structures

In many ways, the accountability structures of the LAA can help to provide deeper insights into how the LAA is governed and in particular, how the various actors interact. There were two levels to this process: the Executive Board and Thematic Partnerships (see figure 3.3).

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┌────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  LAA Executive Board                     │
│    Principal Actors from each agency – led by the        │
│       leader of the council and council chief executive  │
└────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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| Thematic Partnership A | Thematic Partnership B | Thematic Partnership C | Thematic Partnership D |
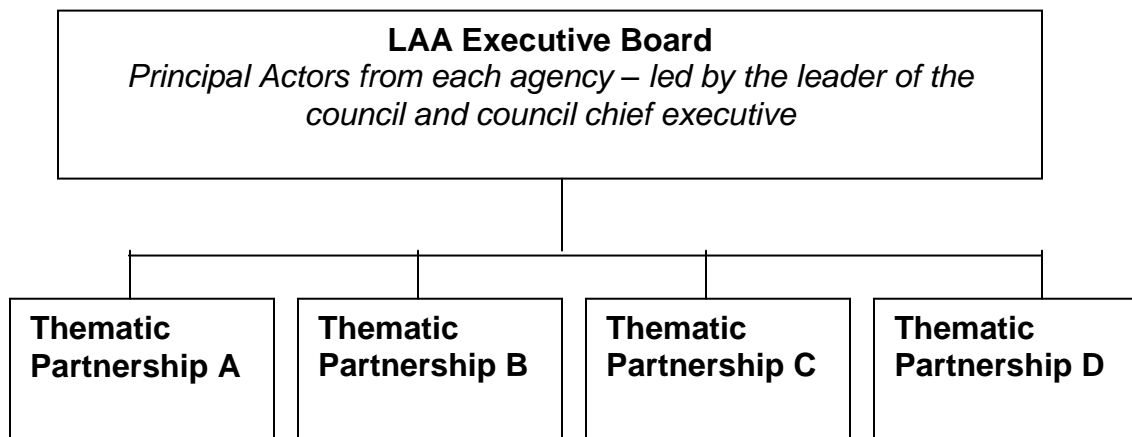
Figure 3.3 - Structure of the LAA Boards

3.11.1 Executive Boards

One of the principal governance structures of the LAA was the executive board: a regular meeting of all the senior actors tasked with delivering the LAA – i.e. heads of service – to discuss progress. This presents one of the key opportunities to provide accountability for the LAA and to change direction in order to assure delivery.

Much has been made already of the potential power that some of the stronger actors could have within this process, particularly in terms of the extent to which their own internal accountability structures can override those of the LAA. As a consequence, the executive board provided a useful opportunity to study this dynamic. This especially relates to how the main stronger actors i.e. local authority, PCT and Police interact, and the extent to which each was held accountable for their respective actions. As well as this, the extent to which the 'weaker' actors engaged (or were allowed to engage) with a process that they may have little prior experience should be considered. In particular, this should focus on if/how they chose to maximise the opportunity for their organisation to engage with the local service delivery process.

Although the executive board was meant to enable the heads of service to meet regularly, the question arises as to what would happen to the legitimacy of the board, and consequently that of the LAA if they consistently failed to attend. If these actors find that their time was being wasted/or was better spent elsewhere then there was the potential for them to send understudies who may lack the organisational clout to make meaningful decisions, thus limiting the action that the board was able to take. If this was the case then there should also be a focus on the extent to which those running the board reflect the notion that 'If nobody is coming to your meeting, then you need to change something about your meeting,' i.e. what measures did they enact to make sure those partners did return.

Further to this it has been noted that there wais a potential for "Middle Managers, charged with delivering [LAAs] at the coalface, typically sitting in theme groups further down the partnership hierarchy' to become disconnected from the executive board (Davies 2009). As a result they are left with little say in the decision making process that will ultimately affect them. Consequently questions arise as to how the executive board can relay and follow through on collective

decisions within what is a coalition of partners with different cultures and structures.

3.11.2 Thematic Partnerships

Earlier in the chapter the issue of silo structure was raised as one of the significant problems of both central and local government (Geddes et al: 2007, Sullivan: 2008), with the LAA model acting as one of the key proposals to stop this from occurring. Despite this, the critique of LAAs in the literature and throughout this chapter has raised significant questions about their ability to achieve this policy aim.

However, Davies (2009) contended that the LAAs would only be partially successful in achieving these aims, attaining an 'expanded silo' status which in essence only 'replicated the silos it was intended to overcome' (Davies: 2009, p86). Indeed it is the use of the thematic partnerships that Davies contends will continue this silo working, which instead of breaking down the silos, creates a 'shallow consensus' which 'enabled stakeholders to proceed 'as if' they shared norms, meanings and goals but meant that silo practices remained unchallenged in thematic partnerships, where like minded actors reinforced them' (Davies: 2009, p90).

Therefore whilst grouping the various actors together into similar interests, it reduces the amount of political manoeuvring required by the stronger actors to ensure that their interests are served, but this comes at the cost of renewed silo working. Whilst this suits the requirements of the various partners which work within those themes, it can act as an impediment to those seeking to work on areas outside of their sphere of influence, and thus as an impediment to the principles of partnership working itself. As a result, the research will focus on the extent to which the thematic partnerships that sit beneath the executive board do show signs of Davies' expanded silo model.

3.11.3 Tie through between the two levels

In practice these two levels of LAA governance are expected to work in conjunction with one another, with the thematic partnerships reporting back to the executive board, thereby providing full accountability to the partnership as a whole. However there are questions raised as to how effective these processes are and the extent to which this happens in practice, particularly in terms of dealing with the side effects of the expanded silo working outlined in the previous section.

As a result of these expanded silos, Davies (2009) foresees that each thematic silo, whilst operating within its field of interest at the thematic partnership level, may add to a fragmentation of the overall partnership without effective governance from the executive to make sure each thematic group delivers within the parameters and ethos of the partnership as a whole.

Consequently, whilst the roles of both executive board and thematic partnerships have a significant bearing on the effectiveness of the partnership, the links between the two are equally important, and should be investigated as part of the research.

3.11.4 Democratic Involvement

As touched upon earlier in this chapter, whilst one of the stated aims of the LAA is to allow local areas to become more able to focus on the policy priorities of importance to them, of all the actors participating process, only elected representatives have a mandate to act on the behalf of the public. These include elected representatives that operate at the local level – i.e. councillors – and those who operate at the national level – i.e. MPs. Consequently the role of these actors and how they impact on the LAA delivery warrants further investigation.

Chapter two briefly discussed how cities whose political makeup differed from that of central government could find themselves distanced from central government policy whilst also finding that their ability to set their own local agenda became hindered by central agendas. Given this historical context there a consideration of how current local authorities work with the Whitehall administration and the extent to which political hue influences this.

There is also the potential for authorities in England to be in a state of no overall control – i.e. no one political party has a sufficient majority in order to direct the policy of the local authority. Earlier the chapter discussed stronger actors, particularly referencing the local authority as the lead partner but, given that the policy direction of the local authority is ostensibly politically driven, if the local authority does not have clear leadership, is this likely to hinder the discharging of the council's duties including the LAA? Further to this, in areas where there is no overall control, but also in areas where political control of the council is narrow (or liable to change at elections) there is the potential for this political climate to spill over into the LAA board or thematic partnerships. Questions arise as to whether, if political control was an issue in LAA governance, how did it manifest itself? Would elected members be likely to hinder work on LAA business if it didn't match with their political goals, or would these political disagreements be played out in another arena within the local authority?

Evidently, the role of elected members and particularly the outcome of elections has the potential to impact significantly on LAA governance and delivery, and this should be considered as part of this research.

3.11.5 MPs
The role of local Members of Parliament is one which is also worthy of exploration, especially given that these actors by their very nature operate and have influence at the national and local level. Although the MPs have little to do in terms active governance with regards to the LAA itself i.e. they would be

unlikely to sit on Executive Boards, questions focus on how they work to reconcile their dual national/local roles. Indeed, the role of MPs raises similar questions as discussed earlier in the chapter with regards to when their political party differs from that of central government and the issues that this raises. However, what is of more interest with MPs is what occurs when their political affiliation differs from that of the ruling majority in the local authority. What are the consequences when there are two opposing viewpoints at the county-district levels of local governance, particularly if one level is of the party of government? Are the two sets of actors likely to work in the local interest of the area they have each been elected to represent, or will they undermine each other for political gain, potentially to the cost the interests of their area?

3.12 Future Developments

The development of this research was set against the backdrop of change to the local public service delivery mechanisms including the LAA following the General Election in 2010. As such it seeks to reflect this shifting environment as clearly as possible, particularly noting the research's overall brief surrounding the improvement of the future practice of local public service delivery.

3.12.1 Pre-election Conservative Policy

Prior to the election, the Conservatives (considered at the time to be most likely party to form the next government), and numerous think tanks affiliated with the party, produced a number of position papers outlining their programme for government if elected following a general election.

Focusing on local public service delivery, one of the central themes of this was the concept of 'Delivering More for Less' (NLGN: 2009a) through greater efficiency, drawing upon the best practice of Conservative-run councils across England. The party also – ironically, like Labour before it – promised to increase the power of local citizens by devolving power away from Whitehall to local areas, indicating that they, at least, believed that Labour either failed to achieve

this objective, or did not go far enough. The Conservatives proposed to achieve this by drastically reducing the number of targets that had to be reported on, as well as by reducing the bureaucratic requirements placed upon local authorities (NLGN: 2009b).

3.12.2 The 2010 General Election and Coalition Government

In 2010 a general election was called which saw the end of 13 years of Labour Government. However, a period of political uncertainty emerged as no one party was able to command a majority in the House of Commons and thus be invited to form a government by the Queen. As a result a coalition government was formed between the Conservative Party (which had the largest number of seats in Parliament) and the Liberal Democrats (which held the third largest number of seats). Combined, the two parties held enough seats to give them the required majority to govern.

Given the nature of each party's manifesto (with the traditional views of each party coming from opposite ends of the political spectrum) they would not appear to be natural bed-fellows in government. In order to establish a stable policy platform from which to govern, the parties entered into negotiations which resulted in the 'coalition agreement' (Cabinet Office: 2010). The idea was that this then would form the basis of all subsequent government policy moving forward.

As the full Coalition programme for government is instigated, the views of practitioners will be helpful in considering how emerging policy responds to the challenges faced in their areas. More importantly, one of the principal aims of this thesis is to provide recommendations for the improvement of future practice – particularly by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the LAA system. Therefore an examination of the extent to which Coalition policy seeks to respond to these issues will be undertaken. Similarly, analysis can compare these policies with past schemes (outlined in chapter two) to assess whether

there are similarities with these schemes and whether they seek to merely reflect past programmes, or respond to their weaknesses.

3.12.3 What would Labour have done?

Although now relegated to conjecture, the prospect of what a hypothetical fourth Labour term would have done is also an interesting concept to explore. Before considering the changes to the system made through Coalition policy and their implications, it would be helpful to consider how the LAA and the institutions surrounding it would have been developed under a continued Labour administration and the potential implications this would have had for the scheme in general.

The details and analysis of both Labour and Coalition policy will be discussed later on as part of a wider discussion around the strengths and weaknesses of LAAs.

Local Public Service Delivery within an International Context

In order to better understand how LAAs have been implemented, the policy rhetoric surrounding them, and the important questions arising from their undertaking, it is important to look closely at several examples drawing from a wider international context.

By undertaking this study, international examples can highlight occurrences of best practice from around the world which can be useful in analysing the implementation of LAAs. The understanding of how issues of governance and accountability may be addressed in international examples can aid deeper understanding by helping to raise or expand on the initial research questions. Alternatively, a closer look at these examples may raise many of the same research questions, particularly about how different partners work together, how the state locates and relinquishes its power, but also how results are delivered and reported and the associated accountability issues that come with this.

Whilst this exercise lets us focus on a wider policy context, it is important to be aware of Peck and Theodore's (2001) concerns about policy transfer and the dangers of transferring 'off the shelf' policies into a context that might not necessarily be receptive. Reflecting this, therefore, the idea behind this section is to reflect upon how international examples may approach similar issues to those faced by the LAA and whilst there is a consideration of how any best practice compares with the English context, any such attempt should be both considered and tentative.

Therefore, the next section of this chapter will focus specifically on governance arrangements which have been carried forward in western countries summarising some of the schemes whilst exploring a selection of these in more detail.

3.13   Shifting Power Away from Whitehall?: The United Kingdom

Since 1997, local government is not the only aspect of the country's political establishments that have undergone extensive reform and modernisation. As part of the move to give areas more say in the issues which affect them a number of devolution projects have been undertaken, at local, regional, and national scales. These attempts were met with varying degrees of success.

At the local scale one scheme that has met with success and has managed to capture the public's imagination is that of elected mayors. The foremost example of the 13 elected mayors within the UK is the position of Mayor of London. Currently this position has been in place for 4 terms of 4 years. The position of Mayor of London provides a significant amount of scope to govern on the issues relating to the city on a broad scale.

However at the regional scale, these reforms were rejected. One of the notable failures was the proposal to devolve a significant amount of power to the regions

through elected assemblies. These plans, championed by the then Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, were ultimately defeated in a referendum when residents of the North East region of England elected not to proceed with the proposed reforms (BBC News: 2004). This referendum was a test, with the likelihood being that referenda would follow in other regions if the North East voted in favour. However. this rejection was seen as a significant blow to the plans and the plans were not pursued in any other regions.

3.14   The Devolved UK States

The largest, and arguably most successful, experiments with devolution in the UK have been undertaken on a national scale. Each of the countries that comprise the United Kingdom has experienced a significant rise in the powers that have been made available to them through the devolution process. Wales and Scotland have seen their respective parliaments installed at the Senedd in Cardiff and Holyrood, Edinburgh, Scotland. Similarly, Northern Ireland has seen its own Parliament in Stormont reinstated and going about the business of government following a successful political resolution to the recent troubles.

These legislatures have since brought forward a raft of proposals and schemes which affect their areas (See table 3.4). In many instances these policies have differed from those relating to England, passed by Westminster. This includes specific aspects of planning policy and governance.

Table 3.4 - Local Public Service Delivery Arrangements in the Devolved UK

	England	Wales	Scotland
Scheme Introduced	Local Area Agreements 2005	Local Service Agreements	Single Outcome Agreements 2007
Timeframe	3 Years	3 Years	3 years
Governance	- Governed by Local Strategic Partnership - Statutory Partners (Police, Fire, PCT, Job Centre+	- Governed by a Local Service Board - Involves the Same Key Partners as the LAA	- Governed by a Community Planning Partnership - Similar key partners as England and Wales. Job Centre+ not statutory but involved anyway, along with higher education.
Negotiation	- Negotiate with Government Office for the Regions acting on behalf of the state	- Negotiate with Assembly Member from the Senedd	- Present draft SOA to the Scottish Government which then agree on it with the CPP
Funding	- Combination of the Area Based Grant and mainstream funding		- Ended ring fenced local funding
	- Up to 35 Indicators selected from a national indicator dataset	- Select 2 or 3 key priorities for the area which action is focused upon	- Emphasis on furthering 15 national outcomes through delivery at the local level
Monitoring Mechanism	- Targets set against the 35 indicators		

Sources: ODPM: 2004 a,b,c. Welsh Assembly: 2007, Scottish Government: 2008

3.14.1 Wales – Local Service Agreements

In Wales, much of the political context is still broadly comparable with that of England. As in England, all Local Authority Areas in Wales have a Local Strategic Partnership in place. These work under the same principles as in England, involving the same statutory partners. However, in the Welsh context, the process is not articulated through an LAA, but rather a Local Service Board. They still contain many of the same partners as the LSP including elected members and appointed officials, representation from the key public services as well as key local stakeholders. Representatives from the private sector were also invited to take part.

In many ways the role of the Local Service Board retains significant similarities to the LSP structure. The main aim of the LSB is to foster an environment of partnership, where the key agencies work together across departmental

boundaries to improve upon service delivery and improve upon local leadership on these issues through the creation of one flagship scheme. Like the LSP, they are tasked with working jointly and for 'connecting the whole network of public services in an area' (Welsh Assembly; 2008, p4). Also, they are responsible for agreeing and delivering a set of priority actions, which are set out in a Local Service Agreement. In a similar way to the discussions and negotiations which take place with GOR in England, each LSB will liaise with a representative of the assembly government in Cardiff. It is envisaged that this representative will provide support and potentially remove barriers to development.

The presence of the assembly government in Wales can be seen as two different forms of government serving one area. Prior to devolution, Wales had a role within a UK context as one of the government regions, albeit with a minister of State. However, in many ways the Senedd takes on some of the state responsibility from Westminster, although not in its entirety. The conflict between these roles is shown in the negotiation phase of the LSA. The LSB must negotiate with a representative from the Assembly, as opposed to GOR in an English context, and as such, must negotiate with the state and region at the same time.

The LSB also produces annual reports on its progress, both nationally and locally. The local report signifies one of the most important initial differences between Local Service Boards and LSP's focus. The LSP and LAA process focuses on specific areas, introducing blanket targets which apply to all areas within its administrative boundaries. However, with Local Service Boards, their output is specifically stated as to be focused on the citizen (Welsh Assembly: 2008). It expressly notes that the citizen and service user's views should have a big influence on guiding how services are delivered and results improved.

While the LSB serves as the organisational structure, the way in which it is operationalised is a Local Service Agreement. In many ways they are directly

comparable to the LAA. Indeed, the prospectus for the first phase of LSAs notes how the experience gained from the English context has directly influenced LSA development (Welsh Assembly: 2008).

Like the LAA/LSP structure the LSB also raises questions about the locus of power the resulting impact on the decision making process. While outlining the principles under which the priorities within the agreement are decided, it sets out two opposing criteria. Priorities could be highlighted as being of local significance, having been identified through the consultation process and other evidence driven procedures. However, the prospectus specifically states that some of the priorities within the LSA could be 'identified by the Welsh Assembly Government as being of national importance' (Welsh Assembly: 2007, p5). While the prospectus notes that local and national concerns will be in balance with each other, it does raise significant questions, in a similar way to the LAA, about how responsive these schemes are. If a majority of the outcomes being pursued by the LSA are outlined and designated as priorities by the central government then this severely hampers the ability of local initiatives to be locally responsive and limits the impact of the consultation proceedings with local citizens.

Again, like the LAA, the LSAs are intended to run for a period of up to 3 years. The significant difference with this scheme, however, is the level of focus. While the LAAs are charged with focusing on up to 30 national indicators, representing some of the most significant challenges to each respective area, the LSA is designed to focus on just two or three key challenges. This reduced scope could lead to further questions about the role of central government, especially within a project of such a narrow remit. Furthermore, questions could be raised around the different partner agencies and their involvement, particularly if their immediate goals or interests are not served or furthered by the priorities that are selected.

The use of indicators is not as prominent within the LSA process as it is within the LAAs. While they form the basis of the LAA, the indicators do not have to exclusively come from the national dataset.

The Local Service Board policy documents attempt to respond to several emerging governance issues which could arise, and relate directly to an English context. Many of the partners within the LSB scheme will involve themselves primarily through high ranking members of their organisation, which then attend meetings. As such they would occupy a leadership role within the process. Seeking to provide guidance for those members, the prospectus notes several important values and characteristics to which all its high end partners must aspire, including;

- *A willingness to transcend organisational interests in the interests of better delivery for citizens*
- *The capacity both to lead, and to follow other's lead*
- *A willingness to contribute to work where others are in the lead*

(Welsh Assembly: 2008, p10)

This echoes several of the key governance questions from the English context which will be explored throughout this thesis. While these are desirable attributes of any partner within an organisation, the distinction between theory and practice could be important. Within a Welsh context at least, these issues have been identified, potentially drawing from the experience of LSPs and LAAs.

3.14.2 Scotland – Single Outcome Agreements

Like Wales, the performance management mechanisms for local public service delivery in Scotland share some similarities to those of England, although the Scottish system offers an alternate vision of how similar governance structures can be utilised to deliver local public services.

The scheme is overseen by a Community Planning Partnership – a coalition of actors that again stands to compare with the LSP or LSB of England and Wales respectively. Like the English and Welsh counterparts, the SOA is negotiated and delivered on a three year rolling basis.

However, the Scottish system strikes a different balance to that of the LAA in particular. It does this in two central ways. Firstly, rather than being target based the SOA is outcome based, meaning that 'it should clearly focus on people's quality of life and opportunities' (Scottish Government: 2008) rather than simply performance against any indicator. Whilst this ostensibly makes measurement harder, it makes the process less abstract and requires a deeper consideration about each goal's implications and how to join up working in order to improve delivery. Similarly, the performance management nature of the scheme is potentially diluted compared to the LAA as, although continuous improvement is expected, the Scottish Government anticipate that outcomes will be delivered over a longer period of time than the three year span of the SOA.

The second key way in which the SOA differs from its English counterpart is the number of outcomes that it sets out. In England this number is up to 35 (plus 18 further statutory indicators), whilst Scotland mandates only 15 outcomes that reflect the 'strategic priorities' of the area (Scottish Government: 2008). However, there are concerns that the outcome based model presents problems in terms of monitoring, in that as opposed to quantifiable targets, it is difficult to measure progress about general outcome statements (SSRG: 2008), in much the same way the initial Sustainable Community Strategies were criticised.

Further to this, given that there are questions in the English context about the number of indicators that an LAA must work with and consequently the ability to really focus on the pressing issues in its area, the SOA deepens the pertinence of these questions, asking whether a significantly reduced number of priorities is more manageable or deliverable. This does reflect concerns, however about the

potential for stronger actors to dominate the agenda if fewer outcomes are up for consideration, freezing out actors with less capacity.

One of the striking similarities between the LAA and SOA is the level of top-down control over the agenda that local areas can set. Not only must the 15 outcomes reflect national policy priorities, as set out by Holyrood, ensuring a tie through between national and local, but in the absence of regional government, each SOA must be negotiated and agreed directly with the Scottish Government. This process clearly represents a limitation on the scheme to be truly bespoke and focus on any unique issue, and in many ways chimes with some of the research questions about LAA indicators.

In an assessment of the first year of the SOA, Park and Kerley (2011) identify a number of issues corresponding to those raised by the LAA literature. In particular they note the challenges presented by the rollout of the SOA and the timescale preventing effective relationship building between partners as well as the restrictive influence of central government in SOA development – albeit considered more 'light touch' than Westminster (Park and Kerley: 2011). Thus, the extent to which these finds are replicated by the LAA process is of interest.

In all, the Scottish example presents a much better comparison to the LAA than the Welsh LSA. It offers contrasts in its structure and monitoring which act as a comparator to the LAA. Furthermore the issues that it faces are similar to those of the LAA and thus provide can assist in the analysis of LAA working.

3.15 The European Union

Within the wider European Union there are a number of different approaches to local public service delivery, which reflect the differing governing arrangements in each country, and in particular differences in central-local relations. A selection of these mechanisms are shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 - A Selection Local Public Service Delivery Mechanisms in the European Union

	Republic of Ireland	Holland	Germany
Scheme Introduced	Local Area Partnership ~1987-1990 (first round)	'Local Agreement'	
Timeframe		2007-2011	
Governance	- 38 Local Partnership Companies - Tripartite board consisting of social, public and community partners - No majority so no interests dominate - Mediated by a company set up to manage the partnerships (Area Development Management (ADM).	- Local areas are autonomous, but are required to deliver on centrally prescribed goals	- Local autonomy integral - Actively seeks to confound the state if local areas can do it themselves - Many mandatory duties under the banner of "managing the needs of communities" - Some state mandated duties also conducted and given funding from the state
Negotiation	Strong role of central government in Ireland which imposes much of social policy		
Indicators?	Selection from 42 National Indicators (Now increased to 46)	- Can have performance 'benchmarked against indicators which are selected by the Local Authority and VNG	
Monitoring Mechanism		- Single Information Single Audit which covers central and local accountabilities, but only on financial issues. - Number of inspectorates to monitor other activities - Developing 'self-monitoring' agenda 2007-2011 - Also agreed a set of targets to deliver that reflect central government aims - Monitored by VNG	
Notes	Autonomous status due to weak role of local government		Largely conducted at a local authority level

Sources: Turok: 2001, LGA: 2010

In many cases the examples from the EU (and the other international examples to be discussed later on) indicate lower levels of central control, supporting the assertion that the UK remains one of the most centrally controlled of the Western democracies. The extent of this central control over UK policy is shown in greater clarity by glancing across the schemes from the European Union. What becomes apparent is that significant periods of policy stability that can exist given the right conditions. This is in stark contract to the British policy environment which, as illustrated in chapters two and three, has had to deal with and adapt to consistent change due to its centralised environment and the differing political philosophies

3.15.1 France – Contrat De Ville

Despite the fact that they may both operate within a European context and under some influence from European legislation, urban regeneration schemes in France and England have developed in different ways. Green and Booth note that, while the context of this development does vary, both countries are characterised by problems which appear similar, but are rooted in a different set of causes (Booth and Green, 1996).

Historically, the French response to urban regeneration, particularly facing problems in inner city areas closely mirrors that in the UK. The 1960s was typified by the creation of mass housing projects, coupled with '*Schémas Directeur'* and '*zones á urbaniser en priorité'* spelling out the location of projects at a broad and detailed level respectively (Booth and Green, 1996). These schemes could be compared to the new town schemes which were prevalent in the UK at the time. However, within a French context there was a realisation that the level of focus was not sufficient to tackle the problems that urban areas faced and that a city level policy approach was likely to be the most effective way to tackle issues of deprivation.

The new policy which was brought forward was the Contrat De Ville (CDV). Like the LAAs in the UK they were a programme phased in over a number of years with the aim of instigating joint action and formalising the relationships between central and local government (Mawson, 2002). Furthermore, it has been noted that, like the LAA, the CDV is in many ways a method of outlining and affirming the responsibilities that local and central government have to their area.

Booth and Green highlight a pertinent point on the concept of 'contractualisation' between a local and central government, noting that the 'procedure of contractualisation may be seen as a mechanism of the state which limits the powers of the locality and ensures that the state retains control' (Booth and Green; 1996, p26). This is a notion which can is equally attributable to LAAs due to the fact that they are often presented as a contract between central and local government. This also reflects many of the issues raised throughout the discussions about LAAs, particularly about the location of central government's power. The French example indicates that the location of power and the relationship between the centre and the local is pertinent, even outside the UK context. Particularly important is the question as to whether this is a movement by the centre to appease local authorities, seemingly giving them more power while at the same time maintaining or even broadening the existing power base the state holds.

3.16 Scandinavia

There are also examples from Scandinavia (see Table 3.6) which provide useful examples of how local public services could be delivered. Although they do not all apply to the totality of local government in the way that the LAA does, they are still worth considering.

Table 3.6 - Local Public Service Delivery Mechanisms in Scandinavia

	Sweden	Finland
Scheme	'Municipal Compass'	'Centralised Steering – Local Implementation'
Governance	- Local authorities can self-determine their own targets - In Sweden there is a culture of mutual interest in allowing local areas autonomy, which feeds into the wider success of the state	- Government set curricula but local authorities are given the freedom to implement it and deal with school provision etc
Funding	- Raised through the levying of local taxes	
Monitoring Mechanism	- The compass focuses on citizen satisfaction and how local procedures compare to elements of best practice	
Notes	- Element of collaboration with Denmark and Norway	- Only applies to education

Source: LGA: 2010

3.16.1 Sweden – Municipal Compass

Sweden's 'Municipal Compass' scheme offers a contrasting view on how the state interacts with localities in order to deliver effective results. Here, rather than imposing a system and a suite of targets, local areas are granted the ability to self-determine their own targets based on the presumption of mutual interest – i.e. that allowing local areas to define their own priorities makes them more effective, which in turn feeds into the broader success of the state (LGA: 2010).

This is made possible through the way that the municipal compass is funded, i.e. through local taxation, as opposed to majority central funding in the UK. This dual-process of self-funding and self-determination makes the Swedish local authorities more reliant on their own capacity to act and thus less able to blame a centralised culture if something goes wrong or if there is a funding gap. However, as part of this, rather than centralised monitoring of indicators, the local authorities progress is marked against citizen satisfaction, meaning that the local citizens sense of effectiveness and value for money for their locally based taxes

form the main driver behind assessment, as opposed to central assessment of targets that reflect a central policy agenda.

In many ways the Swedish model stands in stark contrast to the LAA model of the management mechanisms for public service delivery, although it is also indicative of a system that does not place as much of an emphasis on central control as the UK.

3.17 Canada

Moving away from Europe, there are several further examples that can be compared to the LAA (see Table 3.7). However one that particularly resonates is the Canadian 'Vancouver Agreement'.

Table 3.7 - Local Public Service Delivery Mechanisms in Canada

	Canada	
Scheme	Vancouver Agreement	Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Agreement (OMBI)
Introduced	2000	2000
Timeframe	5 Years	
Governance	- Partnership involving representatives from the Federal, state and local level - Governed by a committee of 1 minister from state and federal offices and the local mayor's office. This committee is responsible for decision making and accountability - Also a management committee represented by each respective partner - Strong delivery role of elected mayors in the process	- Operated voluntarily by 15 municipalities - Share information about progress - Allows for the identification of best practice and the production of 'emulation' strategies
Negotiation		- Covers all major functions of the municipality
Funding	- Funded via a mixture of public and private funds. - In 2003 the state and federal levels provided $10 million while the local level provided $5.78 million in funds	
Monitoring Mechanism	No National Audit in Canada and no statutory requirement to report on data	
Status	Renewed in 2005-2010	
Notes		

Source: Bradford: 2008, Vancouver Agreement: 2005

3.17.1 Canada – Vancouver Agreement

Within North America, one of the most strikingly similar schemes to the LAA can be found in Canada. It is a fixed term multi-agency scheme accompanied by a strategic implementation strategy (Bradford: 2008).

The agreement was introduced in March 2000 to run for a five year period. It was extended in 2005 to run until 2010.

The scope of the Vancouver Agreement is strikingly similar to much of the policy agenda within a UK context.   The broad remit of the agreement is for the parties to 'co-operate in promoting and supporting sustainable economic, social and community development in the city of Vancouver' (Vancouver Agreement: 2005, p1), which also form the core principles of current UK development policy. The issue of sustainability is also developed.   Like the UK, with the Sustainable Communities plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy that the LAA operationalises, the Vancouver Agreement places a focus on the concept of Sustainable Communities.   These stated shared policy values make the Agreement an ideal example with which to compare methodologies on how to achieve these goals.

The Vancouver Agreement serves as a mechanism under which the various parties of the state and localities can come together to formulate an appropriate policy response to their shared aims and ambitions.   However, Mason (2007) identified difficulties in getting the various levels of government to engage fully, largely due to scheduling, and that as a result partner co-ordination took place within each tier of government, rather than across them.   This reflected similar concerns within a UK context about how fully engaged high tiers of government can be with the process.

These policy responses would be articulated through the production of a Strategic Plan which would be approved and adopted by all parties concerned.

In this sense it is directly comparable to the LSP/LAA structure of the English system, with the broad structural mechanism representing the LSP, its commitment to work together and shared aims, while the Strategic Plan represents the LAA - operationalising and providing a delivery mechanism for these aims. Furthermore, like the LAA, it was felt that the Vancouver agreement was heavily reliant on the quality of local leadership, both to set the Agenda and to drive through effective partnership (Mason: 2007).

3.18 International Examples: A Summary

The various examples drawn from the devolved UK, Europe and North America offer some valuable insights about how other mechanisms for local public service delivery can influence the study of LAAs, and perhaps improve their practice. These schemes have demonstrated that many of the issues faced by LAAs, as raised by the earlier chapters, are not unique. Indeed, many of the questions occur frequently, particularly around notions of top down control, target setting and inter-agency partnership working. As such this section should further demonstrate the relevance of these questions. It should also highlight how these examples can help us to better reflect on the case of LAAs. In particular the extent to which wider examples were considered in UK policy development and perhaps a reflection on the extent to which any improvements to practice would move the UK closer, or further away, from any of these particular schemes.

3.19 Key Research Questions

By exploring the literature surrounding LAAs, it is now possible to identify a number of key detailed research questions to further guide the research.

The ultimate aim of the research is on LAAs and their effectiveness as a tool for local public service delivery. However there are two key themes with the research will now focus upon. The first is one of vertical governance: particularly centre-local relations and the interactions that occur between the state, region

and locality in delivering the LAA. The second is one of horizontal governance: and how the various actors interact at a local level in order to deliver a specific LAA. Beyond this, the research also aims to reflect the wider theme of generating recommendations for the improvement of the future delivery of local public services.

3.19.1 Vertical Governance

- What level of control did Whitehall exert over the LAA process?
- Did GOR act as a 'local champion' in LAA negotiation or purely in the interests of the state?
- Was GOR effective in its role as handlers for the LAA?
- Did the national indicator dataset provide sufficient scope to focus on a local area's needs? Was the National Indicator Dataset suitable for this purpose?
- Were Indicators imposed upon local areas?
- Was the indicator system subject to 'gamesmanship' to benefit a local area? What were the implications if this was the case?
- What effect did a two-tier system of local governance have on LAA delivery?

3.19.2 Horizontal Governance

- What were the implications for the implementation of a LAA if a central government department's stated goals were not shared, or seen as a specific priority, by a local area?
- Were there any actors that dominated the process over others? What led this to occur?
- Did an agencies' internal agenda impact on its effectiveness in delivering LAA targets?
- How did elected representatives and party politics affect the delivery of LAA targets?
- Where was the locus of power within the LAA system?

- Who (amongst the LAA partners) was the greatest long term beneficiary from the shift in focus to LAAs?

3.19.3 LAAs and the Future

- What were the strengths and weaknesses of LAAs?
- In your opinion, was the LAA project a success?
- How can the future delivery of local public services be improved?

Chapter Four: Theories and Concepts

Now that the policy environment surrounding LAAs has been explored in depth, and a number of key research questions identified, the next step is to identify a theory or theories which can aid in the deeper understanding of these issues. Consequently, this chapter will focus on a number of theories which have relevance to the themes of the research. Through the course of debate each of these theoretical concepts will be analysed in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, the aim of this process is to find the most that provides the greatest assistance in exploring and understanding these research questions. As such the chapter will conclude by identifying the most appropriate theoretical concepts that can assist with understanding the research findings.

The process of identifying the most appropriate theories to help analyse LAAs was not linear in nature. It began with a general exploration of the theories around centre-local relations and local governance in order to find a 'best fit' for the research questions. Then, following this, follow up explorations were taken to identify any gaps in this 'best fit' and how they might be filled by other concepts. What follows should shed light on that process and how, ultimately, a robust conceptual framework was identified.

4.1 Concepts Surrounding the State

Given the strong themes of centre-local relations raised in chapters two and three (and particularly referencing the fact that the LAA is defined as a three-year contract between central and local government), the first point of exploration required a consideration of the role of the state and some of the theoretical concepts surrounding this subject.

Davies and Imbroscio (2009) assert that the State holds a number of unique power bases which allow it to function but note that, as the modern state continues to unfold, the structures which influence these power bases become

increasingly complicated and difficult to understand. This in turn has implications for accountability, for as command chains become longer and more complex, so the accountability structures also become longer and more complex (Day and Klein: 1987). This increasing complexity within the policy environment makes it difficult to assess its working precisely, corresponding to the issues raised around accountability, particularly with inter-agency accountability.

In line with trends towards both devolution and globalisation, Kjaer (2009) also outlines a recent rescaling of state interests. This also corresponds to Skelcher's (2000) 'Hollowing Out' model whereby the traditional institutions and functions of the state are being removed and transferred to other organisations, both downwards to the localities and upwards to supra-national organisations such as the EU. This links with many of the themes identified in the discussion about multi-level governance. With this rescaling comes what Gerber and Kollman (2004) describe as an 'authority migration', where power is transferred away from the actors which, traditionally, would be seen as being in control. However, it is further noted that overtures of devolution can potentially lead to a further increase in the power of the central state (Somerville and Haines: 2008) as in most cases, many of the organisations which play a key role in developing these policy agendas (i.e. GOR) still owe their loyalties to the state (Goodwin et al, 2006). The concept of power bases outlined by Davies is further developed by Healey (2006) who comments on the state as a strong actor, noting that even when power is given to local areas, they are still heavily reliant on the state and its resources both to act in an effective way and to obtain legitimacy.

However, Peck (2001) notes that, contrary to Skelcher's (2000) notions of hollowing out, the state is simply being reorganised, 'not as some lumbering bureaucratic monolith but as a (political) process in motion' (Peck: 2001, p449), and thus the question is not about 'the extent to which the national state has somehow become 'less' powerful in the process, but how it has become differently powerful' (Peck: 2001, p447). In effect, devolution, contends Peck,

while a signifier of 'inter-scalar shifts... may or may not add up to a real transfer of state power... as powers of institutional coordination and ideological control remain firmly located (albeit in a restructured form) at the centre' (Peck: 2001, p452). This view can particularly assist in the consideration of the research questions surrounding the participation of partner agencies with strong state-led structures (e.g. police/health) and how they interact with the LAA and its delivery.

As the actions of the state cause its form to be constituted / reconstituted in order to meet its changing requirements, the relationship that it the state with those actors within its boundaries also changes. To reflect this, a theory is required that provides a deeper understanding of why this happens. Developing upon this, a theory emerged that met this requirement: the Strategic Relational Approach.

4.2 Strategic Relational Approach

As the previous chapters have indicated, the relationship between the locality and the state has changed over the course of many years, often resulting in specific policy practices aimed to either limit or increase the power of the locality – either implicitly or explicitly.

Key to the understanding of this aspect of theory is an acceptance that the state is a site, generator and product of numerous strategies and as a result is in a constant state of flux (Jessop: 1990). In shaping this argument, Brenner (2004) suggests that the concept of the state and its activities is not a fixed one, nor for that matter by extension is the locality. He notes that 'the spaces of state power are not simply 'filled' as if they were pre-determined territorial containers but instead, state spatiality is actively produced and transformed through regulatory projects and socio-political struggles articulated in diverse institutional sites and at a range of geographical scales' (Brenner: 2004, p76). By this, it is meant that the any concept of 'The State' is an ongoing project that is constantly being reformed and realigned through a succession of policy initiatives and

programmes. This changeable role of the state and its methodology forms a central strand in Jessop's Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) (Jessop, 1990).

Reflecting upon some of the themes discussed around regulation theory earlier in the chapter, Brenner noted that these processes of state rescaling were animated as a result of regulatory failure (Brenner: 2009). Jessop contends that the changing activities of the state, and its historic and continued influence in a wide variety of regulatory projects, makes it a social relation and further to this the stability the state enjoys only comes about as a result of these social relations (Jessop: 1990).

Jessop's central conclusion is that as a result of the changing focus of policy to meet particular needs, and largely as a result of the party political process, the state cannot, and does not, remain neutral, and as such cannot arbitrate policy decisions in a wholly neutral way. As a result, any policy enacted by the state could be seen to favour one party over another through 'strategic selectivity' (Jessop, 1990) i.e. a strategic choice to favour one course of action based on its cumulative reward.

 While Jessop is the prominent author on this issue, the concept that the state privileges specific parties through its allocation of policy has a somewhat longer history. Offe (1984) first noted that particular actors always stood to benefit from state policy at the expense of others, a point expanded upon by Pemberton and Goodwin's (2010) work noting that any change in scope by the state has the effect of changing who has access to the policy process. As well as this, those that have this access will seek to maximise their opportunities whilst they are available (Pemberton and Goodwin: 2010).

At the more local level, this notion is coupled with the ideas of Somerville and Haines' work (2008) who identified a fallacy with the devolution of power, particularly with the contention that the citizenry holds more power than the state

itself. They contended that, while the state would appear to present localities and other parties with power, the state would not undermine its own powerbase. Instead, where the state would relinquish power in one area, it would simply regain it, or acquire more power elsewhere.

Despite the notion that the devolution of power does not significantly affect the state's power base, there are nonetheless numerous benefits to those that are privileged by the state. Goodwin et al (2006) note that any actor that is able to act with the state through these established relations can position themselves to maximise the opportunities and benefits they are likely to receive. As a result any party that is capable of acting through, or with, the state stands to improve their capacity to act – and therefore deliver their policy objectives - compared to those which are not. Furthermore, Healey (2006) notes a significant increase in the abilities of groups which are privileged by the state to decide what is in the public interest.

This issue is reflected in several of the research questions, particularly those relating to the indicator/target selection aspect of the LAA and the extent to which locally identified indicator targets correspond to (or hinder) nationally set targets, as well as those set internally by an organisation. Indeed, under the SRA, being a state approved actor should minimise the impact of locally-decided targets on the organisation's internally set targets. Consequently an examination of this can help to explore questions about whether organisations with strong internal agendas are privileged by the state thus granting them more freedom and power within the LAA process than those that are not.

The notions of state privileging of particular parties and the power that they are subsequently granted to shape any agenda relates to a number of questions surrounding those that are both included and excluded by the LAA process. In a move seen to add legitimacy to the governance process, the LAA involves several statutory partners comprising the major service delivery agents in an

area. However, the SRA can aid in exploring questions about whether these actors are involved in legitimising a process of devolution to local areas, or alternatively whether the involvement of statutory partners represents an assertion of control by central government at the local level by ensuring an 'on the ground' representative. In summary, the SRA would define the inclusion of the key partners as a move by the state in order to assert its power over the locality and take a direct role in shaping the agenda for LAAs.

As well as the concept that the state privileges, or places at an advantage, certain parties through their inclusion, there is the possibility of the opposite effect occurring, whereby the lack of inclusion causes an agency or group to become disadvantaged. This concept of disadvantaging can potentially relate to some of the issues raised around accountability, particularly the democratically elected representatives of local areas. As chapter three outlined, the ability for elected members to be effective has the potential to be heavily influenced by the outcome of elections, but also by the extent to which local political makeup matches that of the state. Consequently, there are issues about whether the state can theoretically unprivilege this group, thus limiting their involvement within a key local process and thus their ability to represent their electorate. This stands at odds with two issues which are central to LAAs. First, is the criticism that they are democratically unaccountable – owing to the large number of actors, but minimal involvement of elected representatives. This stands against the fact that LAAs were designed as part of measures to improve local faith in public governance and consequently improve election turnout. Consequently these two issues remain diametrically opposed.

Goodwin et al (2006) further identify the usefulness of the SRA as a theoretical tool to analyse LAAs. They state that the SRA 'has the ability to reveal how the power of the social forces acting in, and through, the state, and their interplay with the state institutional form are dependent on sets of relations which are geographically constituted and contested' (Goodwin et al: 2006, p983). Indeed,

Jones (1997) takes this further, explicitly acknowledging the spatiality of state privileging, whereby as well as privileging specific agencies, the state also privileges specific spaces through its articulation of policy. This could occur when a policy specifically or inadvertently favours one specific area over another.

As signified throughout this discussion, the SRA provides an extremely useful and wide ranging theoretical concept which can assist in investigating a considerable number of the key research questions that have been identified in earlier chapters. By doing this, the research can also help to fill a gap in the knowledge identified by Brenner, who points to the fact that, with few exceptions[8], 'references to the localities debates have been largely absent from contemporary discussions of state rescaling' (Brenner: 2009, p131).

Many of the issues raised through the SRA relate closely to issues around the LAA. One of the central research questions is 'who benefits from LAAs?' - Approaching the issue from an SRA perspective can help to assess whether the LAA benefits the state and the agencies that operate on its behalf, or if the locality benefits in a true transition of power away from the state.

Jones' work, taken in consideration with that of Jessop, links closely with many of the research questions, particular around the national indicator data set, as well as the reorganisation of some aspects of local government. The use of a set of national indicators could stand to benefit particular areas over others (through omission of indicators as much as inclusion). As the NID focuses on particular policy issues, the indicators that areas can choose may be of greater relevance to certain areas, whereas other indicators may lack the ability to focus on issues that areas consider to be of importance. As a result, the SRA can help to understand whether, by limiting choice, or predetermining outcomes, the scope of the NID can prevent a true reflection of a locality's policy priorities, and thus privilege some areas over others.

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[8] Brenner points to the work of Kevin Cox, Mark Goodwin and Neil Smith

The SRA is also helpful in considering the 2009 reorganisation of local government, discussed in chapter three. In particular, this can help with questions about whether the reorganisation actually benefited the areas it affected, or the partner agencies within it (e.g. by limiting the amount of bureaucracy they have to face).

Although the SRA clearly has benefits for this research, it is also important also to be aware of its limitations. Whilst identifying the gaps in knowledge discussed earlier, Brenner (2009) also strikes a note of caution, pointing to the Achilles Heel of using the SRA to analyse these issues. He describes the danger of over-generalisation in order to apply the SRA to a broad array of contexts, thus diluting the theory's potency. However, given that the SRA was initially conceived as a method of understanding British governance and the clearly identified trends towards central control discussed in chapters two and three, concept stretching should not form a major barrier here.

4.2.1 The Strategic Relational Approach: A Complete Theoretical Fit?
Although the SRA offers a lens through which to examine a significant number of research questions, both in terms of centre-local relations and how local actors interact in the governance of their area. Much of this can help to pinpoint where power lies in this process and who benefits from it. However, there are some gaps that would result in using the SRA.

In particular, two aspects remain unclear. The first relates to the nature of the LAA itself. Whilst the SRA can help us to consider whether the LAA represents a form of privileging or state control, it does not offer any insights as to why the LAA might required to legitimise any actor i.e. why the state would have nominally lost control, and felt the need to assert itself.

Secondly, while the SRA can help to understand where power lies in local interactions, and who benefits from the LAA process, what it does not offer is an ability to analyse why partners act the way they do.

Therefore, in order to fill these gaps, further theories are required which can help to analyse findings in relation to those areas.

4.3 Regulation Theory

Regulation theory focuses on the capitalist system, and particularly aims to understand how it maintains continued periods of stability 'through a unique perspective on the relationship between the capitalist system and the structures within which it operates – i.e. society, government, institutions' (Cocks: 2009, p457), thus intimating that economic growth and development are socially embedded.

Goodwin and Painter (1996) discuss several key issues which are crucial to the understanding of regulation theory, the most important of which is the acceptance of the fact that most social systems are complex, dynamic and prone to contradictions. As a result of these characteristics Goodwin and Painter surmise that there is a tendency towards what is known as 'crisis' as these social systems develop over time. A crisis is defined as a moment of intense disruption within the system and can be classified into two main themes; a crisis in the system, where a particular aspect of the social system comes under threat, or a crisis of the system where the system in its entirety is in jeopardy (Goodwin and Painter 1996). Consequently, to counter these tendencies toward crisis, regulation is introduced (see figure 4.1). This regulation also serves to counteract some of the contradictions which may be prevalent, which can lead to crisis. However, Goodwin and Painter (1995) note that this regulation is not seen as a permanent fix to inevitable crisis in the system, but merely a spatial or temporal fix, either averting the crisis for a period of time, or moving it to another place. Then, over a period of time, the mode of regulation (MOR) that is

accepted becomes adopted as part of the system itself, and as such adopts the characteristics which make it predisposed to crisis. As such the modes of regulation need to be constantly updated so as to avert crisis in the social sphere.

Figure 4.1 - Modes of Regulation
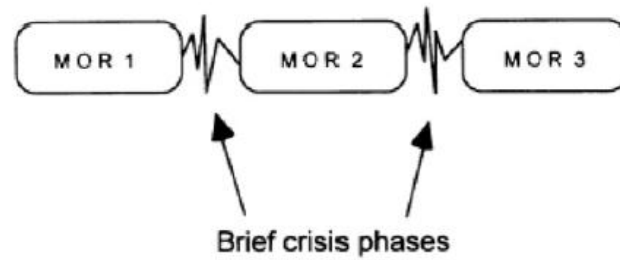
Figure 1 Modes of regulation as normal
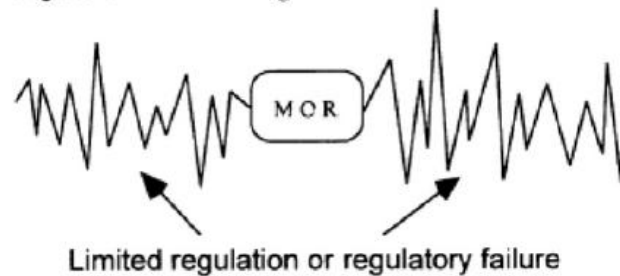
Figure 2 Mode of regulation as abnormal

(From Goodwin and Painter: 1996, p.639)

Regulation Theory presents a useful theoretical consideration for the analysis of research questions around LAAs. In particular, this is because Painter and Goodwin describe local government (and by extension the tools of local public service delivery such as the LAA) as both 'a target for, and an agent of', regulation. The State's role in setting policy (or establishing modes of regulation) which directly affects economic growth/accumulation makes it a key agent of regulation. Similarly the actors at a local governance level represent the instigators of modes of regulation at their own local level, whilst often working in tandem with modes of regulation set in place by the state.

The relationship between these two scales of governance, and in particular how the state sets up modes of regulation with consideration for those that must implement it, reflect some of the central-local relation themes raised throughout chapters two and three. Regulation theory can help to explore some of the themes of centralisation and the extent to which governance in England remains centralised.

Cocks (2009) argues that the post-fordist economic environment, which required constant regulation fixes accounts for the start of a period of reduction in the activity of state actors and the subsequent rise in multi-actor policy environments. In this light, regulation theory could be especially useful to explore themes around the extent to which the central state regulates the activities of local areas through policy prescriptions – i.e. partnership working and the LAA - whilst also considering the extent to which local areas, and the actors operating within them are able to enact policies which meet their ambitions for their area.

However, given that regulation theory largely relates to economic development, care would have to be taken when considering how the theory is applied to social fields, which may be less responsive to 'market forces'. As such, regulation theory could be used to pose and answer questions about whether Local Area Agreements represent either a part of the system which needs to be regulated, or are an act of regulation in, and of, themselves.

4.4 Urban Regime Theory

The concept of Urban Regime Theory was introduced as a means of analysing how power and governance roles are affected in a multi-actor policy environment (Stone: 1989). At its heart, an 'urban regime' is the organisation or coalition that is formed between local government and private organisations in order to govern their local area and provide co-ordination, so that their area can take action against the issues it faces. Stoker and Mossberger (2000) note that within a modern governance environment the formation of an urban regime becomes

essential, owing to the fact that individual actors now occupy different key aspects of governance. This can take the form of providing the legitimacy of the state or the financing and job creation of private enterprise. Stone (1989) continues to define an urban regime as 'an informal yet inherently stable group with access to institutional resources that enable it to have a sustained role in making governance decisions' (Stone, 1989, p4) indicating that, particularly in a UK environment, given its high degree of centralisation, any urban regime needs the endorsement of the state and its apparatus in order to operate.

There are two key barriers preventing LAAs accurately and fully meeting Stone's criteria of an urban regime. The first is the notion of an urban regime being an informal relationship. Defining what is meant by an informal relationship is not straightforward, but it is envisaged that this would be represented by participants taking part in a voluntary fashion. Of course, as chapter three has illustrated, the LAA should be seen as more than just informal ties. Indeed, the LAA clearly represents a formal set of ties between its constituent partners and much is made of the fact that the LAA represents a three year 'contract'[9] (a word, which in itself explicitly implies formality) between central and local government. Thus, the extent to which LSPs (as the governance mechanism for the LAA) meet the criteria of being an urban regime is debatable. In turn, such discussions could cast doubts about how appropriate the Urban Regime Theory concept is to analyse the research questions.

Similarly, policy guidance relating to statutory partners placed a significant emphasis on the duty to co-operate with the LAA and its stated goals, but placed an equal emphasis on the duty of the LAA, as the lead partner, to consider all other parties commitments i.e. internal policy documents and statutory duties. Whilst this illustrates how local government can, and does, work with a host of other actors in order to realise objectives relating to an area (thus partly

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[9] The nature of this contract is questionable, however, given the ambiguity of accountability measures against non delivery, as discussed in Chapter Two.

satisfying the criteria for a regime), these imposed formal structures do not comply with Stone's original theory. As such, these measures demonstrate how LAAs may be considered unrepresentative of an informal relationship.

The other significant potential element of incompatibility between Urban Regimes and LAAs revolves around the element of stability. Stone (1989) describes stability in relation to an urban regime as the ability to span a number of administrations[10]. This is primarily intended to describe local administrations and the change in local council priorities which can arise with a change in political control. This could be further expanded in order to consider the impact of central government. As chapter two has demonstrated, the central state can have a significant impact on the policy agendas and financing of projects at the local level, frequently changing the nature of the policy environment in which localities must operate, and the actors that take prominence within that environment.

To this end, questions remained as to the extent to which LAAs were a stable entity and as such, any consideration as to whether the LSP and LAA constituted a stable regime could only be made with time. Indeed, this moment came with the 2010 general election, which saw administration change and the consequent scrapping and replacing of LAAs with a new regime system. As such the LSP/LAA did prove to be unstable. However this may prove useful, as when there is a change in governance structures, another theoretical construct will be needed, given Orr and Stoker's (1994) concession that there is a gap in the theory making it difficult to analyse regime change.

Despite these challenges, the Urban Regime model offers some interesting insights into the consideration of LAAs. In particular, two concepts around power and partner goals are helpful. The first concept focuses on the power that is held by the urban regime. Stone (1989) notes that theories about power often refer to the power of 'control', whereby a powerful actor can set the agenda and

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[10] In the American usage of the word. I.e. Terms of office.

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consequently control the actions of others. However, in the urban regime model, Stone notes that the goal of an urban regime is not to accumulate power but to 'act' in pursuit of an identified goal. In this sense the urban regime ultimately seeks to become autonomous, with its own capacity to identify the issues which affect it. This is reflected in LAAs, which identified issues of importance to local areas and acted upon them. Nonetheless, despite the regimes not seeking out this power, by attaining this ability to act within their own capacity they would thus gain many characteristics commonly found in the state apparatus – most notably the ability to confer advantages or disadvantages upon those that they worked with – thus presenting a new set of challenges for the localities to deal with.

The second interesting concept raised by Stone is one of perspective changing. Stone notes that over a period of time, participating within an urban regime may slowly change a partner's perspective on a number of issues as they become aware of a wider consideration of other members, but also the implications of any action upon those actors. Through their efforts to deliver the targets of the LAA, the extent to which this premise was reflected in the policy reality was one that was worthy of exploration.

Beyond these considerations, there is also a major barrier within the urban regime literature that could prevent it being used as an appropriate theoretical concept with which to analyse LAAs. It is acknowledged by Stoker and Mossberger (2001) that the urban regime model is not readily applicable to other case studies outside of United States context in which it was originally designed. In particular, transferring the urban regime model to a UK context would require the acknowledgement of the differing governance environment that characterises the UK. Differing from the centralisation that is a principal theme of UK service delivery, US cities have a high degree of autonomy from the state including policy direction and funding to a degree not experienced in the UK. Therefore, to analyse LAAs through the urban regime concept would require a keen awareness of 'concept stretching' (Sartori, 1970) whereby the model is taken

outside of its original American context, and used to analyse a different system. Whilst this might not undermine the use of urban regime theory as a concept, an awareness of limits to its transferability is essential.

4.5 Multi-Level Governance

The complex policy environment that has developed in post-war Britain has many actors which operate at a multitude of levels. The state still retains a traditional and central role in proceedings (arguably strengthening this role over time: see chapter two), with the locality also retaining its role. Between these two levels there exists an intermediary level of governance, with several institutions of regional governance being developed in England since 1994[11]. Above the nation state, however, is a new powerful actor: the supra-national organisation, for example the EU. Pierre and Peters (2000) rationalise the implications of this developing policy environment through their concept of Multi-Level Governance.

Pierre and Peters premise their theory on the basis of an evolving central state. They contend that the state retains some of its unique power bases, particularly the regulation of physical activity within its boundaries, e.g. the planning system. However, despite the retention of control over these activities, the state becomes more reliant on other organisations and actors to fulfil its role. This could be because it lacks the resources, lacks legitimacy (or is contested), or due to the fact it now operates in an environment, it cannot govern alone. The move away from total central control over public services, beginning in the mid 1970s, as outlined in chapter two, is a contributing factor to this effect.

This challenge to the state's role is where the multi-level governance model can potentially be of use in analysing LAAs. Its usefulness has already been demonstrated to some extent, with Wilson's (2003) utilisation of the Multi-Level Governance theory as a lens through which to examine the LGMA. This work

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[11] i.e. Regional Development Agencies, Regional Assemblies and Government Office For the Regions

discovered that the policy reality more closely resembled multi-level dialogue, rather than multi-level governance, with the amount of discussion between levels increasing, but with little change to the practical governance mechanisms.

The application of multi-level governance to LAAs could be seen as a continuation of this work. The LAA, involving a range of actors, including those operating outside of the control of the state, signifies that the state acting alone (and through its dictation of policy via local government) is no longer strong enough to deliver public services.

The LAA process represented the latest of many policy initiatives brought forward which are specifically aimed at improving accountability and the feeling that local citizens have a voice in issues that affect them. This leads to questions about whether LAAs are simply indicative of a weakened state seeking to increase (or reassert) its legitimacy in a increasingly diluted policy environment, or, reflecting the Strategic Relational Approach, to be discussed later in the chapter, which suggests that this process actually represents a consolidation of power on behalf of the state, rather than a weakening of state legitimacy.

The Multi-Level Governance (MLG) approach only partly assists with the analysis of the research questions raised around LAAs. This theoretical model could provide a broad platform for looking at the governance interactions between agencies of different levels. In particular this could be used to analyse the role that the region plays in negotiating with local areas. This could also be considered in light of Goodwin et al (2006), who note that representatives from GOR owe their allegiance to the state rather than the localities. The MLG model could be useful in analysing this notion to assess the role that the state does play in the LAA process, and the extent to which individual localities and their LAA are fairly represented at the negotiation state. Furthermore, MLG could be used to discuss questions about the involvement of partners that are sanctioned by the

state, although, as will be shown later, there are other, stronger theoretical concepts which can be used to explore this issue.

4.6 New Institutionalism / Path Dependency

So far, the theory has principally focused on analysis of the vertical aspects of governance. Whilst these theories do offer opportunities to discuss the aspects of the horizontal governance raised through the research questions – in particular the interactions of individual actors – some further theoretical considerations are required to allow us to better understand this.

The concept of institutionalism and path dependency offer some insights about local actors and their interactions with each other. March and Olsen (1984) note that, over time, the various social, political and economic institutions have grown in size and evolved into formal organisations occupying a dominant role. This increase in the institution's formality and subsequent involvement in the workings of local public service delivery, has been identified as a continued attempt by central governments to add legitimacy to the process by involving experts (Meyer and Rowan: 1977). Edelman (1964) also indicates that, further to adding legitimacy to the process, the addition/inclusion of popular symbols of the public sector (i.e. health professionals, fire and rescue service) with potentially unpopular policy decisions can help to mitigate negative reaction amongst the public.

Whilst this may help to understand why the various institutions are included within the process, many of the research questions focus on their interactions with other institutions and the LAA itself. To help explain this, the central principles of new institutionalism argue that these institutions, given their increasing legitimacy, must then seek to maintain this legitimacy through their actions. These attempts to maintain legitimacy may help to account for the actions of the 'stronger actors' within the LAA process, particularly in any situation where they would be seen to dominate indicator selection. It can also

help to understand how the relationship between internal and external organisational policy priorities plays out in practice.

The notion of path dependency, in turn, contends that a changing policy environment may not lead to these institutions changing their modes of working – instead preferring to maintain existing methods. This is because, as Powell notes; "common procedures … may be maintained, even in the face of considerable evidence that they are suboptimal, because the benefits associated with familiarity may easily outweigh the gains associated with flexibility" (Powell: 1991, p192). As well as maintaining older methods of working due to familiarity, Powell also suggests that this reticence to change working methods may arise due to the legitimisation that comes from repeated institutional patterns of working (Powell: 1991). Path dependency, therefore, may also shed light on the actions of actors at the local level. In particular this can focus on how partners altered their existing working practices in order better to cooperate with the requirements of the LAA. This can also help in understanding the internal accountability structures of partners, which may be subject to a similar traditionalist view.

4.7 Constructing a Conceptual Framework

As this chapter has illustrated, there are several key theories which have some application to the research questions identified in chapter three, though it has to be recognised that many of them do not offer a full and comprehensive coverage of the research questions. Indeed, many of the theories and concepts outlined only cater to a small segment of the questions, reflecting the fact that these theories are very focused on specific aspects of governance. As such, while many of the theories offer useful insights, and can be drawn upon briefly throughout the rest of the thesis, they will not form the main thrust of the conceptual framework.

However, there are a number of theories which can help to analyse the research findings in more detail. Drawing upon these theories – and utilising some of the smaller, more focused theories where appropriate - it is possible to produce a conceptual framework for the research (Figure 4.2).

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│   │  Research objective: To analyse Local Area Agreements as a  │   │
│   │        tool to deliver effective local public services       │   │
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│             │  Literature Review Leading to Research  │               │
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│         │ Vertical Governance│    │    Horizontal     │              │
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│   │ │ - Strategic Relational│  │ - Strategic Relational│       │     │
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│   │  │ - Regulation Theory│     │ - New Institutionalism /│    │     │
│      ╰──────────────────╯      │   Path Dependency  │         │      │
│   │                            ╰──────────────────╯           │     │
│      Theories that help to understand those research questions │    │
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│             ┌────────────────────────────────┐                       │
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│        │ This will draw upon the theories utilised to assess aspects of │
│        │ vertical and horizontal governance           │             │
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│   │ Data collection methods that help to explore this conceptualisation │
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Figure 4.2 - A Conceptual Framework for the Thesis

In particular, of all the theories that have been discussed, there is one which appears to cover the broadest number of research questions. That is the strategic relational approach (SRA), outlined by Jessop (1990). This outlook presents the widest framework with which to analyse all of the themes raised through the research questions. Indeed, it allows for the investigation of themes around governance and accountability, specifically by framing them in terms of the relationship between the state and local areas. By doing this, questions can be used to investigate who benefits from such interactions and the wider reasons why these interactions take place.

Beyond this, Regulation Theory allows for the analysis of centre-local relations and the extent to which the LAA represents a mode of regulation, so as to maintain economic growth. New Institutionalism and Path Dependency is particularly helpful in analysing the questions focusing on local actor relations. This can assist in analysing the way that actors at the local scale act the way that they do, and the extent to which the institutions to which they belong influence these actions.

Therefore, results in the chapter relating to vertical governance will be analysed in the context of the SRA and Regulation Theory. In the results chapter which discusses horizontal governance, findings will be analysed within the context of the SRA and New Institutionalism/Path Dependency.

4.8 Next Chapter:

Now that the theoretical concepts have been outlined as a way of analysing the research questions, the next stage of the thesis will involve outlining the methodological considerations of the research. The following chapter will consider the conceptual framework and questions raised throughout chapter four in order to identify an appropriate model for selecting case studies and participants to be contacted, so as to provide the best possible data with which to consider these questions in more detail.

Chapter Five – Methodological Considerations and Case Study Selection

So far, chapter two has focussed on the changing nature of the delivery of local public services in England, before moving on to a detailed discussion of LAA policy in chapter three. From this discussion a number of research questions were identified, focusing on two main aspects – vertical governance (i.e. the relationship between the central state and the locality) and horizontal governance (i.e. the relationship between the actors at the local level). Following this, different theoretical avenues were investigated in chapter four to help conceptualise the research. This focused on several theories, dealing with the concepts of governance, central-local relations and actor relationships. Now, the research moves on to consider what sort of methodology is best suited to explore these themes in practice.

The chapter is split into two main stages. In the first of these, the methods for a national overview survey of LAA practitioners are outlined. The aim of this process was to help inform the case study selection process, by providing national data, which could indicate issues or non issues around particular research questions. Although, as will be discussed in the chapter, limits were placed on the case study 'catchment area' owing to how the research was funded, the aim was to be able to select case studies through an evidence based approach.

Therefore, given that case study selection was heavily influenced by the national overview survey it is not possible to explain their selection without first discussing the results of the overview survey. Therefore, there will be an analysis of the overview findings before outlining the case study areas, the rationale for their selection and the methodology for exploring the research questions within them.

5.1 Stage One: National Overview Survey

Chapters two and three identified a series of key themes that reflect the core issues in LAA implementation, while chapter four went on to identify a conceptual framework that can be used to analyse these questions. In order to study these questions in more detail, a set of case studies exemplifying the issues at hand would be required. This detailed exploration would then allow for broader reflections to be made around LAA delivery (Stake: 2000).

However, in order to reach that point it is essential that any case study selection is carefully justified. This was assisted by carrying out a national overview of all LAAs in England. This has several benefits. Whilst selecting areas for detailed study, this process also grants the opportunity for an initial exploration of some of the research questions. This would raise the possibility that some questions, whilst occurring in the literature review, may not turn out to be relevant to the practice of LAAs and thus, do not need to be taken further. Conversely, this could highlight issues which warrant further investigation. Therefore this process also serves as a way to further strengthen the case study work itself.

5.2 Method for the National Overview

In order to be effective, the national overview had to accurately and adequately reflect the experience of 152 LAA managers. This required very careful consideration as to the survey's composition. To best reflect this, and to assist the further refining the research questions in a way that also ensured a sound basis for selecting the case studies, the method that was selected for the national overview was a questionnaire survey.

There are several reasons why this method was the most appropriate. Importantly, the emphasis at this point was to encourage a high response rate, so as to obtain a clearer idea of how issues around LAA implementation and their governance were viewed at a broader scale. Simply put, the more responses that were received the more reflective the findings emerging from them would be,

and in turn, the better the case study selections would be in their ability to explore these issues in more detail. Therefore, rather than approaching only a small sample, in Winter 2009/10 the study approached all 152 unitary or upper-tier local authorities (100% of the population) (Krausz and Miller: 1974).

To maximise response rate, several issues were considered within the national overview. The first was the length and composition of the survey itself. The survey included only 10-15 questions, reflecting the broad topic areas identified as being important throughout the first three chapters. This was coupled with the fact that a majority of these questions were to be closed answer style utilising the Likert scale[12]. This served two purposes. Firstly, this question style makes data analysis significantly simpler, thus making it easier to identify patterns in the data that may not readily emerge in a qualitative answer (*ibid*). Secondly, this approach should minimise the response time for the survey by reducing the need for participants to provide protracted qualitative answers.

There were two methods of delivery of this survey that could be utilised: postal and online. Ultimately, it was perceived that conducting the national overview in an online format would be the best course of action for two main reasons – time and response rate. Firstly, the act of sending data would be quicker, with the ability to email each respondent individually. Secondly, the use of an online data collection strategy would present significant efficiency savings, both in collating, and subsequently analysing the data in order to draw meaningful conclusions.

After setting up a pilot interview with a LAA co-ordinator to consider which data collection method they would be most likely to respond to, the online method was shown to be popular, especially in terms of ensuring a high response rate. One of the principal reasons for this was the ease of reply, which broadly reflects the concerns about timeframe discussed earlier.

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[12] Where responses are recorded using a variety of tick boxes, with a scale/ranking system (De Vaus: 2002)

The process of identifying and contacting the managers for the 152 LAAs was done utilising a list of such people complied by IDEA[13] complemented by online research where the list was not up to date.

5.3 The Focus of the Survey

The survey itself was designed in order to focus on six main areas of interest, drawing upon the issues raised in chapters two, three and four.

Phasing & Guidance: As LAAs were implemented in several phases, there were questions as to how this phasing affected each area's ability to sign off and deliver upon an LAA. Therefore questions in this section were designed in order to identify any patterns in how phasing affected a number of issues, particularly focusing on guidance from CLG and how this had changed.

Beyond this, the overview sought to ask questions about the nature of the guidance itself. This focused on how clear the guidance was, as well as identifying any gaps or flaws that arose. It also questioned each locality manager on the extent to which the guidance from CLG allowed them to develop and focus upon issues which affected their individual area.

Government Office for the Regions: As the representative of Central Government in negotiating and signing off LAAs, GOR had the potential to play a key role in defining the focus of any particular LAA. Consequently, several key themes emerged. Firstly, there was an exploration of how the experience of negotiating the LAA indicators varied across the UK regions, both to see if any particular region had a strong overall relationship and vice versa. Consequently, the case studies could then focus on why this might be the case. Similarly the same data was analysed on an intra-regional basis, to investigate the extent to which each GOR dealt with individual LAAs within its boundary. This was also of interest, as

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[13] available online until the abolition of LAA's in 2010

detailed case studies could be selected which could allow for any differences to be explored.

Districts and Counties: The next section of the national overview focused exclusively on those areas operating a two-tier district and county model. This was in order to ascertain whether converting multiple SCSs – each focusing on an individual district's concerns - into one county-wide LAA was an issue in practice. To this end, the questions focused on the extent to which an LAA balanced district concerns against each other, before moving on to ask if any district carried any more influence in the negotiation process or not. Any findings in this section were intended to assist in making the case for the inclusion/exclusion of a district and county model local authority area in the case study selection.

Elected Representatives: The role of elected representatives in the LAA process and their accountability was also felt to be something that could influence LAA implementation.   In particular these concerns related to whether elected representatives were helpful or not in their conduct and the impact of party politics. To this end, results were analysed in the context of how the council was comprised at the time of the survey. This also allowed for a consideration of how a contrast between local political composition and the governing Labour administration in Whitehall may have lead to difficulties in delivering an LAA.

Strengths and Weaknesses: This section of the survey sought to obtain a more general perspective on how LAA managers perceived the LAA. This process identified some of the core features of LAA practice and asked practitioners to identify them as either a strength or weakness.   Then, each respondent was asked to rank, in order of importance, the three factors that they believed were most important to the effective delivery of an LAA.

Improving Practice: The final section tied in closely with the strengths and weaknesses segment but provided a more qualitative element, inviting LAA practitioners to share their thoughts on how they believed LAA practice could be improved.

Reflecting these six themes the National Overview survey set out a total of 15 questions (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 - National Overview Survey Questions

1. In your opinion, how clear was the guidance from CLG?
   (*Central Government*) when you were producing your LAA? (*Clear, Adequate, Unclear*)

2. What aspects of this guidance were a) helpful; b) unhelpful; c) absent?
   (*Overview of Expectation, Stakeholder Involvement, Themes, Indicator Selection, Negotiation and Signing Off*)

3. In your opinion, how relevant to you feel the national indicators are in allowing your LAA to address the issues facing your area, within the four main policy blocks?
   (*Relevant, Irrelevant*)

4. Of the areas where you have developed local indicators, what emphasis were they given compared to the national indicators set by your LAA?
   (*More Emphasis, The Same, Less Emphasis*)

5. How would you rate your experience with Regional Government Office when negotiating the indicators for your LAA?
   (*Good, Adequate, Poor*)

6. In your opinion, to what extent did the Regional Government Office balance issues specific to your area, compared to national policy priorities when negotiating your LAA?
   (*High, Moderate, Low*)

7. To what extent were the priorities detailed within each Sustainable Community Strategy presented at a district level reflected in the overall LAA?

(*High, Moderate, Low*)

8. Did any district(s) carry more influence than others during the LAA production process?

   (*Yes, No*)

9. If you answered 'Yes' to the previous question, what was the reason for this?
   (*Funding, Selection of Indicators, Size of Population, Negotiation Experience, Other (please specify)*)

10. Overall, to what extent are elected local members involved in the LAA process in your area?

    (*Very Involved, Moderately Involved, Minimally Involved, Not Involved*)

11. In your opinion, to what extent do you feel the involvement of elected officials has helped or hindered the LAA process?
    (Helped, No Difference, Hindered)

12. Based on your experiences, what do you feel are the overall strengths and weaknesses of LAAs?
    (*Scope of the National Indicators, Three year timeframe of the LAA, Involvement of Statutory Partners, Local Authority as Lead Partner, Negotiation and Signing off with Regional Government Office*)

13. In order of priority, what do you feel are the three most important requirements for the successful implementation of an LAA?
    (*Clear Guidance, Relationship with Central Government, Relationship with Regional Government, Relationship with Local Authority, Good relations with partners, effective community engagement, active partner agencies, local politics, other (please specify)*)

14. In your opinion, how could future LAA practice be improved?

15. Comments

Upon the completion of the overview, the findings were analysed and used to help inform case study selection. This was done in conjunction with several other data sources, including economic statistics. The process of selecting the case study areas is outlined later in this chapter.

5.4 National Overview Results

The overview survey was first sent out to all 152 LAAs in the UK in November 2009, with a second round 'follow up' conducted in March 2010. Overall, 73 LAAs responded, providing 60 individual sets of useable data. This represented 39.5% of the total LAA population (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 - National Overview Survey Response Rates

	Responses (N=152)	Completed Responses	Percentage of LAA's Represented
Round One	60	50	32.9%
Round Two	13	10	6.6%
Total	73	60	39.5%

A minority of participants failed to provide useable data due to a failure to complete the survey beyond the initial identifiers. The reasons for this are varied and subject to some degree of speculation. Within the survey itself, there are also instances where respondents failed to register an answer for a particular question, while still completing the survey. This results in fluctuations in the total responses to each question (in the range of 1-2 responses per question), but still allows for patterns to be identified. Overall, the response rate was very positive, providing a representative and useful sample with which to explore the issues identified earlier.

Coupled with the response rate, the geographical spread of responses was also very positive (Figure 5.1), with numerous responses from within each GOR and each of the models of local government structure. Therefore, this geographical spread allowed for a good consideration of national issues, covering all the contexts within which an LAA could be placed that were of concern to the research.

Legend

National Overview Survey

☐ <all other values>

Replied

☐ No
☐ Part
☐ Yes

0 25 50 100 Miles

N
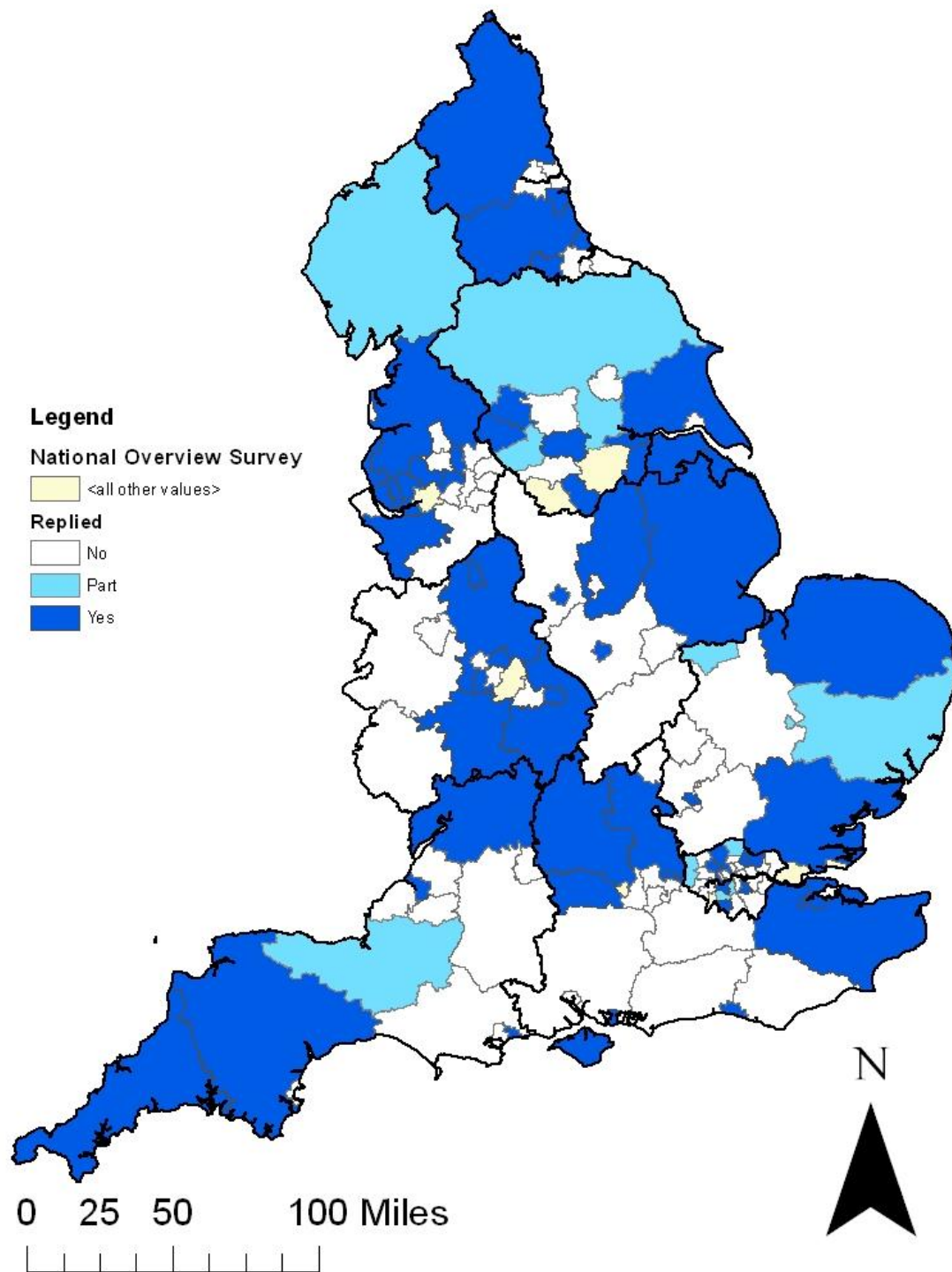
Figure 5.1 - Responses to National Overview Survey

5.4.1 Guidance

When asked about the clarity of guidance received from central government when producing the LAA, the respondents were generally positive. The majority of respondents (57%) described the guidance as 'adequate' with another 32% describing the guidance as 'clear'. Only 11% of respondents described the guidance as 'unclear'. The fact that 89% of respondents described the guidance as being at least adequate to do the job indicates that the quality of the guidance was not a significant dividing issue in influencing LAA production.

Although respondents were largely positive about the helpfulness of the individual aspects of the guidance, when asked, responses around the guidance for indicator selection showed that over a third (34%) of respondents found the guidance unhelpful. This gave a first indication that indicators may require deeper exploration in the case studies.

When asked about the relevance of the NID in allowing local areas to address the specific issues facing their area, once again the respondents were largely positive. However, when discussing the 'Economic Development and Enterprise' policy block, some 33% (20) of respondents described the indicators under this theme as irrelevant. This indicated a degree of unease with the NID and strengthened the case for further detailed questions surrounding the ability of the NID to effectively relate to an area's individual needs.

5.4.2 Government Office for the Regions

When asked about their experience with GOR when negotiating the indicators for their LAA, a majority of respondents (62% /38) described the relationship as 'good' with a further 31% (19) of respondents describing the experience as 'adequate'. This data, when discussed in isolation, presents a case illustrating that GOR has had a positive influence in the eyes of the localities. However, if the results are mapped (Figure 5.2), a different pattern begins to emerge.
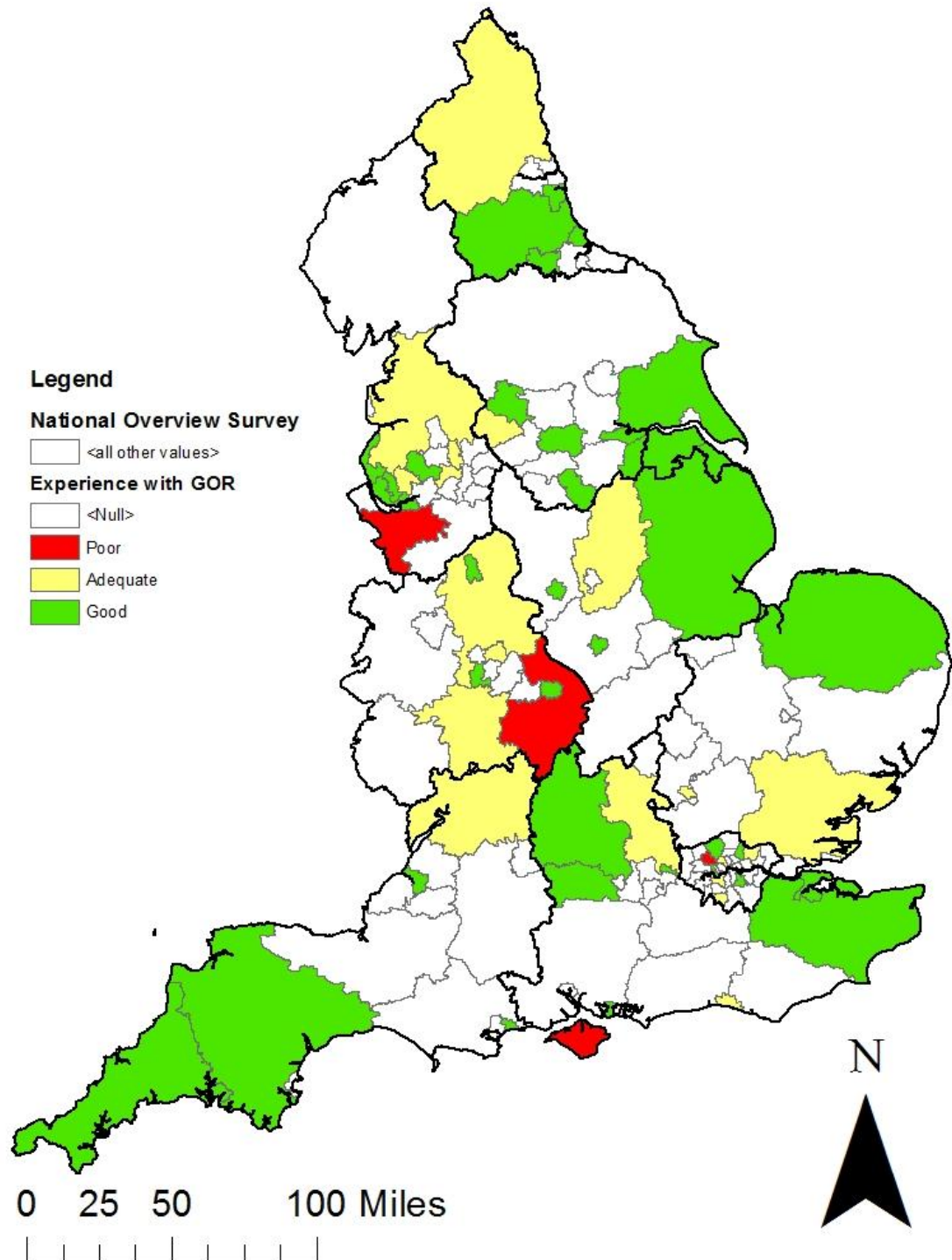
Figure 5.2 - What was your experience when dealing with GOR?

When these results were considered at a regional scale, although no single GOR emerged as being either particularly good or bad, some regions had a higher concentration of 'good' responses than the others (particularly the North East), whereas some had higher concentrations of 'adequate' (West Midlands). This provides some indication of the variation across the different regions, although the trends were not particularly compelling and so represented a weaker case for influencing case study selection.

However, when the data was analysed intra-regionally, a stronger trend emerged which significantly influenced case study selection. When the responses were analysed to focus within any particular GOR they clearly demonstrated that there was some consistency in the responses within each region, with no one GOR area recording a uniform response to LAA manager impressions. Most tellingly of all, four GORs (London, North West, South East and West Midlands) each reported the full range of responses i.e. poor, adequate and good. This illustrated that there was an inconsistency with individual GORs and how they worked with their constituent LAA areas. Whilst this could be reflective of the approach taken by GOR locality managers, this could also be indicative of the way various LAA managers received GOR representatives.

Nonetheless, this was one of the most striking results to emerge from the overview. The fact that within one GOR there could be such a wide disparity in satisfaction, suggests that the system was not working as intended. Therefore, this became one of the strongest criteria for case study selection, in order that this finding could be explored in more detail within one of these regions.

When asked about the extent to which GOR balanced issues of local specificity against those relating to national policy agendas, similar trends emerged. The most popular answer was "moderate' amassing 61% (37) of responses. With 'high' consideration gaining 28% (17) of responses, this meant that 87.5% of

respondents broadly felt they were able to balance local and national policy priorities through their LAA.

However, as with the previous question, when this data is mapped and analysed by region, a similar trend emerges (Figure 5.3). A 'Low' consideration of local issues amassed the fewest responses with just 11% (7) of replies, however these responses were given in areas (North West, West Midlands and London) where LAA managers provided the full range of responses in the consideration they felt was provided to them by GOR. This again illustrates a clear case for investigating GORs on an intra-regional basis to explore why these disparities occur.

The responses around GOR indicated several findings which warranted further investigation through case study. This expressly drew attention to the intra-regional responses. Therefore, case studies that allowed for a deeper investigation and understanding of the role of GOR in the LAA process were desirable. Within this consideration, a case study which allowed for further exploration as to the limits of GOR flexibility with regards to national policy priorities would be a key criterion.
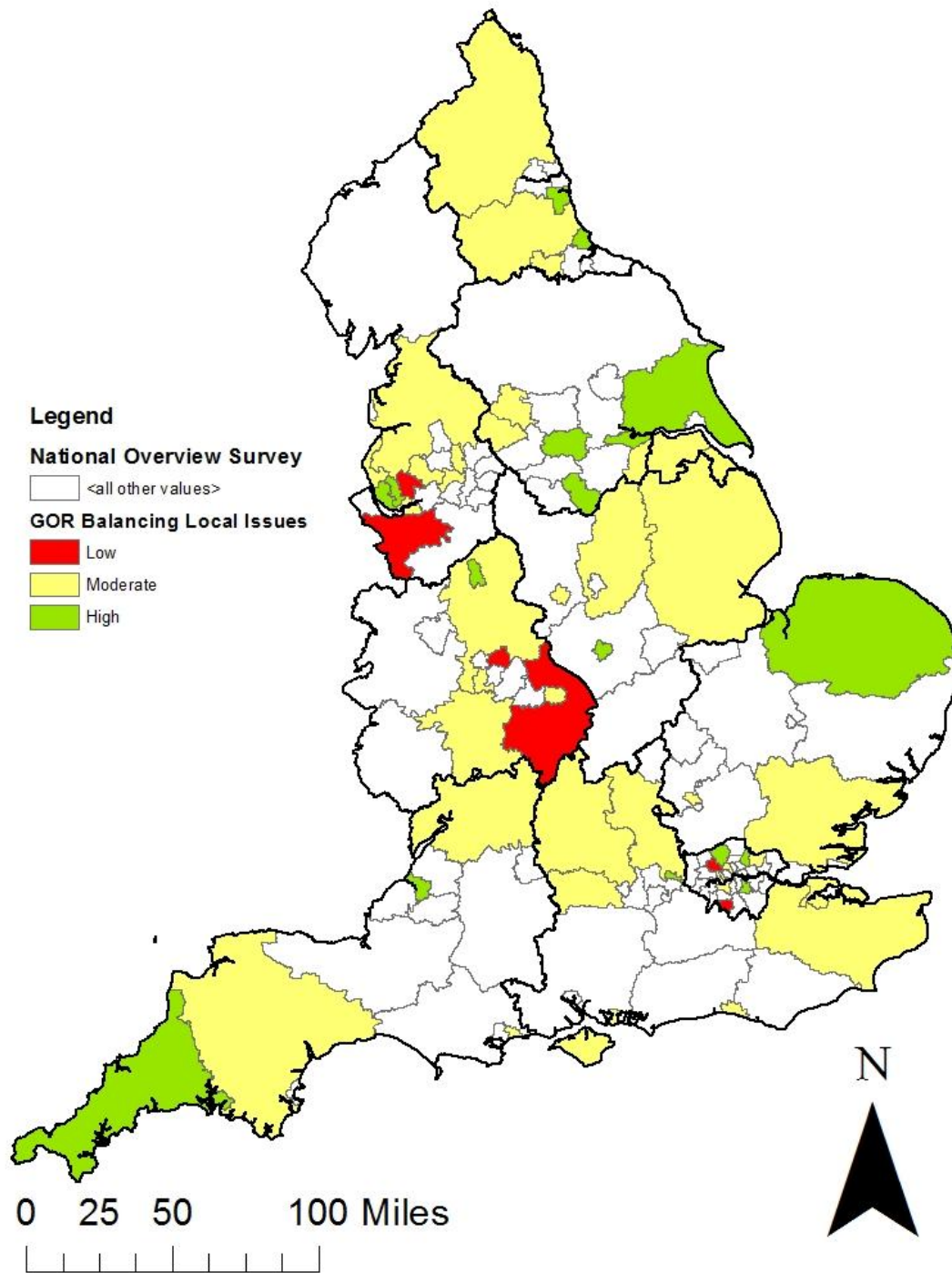
Figure 5.3 – Perceptions around GOR balancing local priorities against national priorities

5.4.3 Elected Representatives

In order to better understand how elected representatives affected LAA delivery, the responses were analysed to ascertain the extent to which a link existed between the level of political involvement and the extent to which this was perceived as being helpful (Figure 5.4).
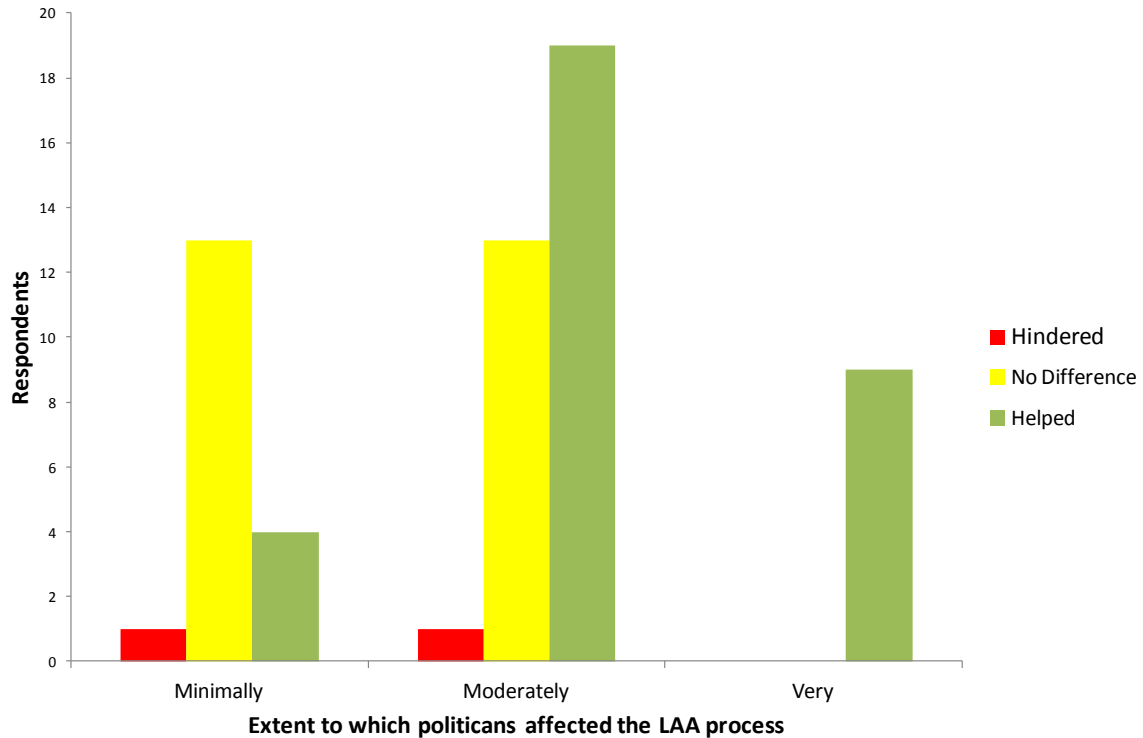
Figure 5.4 - Graph demonstrating the Link between Level of Involvement and effect on the LAA Process

This analysis demonstrated a link between the high involvement of elected representatives and their perceived help to the LAA process, with all the respondents that noted that their elected members were 'very involved' going on to cite them as a help. Furthermore, as the level of involvement decreased, the likelihood of representatives being seen as making no difference or even becoming a hindrance increased. While it might be expected that a pattern of less involvement and less help would arise, the logical next step was to analyse the instances in which this occurred, in order to see whether these issues could be explored through case study. To do this, the extent to which elected

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members were perceived to have helped was analysed against the political party in control of the local council (Figure 5.5).
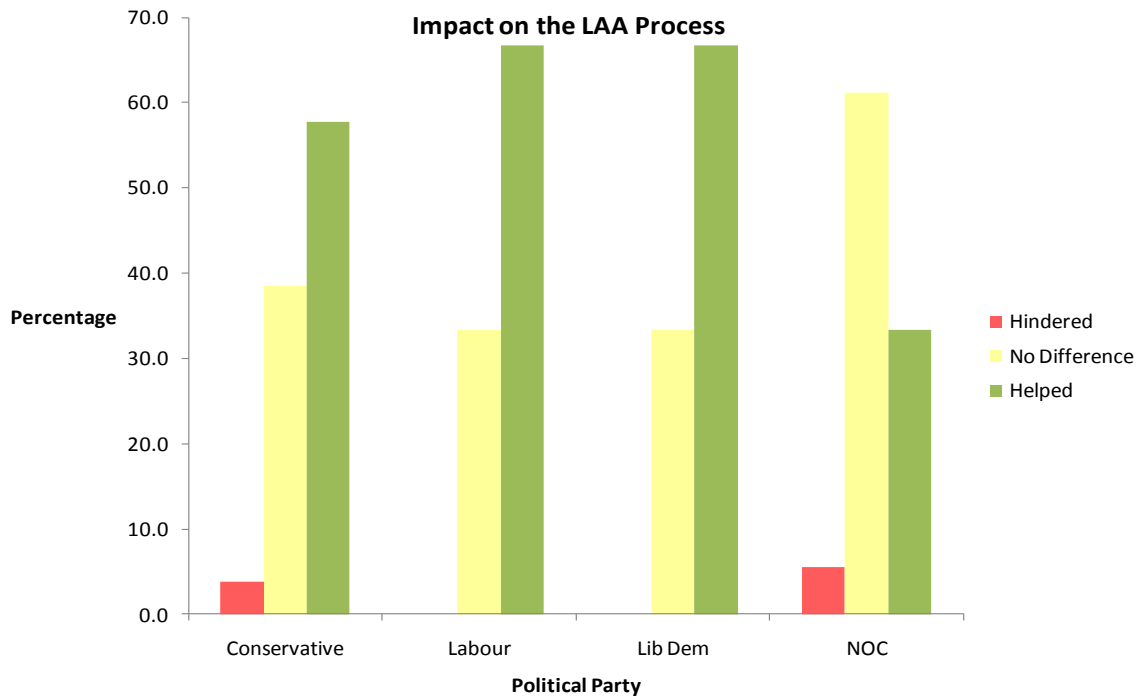
Figure 5.5 - Impact on the LAA process by political party

Interestingly, this demonstrated that there was no compelling link between the three main political parties and the extent to which they were perceived to help, with all three scoring similar results. This refuted the notion that party-politics would have an adverse impact on the LAA (and its governance). However, the analysis demonstrated that areas which were of 'No Overall Control' were significantly more likely to report their elected representatives making no difference, or to be of hindrance, than any area with outright political control. Therefore, the issue of interest here was not about party politics, but how political instability could hinder the LAA process. Consequently, this was to be reflected in case study selection by seeking an area (of any political control) which viewed elected representatives as helpful, and contrasting this with an area of NOC

which had reported a hindrance. Any subsequent examination would then explore the reasons why LAA managers might have provided these results.

5.4.4 Two Tier Authorities

Given that this section was intended exclusively for those LAAs operating in a 'county and district' model of local government, the were less responses than for the other questions – though responses still covered four of the eight areas that experienced reorganisation in 2009. Despite this, the answers still show some illuminating patterns, which significantly affect the case study selection.

When asked about the extent to which the county LAA balanced the needs and recommendations of each district's SCS (compared to other districts in the county) only one respondent said that their area was given a 'low' consideration – all others reported moderate (12) or high (7) consideration.

Developing this further, the respondents were then asked whether – in their view - individual districts carried more influence over others when the LAA indicators were being agreed. Overwhelmingly, 75% (15) of respondents answered 'no,' illustrating that the LAAs did broadly attempt to provide a balanced programme that reflected the wider needs of the county, as opposed to individual areas. There were a small number (5 areas) that felt individual areas were given more influence and priority over indicator selection and LAA priorities. When asked why, responses focused on one area's improved ability to negotiate on its own behalf, whilst another district provided members of the negotiation team when the county LAA was being agreed with GOR (indicating once again the importance of the GOR in negotiation). The final response noted that one area was granted more leeway due to the 'scale of problems' that it faced compared to other districts.

Overall, this section demonstrated that, compared to other issues to emerge from the overview, the role of two-tier government did not appear to have a major

effect on the practice of LAA implementation. Consequently, this theme would not play a decisive role in case study selection.

5.4.5 Strengths and Weaknesses of LAAs

When asked to identify which aspects of LAA practice they regarded as a strength or weakness, the respondents were clear. They were polled on 6 key areas of LAA practice;

- Scope of the National Indicator Dataset
- Targets
- Timeframe
- Involvement of Statutory Partners
- LA as lead partner
- The Role of the GOR

The final five categories were all described as a strength with, in each instance, well over two-thirds of respondents affirming this to be the case. In the case of the involvement of statutory partners, it was universally described as a strength. However, despite the majority of the results in this section being overwhelmingly positive, the respondents did identify one significant weakness: national indicators. By noting the NID as a weakness (63% / 35), respondents confirmed many of the concerns raised in chapter three about the ability of the LAA to focus on issues of relevance to their area. Consequently a deeper exploration of why this was the case went on to form a central aspect of detailed questions utilised in the case studies.

5.4.6 Most Important Requirements

When asked what they believed was the most important requirement for the successful implementation of the LAA, the respondents were clear. Having good relations with partner agencies was ranked as the top factor for success by half of those responding to the survey (30), coupled with a further 14 and 5

respondents that ranked it second and third respectively. This meant that 49 of the 60 respondents to this question considered good partner relations to be a key requirement for an LAA.

The importance of partnership is illustrated further with 'active partner agencies' scoring the second highest number of first priorities (17 respondents) and the second highest overall (40 respondents ranking it first, second or third).

These two results combined confirm the importance of engaged partner agencies to the success of the LAA, and provide a clear justification for a further exploration of this theme within the case study. This can help to better understand how the partners do work together and the implications of a failure to engage, as identified in chapter three.

The final key result to emerge from this was the importance of having a good relationship with the higher tiers of government. Having a good relationship with GOR scored 21 votes. However when the relationship with central government - whom GOR represent and whom have little direct say in individual LAAs – is taken into account, this rises to 31 responses. This indicates a potential conflation of the vertical governance and accountability structures of the LAA, but nonetheless shows the importance those managing LAAs place on fostering relationships beyond their boundaries. However, it is interesting that many LAA managers believe that a relationship with central government is important, considering that central government has minimal direct influence on how LAAs were agreed and implemented. This further highlights the key relationship that exists between the state and local areas and the impact that this can have on local public service delivery.

After summarising some of the key findings to emerge from the national overview survey, the thesis will now move to consider the selection of detailed case studies, which can help to explore some of these findings at the local scale.

5.5 Stage Two: Methodology for the Case Study Selection and Investigation

The second phase of the methodological considerations focuses on the case study selections which can assist in the detailed exploration of the research questions.

Although the national overview survey is substantial in its own right, the aim is to continue to build on this work, utilising case studies to explore some of the overview findings in more depth. Consequently, the case study selection process will draw upon evidence from the survey to help justify any resulting selection.

However, owing to the way that the research was funded, certain limits were placed on the case study selections. In particular, it was expected that case studies from the North West of England should be used, in order to assist the funder – Liverpool First – with their aim of improving their own practice. Even within these limits, the justification of case study selection is possible – and thus it can be demonstrated that these case studies can be used to reflect themes that occur on a national scale, and thus be well placed to provide comment on their causes and the lessons that emanate from them.

Therefore, the second aspect of this chapter will develop the methodology for conducting research at the case study level, before moving to outline and justify the case study selections themselves.

5.6 Principal Techniques and Participants

The principal technique that was used to conduct the research at the case study level was the semi structured interview. This method of interview struck a middle ground between the other two options – structured and unstructured interviews (David and Sutton: 2004). It offered the formal structure of a set of questions, which could be used to consistently drive the interview forward, providing clear

points to return to while simultaneously allowing for the exploration of other issues should they arise (e.g. a point made by the interviewee that warrants elaboration). This method required a duel set of skills from the interviewer in being able to thoroughly prepare and carry out an appropriately structured interview, whilst simultaneously being able to exploit avenues of enquiry should they arise. Clearly, the semi-structured interview represented the best option for conducting the case study interviews given the freedom it provided to further explore pertinent issues should they arise.

Given that the research focused on the three main levels of government that related LAAs, it was important to draw upon representatives from each tier, in order to gain as broad an understanding of the issues surrounding LAA practice as possible. The following section will outline who was contacted for interview at each tier and why.

Local Level: The local level formed the main focus of this research, due to the large number of research questions that revolved around LAA practice and governance at that tier. Consequently, it involved the most intense concentration of interviewees, reflecting the large number of actors who played a part in LAA delivery as well as the need to interview actors occupying similar roles across multiple case study areas.

The first group to be included at the local level were representatives from the LSP with responsibility for managing the LAA. This reflected their core role in LAA delivery and their ability to comment on how the LSP guided this process. Acknowledging the role of the Local Authority as lead partner in delivering the LAA, the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive of each case study area were also approached for interview.

Given the focus on partner relations, with research questions surrounding partner's roles and conflicts between internal/external agendas; it was essential

that representatives from each of the statutory partners were contacted. This included representatives from the police, Primary Care Trust, charitable sector and the fire and rescue service.

Government Office for the Regions: At the regional level, the list of interviewees was markedly smaller than that identified at the local level, reflecting the reduced number of actors involved. The main actors to be approached at this tier were the locality manager(s) which held responsibility for any selected case study area. This would help to explore the themes around whether GOR balanced local priorities or central goals, as well as the wider centre-local relationship issues identified in chapter three.

Central Government: In order to discuss centre-local relations it was essential to conduct interviews at the state level. This would involve two main groups of actors.

The first group was the ministers who hold, or held, responsibility for implementation of the LAA within Communities and Local Government. This list included Eric Pickles MP, Bob Neil MP (currently representing the Coalition Government) as well as Hazel Blears MP, John Denham MP and Ruth Kelly MP (who – at one time or other – all held this role under Labour). These ministers would also be able to reflect on the horizontal governance issues at a Whitehall scale, particularly including how the various departments interacted.

The second group was the civil servants within CLG who would be able to reflect not only on centre-local relations, but also how the LAA policy programme was developed over time.

Furthermore, across all the tiers of government sufficient scope was allowed to expand the range of interviewees based on suggestions/discussions that arose during the course of conducting interviews with the people identified above.

5.7 Observational Techniques

In several instances, participant observation was carried out. This principally involved observing executive board meetings of LSPs. The purpose of this was to study partner interaction and the working relationships that were required in order to deliver on LAA priorities.

This principally involved making detailed notes, and studying responses for their tone, intent and meaning in order to ascertain which actors held positions of power both formally and reality, or otherwise, and how they chose to act within that position.

5.8 Ethical Considerations

Given that interviews will form a significant portion of the data collection stage attention must be paid to the fact that this data is collected in an ethically sound manner. In particular this should ensure that the full consent of participants is obtained and that findings are also reported in an ethically consistent manner.

Much of this work was built into the interview process from a very early stage. When approaching people for interview it was made clear to them that such interviews would be held anonymously, so as to avoid repercussions. Given that all the interviews were recorded for future transcription, interviewees were also reminded at the beginning of interviews that their contributions would be made anonymous.

The only exception to this was in the case were such an interviewee would be instantly recognisable owing to the prominence of their role. Once such example would be Secretary of State for CLG (a role only held by several people), or Chief Executive/Leader of the Council which may have been held by only one or two people during the lifespan of the LAA. In those instances, before the beginning of the interview an informal discussion took place about the nature of this. By

way of solution, those interviewees were also told that if they wished to say anything 'off the record', the view would not be attributed to them in any way. This ability to speak in this 'off the record' fashion was also offered to all interviewees, if they wished.

In terms of the reporting of results, interviewees were referred to only by their organisation in order to add context where required, or if they related a story that rendered their organisation easily identifiable through the course of their own words. In all other instances they were referred to in the 3rd person, and in all instances any hint as to gender was removed.

5.9   Refining the Research Questions for the Case Study

Whilst interviewing actors at each tier is essential, in order to focus on all the issues of importance, it was recognised that some questions would only be of relevance to certain interviewees. Thus, a suite of questions was required that was modified from the core research questions identified at the end of chapter three. This process identified which questions would be of most relevance to actors at each tier as well as the generic questions that would be asked of all partners such as methods for improving any future system of local public service delivery. The full list of questions can be found in Appendix I.

5.10 Interview Data Analysis

Ostensibly, the analysis of the individual data was analysed using N.Vivo, a software programme for textual analysis of documents. Utilising N.Vivo allowed for segments of interview transcripts to be clustered into 'nodes' or themes, grouping together responses from interviewees on any particular topic, which in turn made drawing comparisons between varying viewpoints considerably less time consuming.

5.11 Secondary Data Sources

As well as drawing extensively upon the views expressed during interview, the research was supplemented by the use of documentary evidence. Specifically, this included the SCS and LAAs for those case study areas, as well as other supporting policy documents for their respective local authority areas.

Other data sources included public speeches on relevant policy issues, news media and policy documents produced in support of new policy initiatives.

5.12 Case Study Selection

Within the limits placed upon the research by the funder, and drawing upon the questions identified in chapter three, the theoretical avenues raised in chapter four and the findings of the national overview survey, it is possible to outline the key criteria for case study selection and consequently, to justify any selection. These criteria are outlined in table 5.3 below, providing a brief summary of their importance to case study selection. In order to select case studies to focus on the most relevant questions, each criterion has also been given a grading.

Table 5.3 – Topics and their relevance to case study selection

Area	Reason for Consideration	Weighting to Case Study Consideration
Location	Must be within the North West of England	Essential
Relationship with GOR	GOR has been shown to play a decisive role in LAA implementation, with significant intra-regional disparities becoming evident.	High
Historical Relationship with Central Government	The role of central government is considered to be important by many LAA practitioners. Therefore a case study area which possesses a historical relationship between central and local government is beneficial.	Moderate
Local Politics	While party politics has indicated no difference in the way LAAs are run, there is an indication that areas of NOC are likely to have an impact on an area's LAA.	Moderate
Socio-Economic Factors	While this is not a driving factor of any case study selection, a comparison can be used to determine similarities/differences between case study selections.	Low

Utilising these criteria and drawing upon data from the overview survey and nationally available statistics, two case studies that respond to these criteria are Liverpool and St Helens, located in the North West of England (See Figure 5.6).
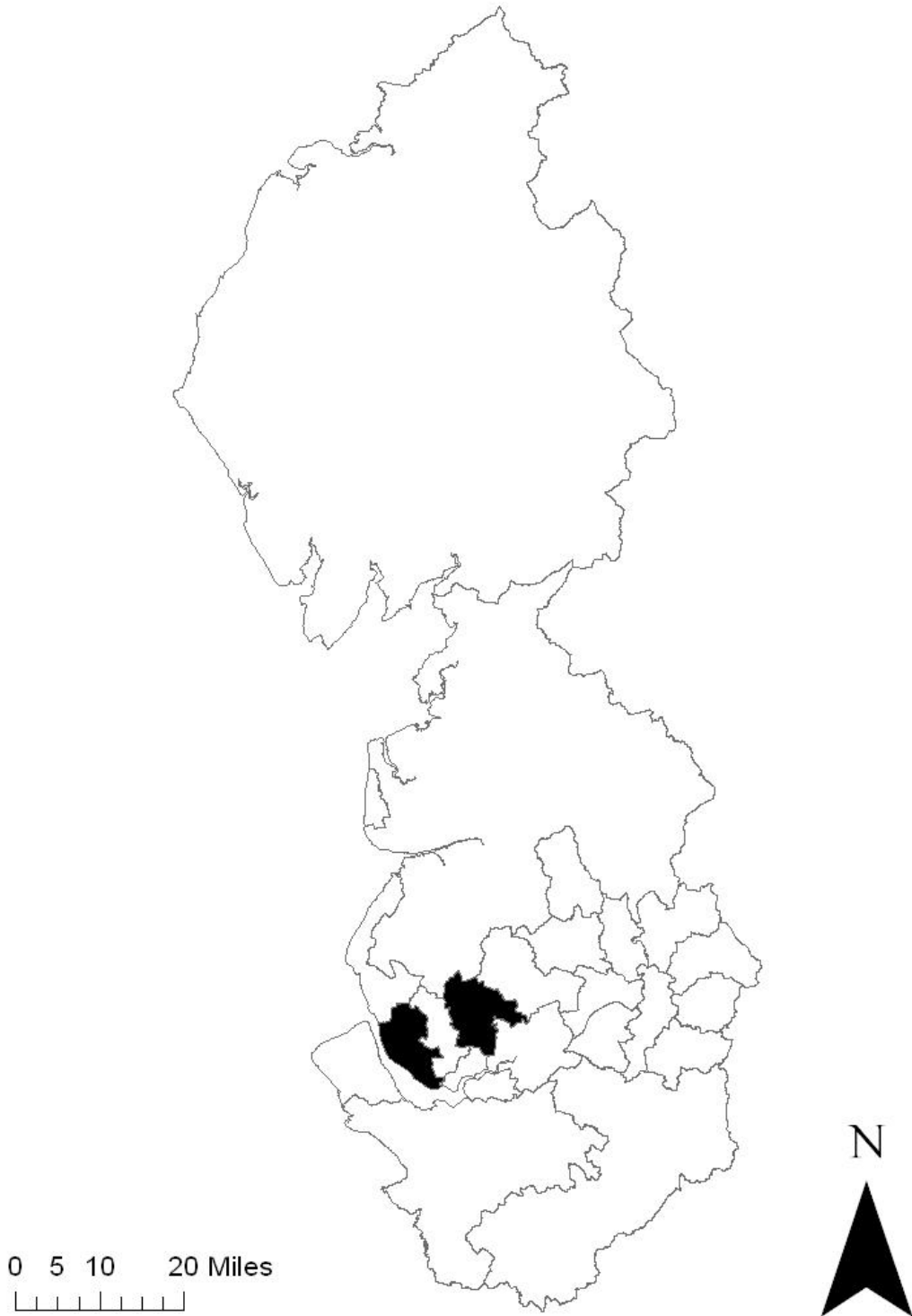
Figure 5.6 - Map Indicating the Location of the Case Study Areas within North West England

Reflecting the requirement to focus on the role of the GOR, the case studies are located in one of the government office regions showing data that indicated a disparity in the approach of the GOR. More specifically, Liverpool and St Helens are the individual districts in the North West that provided opposing answers over the extent to which local priorities were balanced against national priorities. Therefore, the two areas provide a basis to explore why this is the case.

The location of Liverpool and St Helens also offers a useful contribution to the deeper study of the strategic relational approach. This arises due to the fact that both areas were formerly districts within the metropolitan county of Merseyside, within which, the controlling Labour run council of the early 1980s oversaw an antagonistic relationship with the Conservative government - particularly over the ability to raise funds for local purposes (Parkinson: 1985). This was widely seen to be one of the key reasons behind the 1986 abolition of the Metropolitan Counties (of which Merseyside was one). This was perceived as one of the most overt uses of the SRA, in a clear show of the state expressing its dominance over local areas (Macleod and Goodwin: 1999). Within this context both Liverpool and St Helens offer a useful case study to explore how their historical relationship with the state affects their recent experiences of delivering the LAA. This can also provide a useful angle to explore the extent to which autonomy has been restored to areas which publicly had it taken away from them.

Socio-economically, the areas offer a useful platform from which to study. Both areas have been characterised by a period of industrial decline followed by recent physical regeneration. However beyond this general trend, a deeper understanding of the issues facing each area, such as employment and deprivation is crucial in drawing a comparison between each area's approaches and efforts. Firstly, utilising the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation[14] (IMD) –

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[14] Whilst the IMD was updated in 2011, this was after case study work was completed. Therefore at the time of selection, the 2007 IMD represented the most up to date data available.

alongside other economic performance indicators, discussed later - it can be clearly illustrated how the areas compare (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 - Deprivation in Liverpool and St Helens

| | IMD Rank | Income Rank | Employ-ment Rank | % of SOAs located nationally | | | | | |
				5%<	10%<	50%<	>50%	>10%	>5%
Liverpool	1	3	2	44.33	55.67	90	10	0	0
St Helens	47	71	51	6.91	22.88	71.19	28.81	0	0

Source: IMD 2007 (CLG: 2007c)

Overall, despite the figures for Liverpool indicating that the extent of deprivation is worse, there are broad comparisons to be made between the two areas. While Liverpool is ranked 1st (i.e. the worst performing) area in the UK, St Helens is ranked 47th, meaning that both areas are located within the 20% worst performing areas nationally (n=354). Both areas also show similarities in the extent of deprivation, with over 70% of super output areas[15] being located in the 50% most deprived nationally. This context is useful, particularly with the study of central-local relations, as the study of two areas which face broadly similar issues, yet report a difference in their ability to be locally responsive with their LAA against national priorities, warrants deeper investigation.

Economically, Liverpool and St Helens are also broadly comparable, as can be seen in Table 5.5. While both areas do have a percentage of their population of working age that is comparable with the national average, this is the only data that is similar to the national and regional averages. The percentage of the population that is economically active is well below the national average in both areas. Similarly both areas have an employment (and accompanying unemployment) rate that compares unfavourably the national average. Liverpool is consistently the worst performing, but St Helens displays similarly poor

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[15] A unit of geography containing a population of approx 1500 people

performing characteristics when both are compared within the region and nationally.

Table 5.5 - Economic Activity in Liverpool and St Helens

	Liverpool	St Helens	Average	
			Regional	UK
Population	434,900	177,500	-	-
% of Population at Working Age	65.5	61.1	61.6	62
% of Population Economically Active	67.5	73.9	76.8	78.9
% of Population in Employment	60.8	67.5	70.8	73.9
% of Population Unemployed	10.5	7.7	7.6	6.9

Source: ONS Mid Population Estimates and ONS annual population survey via NOMIS, April 2010.

As with the analysis of deprivation, the employment figures indicate that both St Helens and Liverpool face a similar set of economic issues. Once again this affirms that the case study selections can assist in exploring differing perceptions of local responsiveness, and the general differences in LAA approach within each area.

Politically, the two areas also offer helpful aspects from which to explore the research questions. The national overview indicated that while there was no discernible difference between the political party in control of the local council and perceived help given to the LAA process, there was an indication that councils of No Overall Control (NOC) would be more likely to hinder the process. The two case study selections help to explore these findings as Liverpool has outright political control, coupled with a response from the national overview survey that elected representatives helped the LAA process, whereas St Helens, was a council of no overall control[16] (reporting that the involvement of elected

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[16] At the time of completing the survey – under Labour Control since May 2010

members acted as a hindrance to the LAA process. Therefore, the two case studies are well placed to explore the extent to which political involvement and a stable political base can help with the effective delivery of local public services through the LAA.

Consequently, the case study areas of St Helens and Liverpool satisfactorily met the criteria identified for case study selection and allow for the detailed exploration of the research questions and the themes that were further developed through the national overview survey.

5.13 The Case Study Areas in Context

Before moving on to discussing the findings in more detail, a deeper understanding of the two case study areas is required. The purpose of this is to allow the outside observer, who might not be familiar with the areas, to better understand their context and background.

This will cover the general characteristics of each area, the political history, the key figures in the LSP/LAA process and the nature of its governance arrangements (particularly during the period covering the LAA).

5.13.1 Liverpool

With a population of 466,000 at the 2011 Census, Liverpool is the 5th largest UK city outside of London (ONS: 2012). Liverpool is also included as one of the eight UK core cities - noted for their size and economic performance.

Located on the River Mersey, historically, Liverpool's economy has been built around the river. In particular the city's docks and accompanying industries (e.g. docks, sugar, tobacco) were amongst the main employers in the city. As part of this, the city also had a central role in the slave trade (after which several locations in the city are still named), yet Liverpool was also the birthplace of one

of the key figures who ended the Britain's involvement in the slave trade - William Gladstone.

During the 1970s and 1980s, owing in part to globalisation, a shift in focus from the Atlantic to the European Union and changes to the shipping industry Liverpool went into swift and sharp decline experiencing high unemployment figures.

During the late 1990s and 2000s the city began to regenerate itself, drawing upon European Objective One funding to deliver significant improvements to the City's infrastructure and the city centre in particular. It could be argued that this process culminated in 2008 when the city celebrated being the European Union's 'Capital of Culture' - owing to its musical, artistic and sporting heritage.

5.13.2 Political History
Between 1974 and 1986 Liverpool was part of the wider Merseyside Borough Council structure. During this period Liverpool also operated as a district council. From 1986 to the present day Liverpool has held unitary authority status.

Although the Conservative Party did enjoy some support, in the period following 1974 the party has never held political control of the city. Instead political control has swung between the Labour Party and Liberals/Liberal Democrats. In the past this has presented a particular challenge as, besides the period 1997-98, Liverpool has never been controlled by the same party as that of national government. This has meant that the city has been forced to work with its political opponents in order to secure progress against any initiatives requiring national backing.

Much of New Labour's LGMA was overseen in Liverpool by a Liberal Democrat administration led by Mike Storey between 1998 and 2005, and then Warren Bradley between 2005 and 2010. Throughout this period, the Chief Executive of

the City Council was Colin Hilton. The chief executive in all councils is a full time employee of the council who acts in an apolitical capacity. The 2010 local elections saw Joe Anderson become leader of the City Council for the Labour Party. During this period Colin Hilton also stood down from his post, being replaced by Ged Fitzgerald.

5.13.3 Liverpool's LSP and LAA

There were two models that councils could draw upon when establishing their LSP - arm's length, or council-led. Liverpool opted to create an arm's length LSP, whereby the LSP would be, in effect, a separate organisation from the council itself. To this end Liverpool's LSP was known as 'Liverpool First'.

In reality, all LSP employees remained council employees, but Liverpool First's premises were located away from the main council offices, and the LSP had its own organisational structure. Liverpool First was run by Carol Perry, who served as chief executive.

With regards to the executive board[17] and LSP structure, Carol Perry held the strategic lead of the LSP, alongside the leader of the council and Colin Hilton. They were supported by the numerous statutory partners that comprised the LSP, as outlined in chapter three.

Beneath the executive board the LSP split into five thematic partnerships, broadly reflecting the policy blocks that comprise the LAA itself (see chapter three). Those five partnerships were:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Housing
- Safer and Stronger Communities

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[17] A full list of LSP Executive Board members can be viewed in Appendix IV

- Children and Young People
- Economic Growth

(Source: Liverpool First: 2009)

Liverpool opted to wait until phase three of LAA rollout in 2008 until it established its LAA[18]. This made Liverpool one of the last 61 local areas to adopt an LAA.

5.13.4 St Helens

With a population of 175,000 at the 2011 census (ONS: 2012), and located some 15 miles to the west of Liverpool, St Helens is a medium sized town which forms part of the wider Merseyside region.

Like Liverpool, St Helens' economic traditions lie in industry. The glass industry in particular was one of the principle economic drivers of the area, coupled with collieries and the chemical industry that bloomed in the area in the 20th century. St Helens also suffered a period of economic decline following the scaling back and closure of its core industries, however unlike its neighbour, there has been no cultural renaissance to act as a driver for change.

5.13.5 Political History

Like Liverpool, St Helens has experienced a changing political landscape over the years, albeit which markedly less regularity. Operating as a unitary authority since the disbanding of Merseyside Borough council in 1986, the Labour party have consistently been the most successful political party throughout, providing the area's MPs and the largest number of councillors. This allowed them to control the council from St Helens Borough Council's conception in 1974 until 2006.

However, the number of Liberal Democrat and Conservative councillors has, at times, been sufficient to create a coalition which has run the council. This

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[18] A full version of Liverpool's LAA can be found in Appendix IV

happened between 2006 and 2010. Following the 2008 local council elections the council was hung, although the Lib Dem/Conservative coalition held on to control. During this period the council was led by Brian Spencer. In 2010 control of the council returned to the Labour party, with Marie Rimmer returning as leader. Throughout, the chief executive of St Helens Council was Carole Hudson.

Although not as extreme, the political makeup of St Helens offers some parallels to Liverpool. In particular, during the period of the LAA St Helens political composition differed from that of central government. Thus the ability for the area to work with a different political party to achieve local outcomes could be scrutinised and compared with its neighbour.

5.13.6 St Helens' LSP and LAA

Unlike Liverpool, St Helens opted to have its LSP integrated within the structures of the council. The LSP was known as 'St Helens Together' but was operated principally by council employees, operating out of the town hall.

Meetings of the executive board[19] were chaired by the leader of the council, with the support of the chief executive. Beneath the executive board, St Helens split its working into four thematic partnerships, eschewing the explicit focus on housing that Liverpool opted to take.

- Economic Development and Enterprise
- Health and Wellbeing
- Children and Young People
- Community Safety

(Source: St Helens Together 2012)

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[19] A full list of executive board members can be found in Appendix VI

St Helens' LAA[20] was introduced as part of the second phase of LAA rollout in 2007, making St Helens one of the 66 areas to participate in this phase.

5.13.7 Liverpool and St Helens' LAA: A brief analysis.

Developing on the socio-economic analysis undertaken earlier, which helped to justify the case study selection, a side-by-side analysis of the two respective LAAs from each area can help provide further understanding of the two areas and the kinds of issues they face.

Table 5.6 highlights which indicators[21] were adopted by each respective area, as well as indicating which indicators were adopted by both areas.

Table 5.6 Indicator uptake in Liverpool & St Helens and side-by-side comparison

Liverpool	**St Helens**	**Shared Indicators**
1, 4, 15, 16, 19, 20, 29, 30, 32, 39, 53, 56, 62, 115, 116, 117, 120, 124, 151, 153, 154, 156, 163, 165, 167, 171, 172, 175, 195	5, 6, 15, 16, 21, 30, 32, 39, 40, 47, 53a, 53b, 55, 63, 79, 111, 112, 115, 117, 120a, 120b, 123, 130, 135, 136, 141, 151, 153, 154, 163, 166, 171, 176, 187a, 187b, 192, 195a, 195b	15, 16, 30, 32, 39, 53, 115, 117, 120, 151, 153, 154, 163, 171, 195
N=29	N=34	N=15

Sources: Liverpool First: 2008, St Helens Together: 2008

Although areas had the option to select up to 35 improvement indicators neither area opted to do this. St Helens selected 34 improvement indicators, whilst

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[20] A full version of St Helens' LAA can be found in Appendix V
[21] A full list of indicators can be found in Appendix VI

Liverpool adopted only 29. This figure does not include the statutory education indicators present in both sets of LAAs.

When the LAAs are compared to see which indicators were adopted by areas, it is apparent that there are 15 indicators that are jointly held. They principally relate to crime, health (particularly mortality), drug abuse and employment (including youth employment).

This reflects the analysis conducted in chapter three around the homogeneity of indicators and their selection. Indeed, many of the jointly held indicators are those covered in that analysis. Given that the socio-economic composition of St Helens and Liverpool has been shown to be broadly similar, the fact that roughly half of the LAA has included the same targets demonstrates the ability to produce bespoke solutions to local issues may somewhat limited.

However despite this, there are still some differences in approach. Even though St Helens socio-economic and deprivation performances are nominally better than those of Liverpool, the area has opted to select more indicators. More tellingly than this, however, is the fact that St Helens opted for less 'satisfaction' style indicators than Liverpool, instead opting for more 'hard-nosed' practical indicators. This would run counter to expectations that an area experiencing poorer performance, might opt to select indicators more likely to deliver a practical outcome.

Another approach that St Helens has taken, which Liverpool has not, is to split a performance indicator into component parts – allowing for measurement on a number of things. One example of this is NI187, which focuses on households receiving income benefits. St Helens has opted to split this into high and low energy homes, allowing for an explicit focus on those in fuel poverty.

Beyond this, here are differences in how each area opts to present its LAA, although it is accepted that they might be purely aesthetic in nature. Liverpool appears to set out its LAA as if telling a story, with indicators grouped thematically including local indicators, whereas St Helens opts to produce a list of indicators, running in sequential order, with local indicators at the very end.

Although this makes little difference, the presentational issues show that areas can opt to present their priorities differently, even if in the case of Liverpool and St Helens the substance is similar.

Now that the case studies have been outlined in more detail, including a discussion of their background, the following chapters will explore the in depth findings that emerged from them. This will draw upon issues of vertical and horizontal governance, and involve interviews with key practitioners within each area's LSP/LAA structures.

Chapter Six – Vertical Governance and Central-Local Relations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the findings related to the research questions raised in chapter three that focus on aspects of vertical governance i.e. the interactions between the state and the localities.

In doing so, the chapter will provide an account of the extent to which local areas were able to use the LAA to truly respond to pressing local issues, focusing particularly on the selection of the 35 national indicators and the setting of the performance targets in relation to all of these. In this, the chapter will consider the extent to which national policy priorities were imposed upon local areas. In doing so, the chapter will seek to draw out whether the national indicator dataset itself allows sufficient scope for local responsiveness, or whether it simply replicates national policy priorities at a local scale. This will be achieved by using deprivation in England's major urban areas as a lens to focus on variations in NID take up based on an area's characteristics. The chapter will then focus on the methods utilised by Whitehall throughout the negotiation process, including the involvement of central departments.

Finally, the chapter will focus on the lower tier of vertical governance – the regions. This will seek to appraise the role of local actors in the aforementioned discussions, particularly around the indicator selection/ target negotiation phase of the LAA. Moving beyond that, it will seek to assess the reality behind Goodwin et al's (2006) model of attitudes towards regional negotiation (i.e. local champion or central servant) drawing upon interviews from each of the three tiers of government.

6.2   The National Indicator Dataset and Indicator Negotiation

Given that one of the central principles of the LAA was that local areas were to be allowed to designate the issues that were of importance to them, one of the aims of this research was to ascertain the extent to which that was allowed to happen in practice. Against this, the research also considered whether the LAA could also serve as a vehicle for delivering national policy priorities at a local scale.

The spine of the LAA was the selection of up to 35 indicators from a suite of 198 national indicators.   Given that one of the research questions placed an emphasis on the extent to which local areas can focus on the issues that are of importance to them, an exploration of the extent to which this suite of 198 indicators did provide sufficient scope for local expression of priorities was of relevance.

The results from the national overview survey also gave cause for further and deeper exploration of this issue. When asked whether they believed the scope of the national indicator dataset was either a strength or a weakness of the LAA system, 64% (50) of LAA managers felt that it was a weakness, providing an early indication that the national indicator dataset may not be entirely suitable to allow areas to focus on issues of local importance.

6.3   Homogeneity of targets

In chapter three, analysis of LAAs from the core cities indicated that there was a significant degree of homogeneity over indicator uptake focusing on issues of deprivation. In particular this analysis highlighted that as levels of deprivation increased, the likelihood on an area's LAAs containing a large proportion of the same indicators also increased - drawing into question whether an LAA represented an opportunity for a local area to create a bespoke solution to the issues it faced.

The detailed case studies then provided the opportunity to probe this homogeneity and lack of scope within the National Indicator Dataset in more depth. There was little surprise expressed by participants any level about these findings, although further comment does provide further enlightenment about the LAA's ability to be locally responsive as opposed to delivering national policy agendas.

One interviewee from a PCT noted that 'the health problems [in our area] are so significant that they're likely to align with national drivers anyway. So you don't feel necessarily that they were imposed, they were things that you wanted to do in any case". [c22]

Former Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Hazel Blears likened the situation to Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' (Maslow: 1943) saying that areas need to be able to focus on the necessities of survival before focusing on things generally not see as an immediate priority, and the LAA indicators provided a mechanism for them to do that. This was a sentiment that was also held by the civil servants at CLG with responsibility for LAAs. However this view misses a central point in that if this were the case then being deprived would essentially limit an LAA's ability to be locally responsive only giving the pretence of a choice, as the targets would be picked before the process even began. This is a view that is held by a former senior civil servant who helped negotiate some of the initial pilot LAAs, who described what felt like a 'phoney dance' over the indicator selection, as "we all knew which [indicators] are the ones [that would be selected]." [m]

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[22] All letters correspond to the list of interviewees, which can be found in Appendix II

6.4 Top Down Targets

By looking at the variation in LAA responses to deprivation, it has been illustrated that in some cases, the indicators that are selected as part of an area's LAA are essentially pre-defined based on the depth and scale of the issues that an area faces.

However chapter three identified the potential for the centre to prescribe indicators arbitrarily during the negotiation process. As will become clear, within both case studies top down pressure from both Whitehall and the GOR representatives was reported, with regards to specific targets being included within the LAA.

As discussed in chapter three, the most obvious manifestation of this was through the mandatory education indicators included in every LAA. However it was estimated by the partners that the statutory education indicators only formed a small part of the legal obligations of an area that were funded out of the ABG. Indeed one partner from Liverpool's Chamber of Commerce estimated that as little as 15% of the ABG would be left over, once the statutory issues had received their funding, which then prompted significant-fighting among partners over the remaining resources (the details of which will be covered in more depth in the next chapter on local governance). This reality for local choice is confirmed by a senior member of St Helens' PCT who estimated that only about 20% of the local freedoms and flexibilities sought by St Helens were actually granted.

Moving beyond the mandatory requirements of the LAA, which indicate significant top-down restriction on its function; interviewees also spoke of Whitehall departments seeking to ensure that their targets would be included within their area's LAA. This first became apparent through the national overview survey with one LAA manager complaining of 'too many central government steers' on indicators/targets.

When exploring this at a case study level, this top-down pressure was principally viewed as coming from the Department of Health and the Home Office in particular. Within the broader LSP structure, partners spoke of letters sent from Whitehall departments suggesting which targets an LAA might wish to include. This led one representative from the voluntary sector to remonstrate against this, believing that it ceased to become a 'local' area agreement as a result.

However, this top-down process is revealed in more detail by representatives from the PCT and police which were - by most accounts – responsible for, and (internally) subject to, the most top-down pressure. Although they avoided giving details on specific indicators/targets, officials from the PCT spoke of 'steers to go for certain targets' coming from above whilst the police spoke of the need to select crime indicators that aligned with targets set internally by the Home Office.

6.4.1 Civil servants also felt that this top-down pressure led to the LAA becoming the stage for Whitehall infighting, so that if the 'Home Office wanted a particular priority in Northamptonshire, well they may not get it without the Department for Education backing down on one of its targets.' This statement in itself sums up the extent of the top-down pressure, in that in this scenario, it was not local responsiveness that was being sacrificed to a Whitehall department, but another Whitewall department ceding to another. Consequently, in some cases the LAA would descend into a horse trading exercise between Whitehall departments pursuing their goals over the heads of the local area. This top down pressure and infighting was acknowledged at the Whitehall level with Secretary of State Hazel Blears expressing frustration that "other government departments wanted to push their own agenda, not always to the benefit of the collective agreement around Whitehall. For example the Home Office would want their crime targets [included] come what may." [e]

This illustrates that within Whitehall there were departments that did see the LAA as a way of furthering their own agenda whilst delivering action in local areas This was opposed to the vision set out by CLG in that local areas could define their own priorities.

6.4.2 Commitment to central targets i.e. congestion (NI167)

Beyond the wider top-down pressure from Whitehall to adopt particular indicators/targets, another issue emerged from the case studies whereby areas were pressured into adopting an indicator in their LAA in order to illustrate their commitment towards a policy area for which it received funding[23].

In St Helens and Liverpool, partners discussed how this manifested itself via NI167 relating to road congestion. This provided a concrete example that Whitehall was prepared to manipulate an LAA in order to see its own priorities included on a wider scale. Senior civil servants were aware of this happening, and in the case of NI167 noted a long standing unease within the Department for Transport about local areas accepting central funding and then not showing – what they felt to be - sufficient commitment in local policy towards the project. There was also suspicion amongst many of the partners at the local level that they were pressured into adopting NI167 in order to bring in a congestion charging scheme, despite strong misgivings locally about its appropriateness for Merseyside.

In the case of Liverpool, former chief executive of the city council Colin Hilton identified the congestion targets as 'an up and coming issue, [but] it wasn't one that should be in the 35' and included at the expense of other local priorities. This view that the indicator wasn't a priority for the Liverpool was also shared by current and former representatives of GOR, but they noted that this was not the

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[23] Partners indicated that this commitment was additional to that shown under the terms of any original funding agreement

only reason why they did not want the indicator for Liverpool. They also felt that to effect real change on this issue required changes in legislation which the authority was not empowered to make (i.e. control of public transport operators[24]) and so they viewed adoption of this indicator as not being appropriate. This notion of indicators that are difficult to deliver against, or have unintended consequences will be expanded upon later in this chapter.

6.4.3 Peer Pressure

Beyond the instances of top-down Whitehall departmental pressure, one council officer who was involved with the LAA in St Helens complained that peer pressure was being applied to them during the negotiation process, in order to encourage St Helens to adopt NI167. The situation arose due to St Helens seeking to resist the inclusion of NI167 in favour of other indicators. After doing this, it was indicated to the St Helens negotiating team that they would be the only council in the Merseyside area (Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, Wirral and St Helens) which would not be selecting NI167 as part of their LAA. While this point was being made, the council officer felt it was intimated that if St Helens were the only area in Merseyside that was not taking up this target, this would make it harder to create cross-authority/regional policy on the issue.

The case of NI167 is a clear example of where top-down pressure was applied to LAAs, conflicting against the ability of an LAA to respond to local needs. Indeed, it is testament to the strength of central government power that the indicator ended up in both Liverpool and St Helens' LAA (Liverpool First: 2009, St Helens Together: 2008), meaning that each area ultimately accepted an indicator in the LAA that it did not believe was a priority.

This provides a strong indication as to why some local areas felt they were given little autonomy in identifying the issues of local importance.

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[24] Public transport in the UK is principally operated by private companies who are responsible for deciding aspects of service provision.

6.4.4 Acceptance of Top Down Control

Despite this top down pressure contradicting many of the central principles of the LAA over local responsiveness, there is wide reaching evidence that many of the actors accepted this element of top down control, seeing it as a practical reality of the centre-local relationship.

One partner in Liverpool felt that framing targets through a national perspective was a logical method of doing things as this would mean that certain indicators/targets would be natural/obvious choices for an area to select, specifically if they were performing particularly poorly on a national scale, or compared to similar areas. Senior police officers also spoke about how this process was already in place within the police force, as police authorities were already grouped with other police authorities with similar profiles[25] for performance management purposes so as to better compare responses.

However, much of the acceptance of this stemmed from partners realising that due to the significant amount of central funding received by local areas through the ABG, it would be unrealistic for them to expect to be able to do as they pleased. One representative from the voluntary sector in St Helens felt that purely from an accountability perspective "as a voter and a taxpayer, you would expect government to say it's not acceptable to not have some of the very key things in [the LAA], wouldn't you?... if an area said we're not really bothered about whether people get jobs, where there's massive levels of unemployment, you would expect national government to [demand the area respond to those issues]." [d]

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[25] Rather than being grouped with surrounding areas which may present different characteristics (and thus crime of a different nature), forces would be grouped into 'families' based on a number of demographic issues, including deprivation and employment. For example, St Helens was grouped with Swansea and Middlesbrough.

Indeed, many actors, at each level, confirmed the view that it is impractical for the state to let go. Instead, Hazel Blears suggested that the LAA system, with its local flexibilities, was actually an attempt to attain more of a middle ground between central and local priorities. By doing so this served to increase local involvement as opposed to delivering fully devolved decision making.

6.5   A 'bureaucracy of control'?

However, not all the partners felt that top down control of the LAA represented a flaw in the system, but instead, there was a perspective which held that instead, this was simply reflective of state control and the privileging of a state agenda as outlined by Jessop (1990). This centred on the notion that England, in terms of its modes of governance, is very centralised (reflecting something referenced consistently throughout the literature review) and the LAA simply represented a continuation of this process.

Indeed one former senior civil servant was of the view that the LAA was simply a furthering of the 'bureaucracy of control' created by successive Whitehall governments which believe that they know best, even when that is not directly articulated through formal policy. As a result of this control, the negotiation process represented a method through which Whitehall controlled the makeup of what each LAA did. In turn this would mean that each local area would have to seek permission from central government in order to work on any particular target that was outside of the interests of Whitehall.

This discussion about whether indicator selection displays cynical characteristics when considering national policy priorities raises significant issues with the contention that the LAA is a locally responsive document. Whichever is the case, it appears that there is significant central control which is either willingly accepted by partners – many of whom are accustomed to working in a centralised policy environment – or cynically foisted on to areas which might have other priorities. However, to a large degree the situation is understandable due to the extent of

funding provided by central government which wishes to see a return on its funding investment and thus wants to influence which indicators and targets are selected.

6.6   35 Indicators – What about Target Setting?

So far, much of this chapter has focused on the suite of national indicators - of which LAAs select up to 35 - and the impact that they have had on central-local relations.   Now the chapter will move on to discuss the performance management aspect of these indicators i.e. the targets that are set against them and consequently the extent to which they affect the same issues of local responsiveness.

As will become clear as the section unfolds, this is driven by partners at all levels pointing out that while the indicator selection was important for an area, it was in fact the targets that were set against those indicators that often proved to be more contentious.

6.7   Unachievable targets:

The first indication that the target setting process could be an issue in practice as well as theory came through the national overview survey data. When asked to make general comments on their perception of the LAA system, one area in the North West said "[our area] was coerced into accepting targets we knew we would not hit simply because they were a government priority. Whilst they were also a priority for [our area] - the targets were simply disaggregated from national targets and were too high for [our area]." The fact the area in question accepted that the general inclusion of the performance indicator reflected the priorities of the area, yet felt aggrieved at the nature of the target is telling. However, most telling of all, is the allegation that targets were simply reproduced from national attainment targets (which may be difficult to reach for areas facing concentrated levels of any issue (I.e. crime, deprivation). This viewpoint illustrated that whilst an area could be happy with the 35 indicators that it selected, they could still end

up with targets that were inappropriate or unachievable for their area, thus making the LAA ineffective. Although no evidence surfaced that it happened in practice, this also created the potential for a theoretical 'double whammy' whereby an area was forced into accepting an indicator that they did not want, coupled with an indicator target that was simply unachievable.

When exploring this issue at the case study level, within St Helens, it became clear that the issue of unachievable targets was a significant issue. In particular this centred on the target for reducing teenage pregnancy. Although reducing the teenage pregnancy rate in St Helens was widely accepted amongst partners as a major problem with the area, partners were largely agreed that the manner in which they were expected to deal with it through the LAA was unreasonable. This was due to two connected issues. The first was as a result of GOR seeking to be ambitious in the setting of the target so as to stretch the area, although one partner in St Helens described the level of the target as 'harsh' in that it would be very difficult to achieve. Secondly however, and more importantly, it was felt amongst some partners that GOR failed to understand the nuance of the target itself and how improvements would be achieved. With one partner pointing out that there are "things [referring to Teenage Pregnancy] which you only have so much control over if you're realistic". In seeking to explain the nature of these nuances, another partner noted that even if all appropriate means were put in place (i.e. sex education, sexual health services) it could still prove ineffective due to the inefficiencies of acting against an issue which does not have a simple technical solution, rooted in one cause.

Partners were also critical of GOR when seeking to mitigate these discrepancies between target and delivery, feeling that GOR were largely unsympathetic to local concerns. Discussing this, one partner related that during the negotiation there were "occasions where we got into situations where GOR officials would say 'well that's the target so tough'" further confirming that in some cases there was little flexibility to reflect justified local concerns.

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It was also felt by partners that economic issues fell into the same category, in that the indicators/targets could fail to reflect the multi-faceted task of developing an economy. These concerns related to targets which particularly failed to consider issues outside of the local authority's control (e.g. a company relocating etc) that could have a significant negative impact, despite best intentions and actions.

This underlines that there were occasions where significant top-down pressure was applied to local areas in order to enforce LAA targets that local practitioners did not feel were achievable, with little consideration for local characteristics, indicating once again that the LAA model could prove deficient in reflecting local considerations, even when they were expressly made.

However, John Denham contended that the process of unachievable targets would still serve to stretch LAAs in order to attain results that they might not if they were set a comfortably achievable target. As an example of what he meant, he described a discussion with a senior Accident and Emergency consultant in relation to the four hour maximum waiting time in hospitals;

> *"The idea of a four hour waiting time is nonsense. The other thing that you need to know is that the only way I manage to get this hospital to take my patients seriously is the four hour waiting time. I cannot defend it as a clinical measure, but until the hospital as a whole was forced to confront the problems we had, I couldn't get them to change…"* [1]

Therefore, in John Denham's view, the stretching of LAA targets could be construed as a way of forcing local areas to abandon complacent practices and reach further than they might not otherwise. What became clear, however, was that the art in this was to stretch the areas by just enough.

6.8 Perverse Targets

Earlier in the chapter, it was briefly discussed that some of the national indicators – including those forced upon local areas – may have lead to perverse outcomes i.e. they measured the wrong thing or were impossible to implement. Within the case studies three distinct examples of ineffective or perverse targets emerged, that allows us to explore this further.

NI167 – Traffic Congestion: The first, as discussed earlier in the chapter is NI167 and congestion.   In the view of several respondents, NI167 proved to be ineffective due to the fact that it required changes in primary legislation in order to deliver it. One respondent summed up the legislation changes required noting that one of the principal ways of alleviating congestion requires "a decent public transport system. And you can't have a decent public transport system unless you've got control of the private operators. And you can't do that because legislation forbids it except for London[26]'. This was a view shared by many of the interviewees on this issue, feeling strongly that primary legislation covering the delivery of public transport needed to be changed in order to make this a worthwhile exercise. Consequently, areas were left with a national indicator in their LAA that they didn't want, and felt that they had little practical recourse in order to deliver against it.

NI32 – Domestic Violence: One example that was raised by senior police officers as delivering perverse outcomes was NI:32 – 'repeat incidents of domestic violence' - even though the same officers felt strongly that the indicator itself was appropriate for inclusion within the LAA.

The difficulty with NI:32 revolved around a difference in what it intended to measure and what it actually measured. This is because, instead of measuring instances of domestic violence, the indicator measured the number of calls that

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[26] Transport for London is operated by the London authority, rather than by private companies.

were received by police for domestic violence. Senior police officers felt that was "absolutely contrary to what is required" and that instead, the measurement should have placed a focus on;

> "reducing incidents of domestic assault. So therefore has there been a domestic assault, not has someone rung us up [sic]. Because if somebody rings us up and says my husband has come home drunk and I think he's going to assault me, we can [intervene], we can give some advice, we can warn somebody off. That should not be something we should be penalised for. That's core business about preventing harm." [j]

Consequently, they felt that the target – if measured the way it was intended - would appear to reflect poorly on the area even though a higher figure could in fact indicate positive impacts, both in the short and longer term. The same senior police officer quoted above felt that this target measurement came as a result of Whitehall having little idea of practical policing and was poorly thought through, leading them to describe whoever wrote the target as "a clown" who lacked policing experience.

NI28 – Knife Crime: The other indicator which had the potential to produce perverse results was NI:28 relating to serious knife crime. The reason for this was similar to NI:32, coupled with an issue of perception. It was noted that if somebody was arrested and found with a knife on their person then this would class as a knife crime. Going further, partners pointed out that if a gang was stopped, then this could generate several knife crimes in one instance. However, in the public perception knife crime is closely related to people being injured by knives. Therefore, a preventative measure by the police (i.e. arresting somebody in possession of a knife), would be perceived as pointing towards rising knife crime in a local area, as opposed to something which in fact contributed towards a lower crime rate.

In both of the latter examples it shows that poor central understanding of performance management when defining the National Indicator Dataset led to the creation of indicators which, while on the surface focused on important issues, created unhelpful outcomes. This, coupled with the homogeneity of the indicator dataset led to many areas, particularly those facing significant issues deprivation, stuck with indicators in their LAA that were not entirely helpful to improving their area. This also raises further questions as to the extent to which the nature of the indicators and their measurement was properly consulted upon, in order to ensure that perverse outcomes did not occur.

6.9 A Failure to Engage in Whitehall?

While the evidence indicates that some Whitehall departments took a strong role in dictating which indicators should be included within an LAA, either through a continued process of empire building (characteristics descriptive of the Home Office and Department for Health) or by seeking to ensure a local area showed commitment for funding that it received from Whitehall (characteristics descriptive of the Department for Transport).

There is also evidence that some Whitehall departments failed to engage with this process entirely. As indicated in both chapters two and three, much of the reason behind the engagement failure can be put down to a historical culture of silo working across Whitehall, which was transposed to the localities. This also reflected the fact that traditionally, many departments' work would have little reason to bring them into contact with the workings and instruments of local government.

When discussing this with Hazel Blears, John Denham and senior civil servants within CLG, they indicated that the response across Whitehall varied when it came to engaging with the LAA. However, they concurred on which departments were most likely to suffer from engagement failure. When prompted as to which

Whitehall department's culture was least likely to lend itself to the LAA, the Department for Work and Pensions was mentioned frequently, for many of the reasons outlined above.

John Denham – who prior to being Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government held the office of Secretary of State for Education and Skills – spoke first hand of how when he became Skills Secretary he felt that the department had failed to engage with the LAA agenda, thus meaning that many LAAs did not have skills targets that were appropriate to their area and that the department was missing out on a vital way of delivering its remit.

This failure to explicitly engage with the LAA has two potential impacts. Firstly it could lead to a situation were local actors wished to have an indicator included within their LAA, yet could fail to achieve this due to a lack of interest/support. Secondly, given the evidence of top-down control from other departments, this failure to engage could also leave gaps in a particular LAA which could then be exploited by the more eager Whitehall departments, thus further compounding their dominance.

6.10 CLG: A strong force in Whitehall?

The failure to engage amongst the Whitehall departments highlights the issue of strong and pro-active central actors, which could see their priorities dominate an LAA, particular due to a lack of buy-in by other partners. Both of these issues can lead to questions about the role of CLG in Whitehall.

While John Denham did not explicitly suggest that CLG was a weaker actor, he felt that CLG's position in Whitehall and the way that it interpreted its role could see it perceived in this manner. He felt that while the other departments had their own, often clear and widely understood remits, CLG did not. Instead CLG opted to mediate and 'hold the ring' to reflect other departments' needs and wishes across Whitehall when it was developing its own policies. This presents a

further indication of the extent to which central policy influenced the creation of local policy, with CLG acting as a 'filter' to funnel wider Whitehall goals into local policy.

6.11 Whose Local Area Agreement is it?

These issues of top-down control have created significant barriers to the ability for a LAA to be suitably responsive to a local area's requirements. In turn, this has led local practitioners to question the extent to which they have control over their LAA, with more than one practitioner directly asking "whose local area agreement is it?" The fact that people working within the LAA felt the need to question the extent to which their LAA was truly local, in conjunction with the evidence presented throughout this chapter so far, adds further weight to the argument that LAAs did not deliver the local freedom that they were envisaged to do. Moreover, the evidence suggests that the LAA gave local areas some freedom, albeit attached with strong central government caveats which could often amount to severe restrictions on the ability to be locally flexible. However, this could be attributed to unrealistic expectations on the part of local actors, but leads to further questions as to whether Whitehall was correct in its seeming unwillingness to give local areas complete freedom.

6.12 The Role of GOR

So far, this chapter has focused on the aspects of vertical governance that affect LAAs, emphasising the relationship between local areas and Whitehall. However, as the literature review has pointed out this is not the only aspect of vertical governance to affect LAAs. Government Offices (for the Regions) stand as a third, and no less crucial actor in this process.

The tripartite relationship between centre and local, with the regions in the middle forms one of the crucial vertical governance arrangements affecting LAAs, with several questions emerging from the literature review. In particular the questions revolve around GOR's role and the extent to which they balanced local views

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against central policy priorities during the negotiation process, but also during the subsequent delivery of the LAA.

So far, GOR and their role in the negotiation process (instead of direct negotiation with ministers) has arisen several times, particularly in relation to how the negotiation phase had, in some cases, forced national policy priorities into LAAs. The next section will take a look at the role of GOR, placing emphasis on how it undertook its role in the process, how those within GOR perceived this role and the perceptions of the other local actors.

The results of the National Overview Survey, while seeking to explore the role of GOR and their loyalties, highlighted clear intra-regional disparities in the GOR approach, with areas under the same GOR providing differing responses in the way they felt GOR handled their LAA negotiation. Through discussing these results with interviewees, two competing ideas emerged which could help to explain why this would be the case.

6.13 Idea One: GOR: Local Champions or the 'End of a Long Corridor?'

The first idea sought to explore and better understand Goodwin et al's (2006) discussion about the potential confusion surrounding GOR and their role. Thus it considered partner's expectations of GOR and whether GOR were to act as local champions or on behalf of the state in a more top-down manner, thus limiting local responsiveness.

In the early stages of the LAA, it was widely accepted that top-down control was more widespread, particularly during the pilot LAAs. Indeed, one GOR representative [b] openly admits that in the early stages the LAA was 'more or less the mouthpiece for central departments', who 'if the Home Office said "actually we want indicators a, b, c, d, e, f and g in", then the government office just went along and said, "the home office wants indicators a, b, c, d, e, f and g in and these are the targets that they want". However, this strict top-down enforcement

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of government priorities was only short lived, with central government becoming less prescriptive following the 2007 spending review. This was something the GOR representatives welcomed, feeling that it gave them a far stronger and more prominent role within the negotiation process, affording them the discretion to negotiate what they viewed as a more realistic agreement.

However, the feeling of top down control remained, with John Denham noting that many local authorities still didn't "find the government offices engaged in a real process of two way negotiation, both with Whitehall and the local authority and too much of it appeared to be inflexible and with a desire to deliver a target" [1]. Further to this, despite these changes, civil servants (based both regionally and centrally) acknowledge that there was a problem driven by the ambiguity of the role of GOR in the initial LAA documentation (OPDM: 2004a). They conceded that "[GOR's] status was always ambiguous. Were they government in the region and acting as if a government department were directly engaged in negotiations? Or were they a friend for a local area, representing them in talking to Whitehall?" This was a sentiment confirmed by representatives for GOR, noting that one of the common criticisms they received on the LAA was that local areas thought "[GOR] know what our problems are like, but you don't stand up for us" [b]. Yet GOR representatives were keen to clarify their own role in the process to avoid this happening, pointing out that some of this confusion was likely to have been caused through the misuse of terminology. This included a tendency to conflate Government Office for the Region with 'regional government' of which no such institutions exist in England. Indeed this conflation can be further understood by noting the presence of other quasi-governmental organisations operating at the regional scale including the Regional Development Agencies and regional assemblies.

The case study where the strength of feeling about the role of GOR was most evident was St Helens, where they reported a low degree of local responsiveness on the part of GOR. One member of the LSP board who was

present for the negotiation process felt that "It was always a bit unclear quite how much authority they did have [to negotiate]."

However the GOR representatives were clear that the role of GOR was to represent Central Government in each of the English regions, pointing out that in many cases the senior civil servants tasked with negotiating the LAAs were contracted directly to CLG in Whitehall effectively making their role "Whitehall in the region at the end of a very long corridor". So consequently, when addressing the notion that these intra-regional discrepancies could be attributed to the dissatisfaction of local areas, GOR representatives noted that "that's not our role, our role is to represent central government, not the local areas" [b].

Whilst emphatically rejecting the concept that they were 'local champions', GOR representatives instead felt that they held some flexibility to provide discretion in local issues of importance. The resulting question, given the views of local actors discussed earlier in the chapter, is 'how much discretion?' This serves as a critical blow to the LAA and its claims of localism, illustrating that one of its principal features – that of local negotiation – was still fundamentally driven by central loyalties.

6.13.1 Top-Down control is a Good thing.

However, the issue of GOR locality managers representing a more centrally orientated policy outlook is not necessarily seen as a negative thing by all partners. Indeed one local interviewee in Liverpool suggested that a locality manager that purely looks at things form the local perspective is not necessarily what is best for the local area. Instead, echoing sentiments expressed earlier in the chapter over indicator selection, they suggest that if GOR is to live up to its role as an 'honest broker' in the negotiation of the LAA, then they need to look at each area, taking into consideration the national context in order to suggest what aspects the area performing badly in, and to suggest which indicators might be beneficial in order to remedy this.

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This raises interesting questions about the GOR locality managers acting as an honest broker through the negotiation process, tempering the need to tell local areas what they need to hear, whilst curbing any desire to proscribe targets unilaterally that an area may does not want. Whilst there was evidence that the situation envisaged by Hazel Blears, whereby GOR principals could be "robust enough to say to [the Secretary of State], we've done as much as we can on this, but actually [the local areas] have got a point" [e] did occur to some degree, there was a stronger indication, particularly in the case of St Helens where this did not happen.

6.13.2 Analysis: Idea One as Suitable Model to Understand GOR Variation

Whilst numerous actors, particularly at the central and regional level concede that Goodwin at al's model is mirrored to some degree in reality, there is not strong evidence to support an assertion that expectations of GOR's role is the sole explanation for the regional disparities.

Whilst GOR representatives were clear about their loyalties, it appears that partners became more likely to criticise GOR for failing to act in local interests whenever they came up against a strong central line in a particular aspect of negotiation, rather than a general sense of being hard done by.

Therefore, a second model was required in order to better explore and understand why these disparities might occur.

6.14 Idea Two: Regional base

The second theory is one that began to emerge during the course of the interviews as an alternative hypothesis of GOR's role in LAA negotiation – although support for this theory varied, depending at which tier of government the question was asked. In essence this theory suggests that the varying degrees of local responsiveness, as well as the general relationship with GOR could be

accounted for through a combination of 1) the physical location of the GOR office and 2) the personal characteristics of the GOR locality manager.

During the period in which the interviews took place, Government Office North West had two operating bases within the North West of England: Liverpool and Manchester. Liverpool's locality manager was based in the Liverpool Office while St Helens' locality manager was based in Manchester.

In Liverpool – which reported a strong amount of local responsiveness and a good overall relationship with GOR – partners spoke of how they felt having a locality manager who was based in the city left them better placed to work on the LAA. In particular they emphasised the working knowledge that the locality managers would have from working in the city on a daily basis and the positive role this could bring to the LAA process. However, this could still be explained by the personality of the locality manager, rather than the fact they were based in the city.

6.14.1 Realism

In part, some of this relates back to the earlier discussion about the role of GOR and whose interests they represent in the LAA negotiation, but this also reflects on the day to day implementation of LAA targets. Several partners spoke of how working in the city provided the locality manager with a greater perception of the issues facing Liverpool, the understanding of which was then reflected in the negotiation process. Members from across Liverpool's LSP spoke of how this understanding of local issues could increase the sense of realism on the part of the locality managers, both in preventing partners from entering into gamesmanship over targets, but also reducing the likelihood that GOR would insist on the setting of unachievable targets.

The former Chief Executive of Liverpool City Council summed this position up in the most cogent fashion, saying that "we were fortunate in Liverpool, we had two

people in particular, who I think understood the locality, understood what was trying to be achieved, but were also quite clear in delivering that central message as well. I think there's a big difference with working in that setting, with people you think are empathetic and understand the position, even if they don't agree with you [as opposed to working] with people who just march in" [k]. Importantly, this illustrates an understanding that the GOR representatives are not purely there to act as 'local champions' sidestepping the confusion that could arise through a misunderstanding of this position (and in part indicating why Liverpool experienced a good relationship with GOR), but instead illustrating that a balance of understanding between local issues and central priorities is key.

Whilst partners spoke of an increased sense of realism that could be gained through increased local knowledge, they were aware of the pitfalls that could arise, particularly if a locality manager was seen to have 'gone native' whereby they begin to go against the role of central representative (as discussed in the previous section) and instead started taking on a local role. One partner spoke of the conflict between central priorities and the fact that "in order [for GOR] to do its job properly in terms of delivering a meaningful LAA, then it has to buy into some of the priorities and understand the issues from the perspective of the local authority and the local companies to have any credibility" [f]. Once again, however this conflict illustrates that GOR representatives ultimately represented central interests. The same partner said that whilst "by and large [GOR] navigated the whole thing remarkably well and brought some real quality, but as soon as push came to shove they crossed sides again" [f]. Consequently, what this illustrated is that whilst the first theory discussing whose side GOR represents rings true -to a point - a locality manager who can depart from this to understand local issues (albeit temporarily) can help to improve the 'localness' of the LAA.

It was also suggested that one of the reasons for this disparity occurring was the fact that the LAA was essentially a 'snapshot' of an area at the time of the negotiation and that, as one representative of GOR put it - "Liverpool are perhaps

lucky at that 'snapshot' in time they had [the representative] as their person on the GOR side. They could equally have had somebody who was based in Manchester, who has only been doing the job for 6 weeks who would quite understandably would go in saying 'well actually, this is what I've been told government wants to achieve here'" [b]. This further highlights the importance of relationship building in the negotiation of a LAA that can carry the regard of the local partners who are tasked with delivering it, and that despite GOR being explicit in the fact that they are not 'local champions', having an understanding of local issues as opposed to just national priorities is a core factor of success.

As indicated earlier, in St Helens partners were less enthusiastic about GOR and the ability to be locally responsive. Whilst the lack of local responsiveness can be attributed to top-down pressure over targets i.e. teenage pregnancy, partners were on the whole not as clear (compared to Liverpool) as to the reasons behind the disparity, indicating that, to paraphrase Tolstoy's Anna Karenina; 'successful areas are all alike, but unsuccessful areas are all unsuccessful in their own way'. Whilst much of the discussion did centre on the amount of local knowledge that GOR held, the reasons and explanations varied.

One partner hinted at a sense of parochialism and a 'frustration' about Government Office being located in Manchester. As a result, in their view, the perception was that GOR were 'Manchester centric' in their dealings, which as a result left partners feeling as if they "on occasion, weren't on the radar in terms of support from GONW" [j].

However, the more prevalent view on this subject didn't focus on the fact that the GOR locality manager was located in Manchester, but instead centred on the fact that they seemed to lack local knowledge, which in turn led them to wrongly diagnose how wider issues would affect the area, and consequently lost the trust of the partners. One of the clearest manifestations of this was through discussions about the 2008 banking crisis and subsequent recession. There

were complaints amongst the partners that the GOR representative failed to understand the implications for the area, with one actor describing it as a 'revelation to Government Office that [the recession] might actually affect the North eventually" [i].

The first main complaint was a lack of understanding at how the recession would affect St Helens economically, with one partner from the Chamber of Commerce pointing out that "people will buy cars, those windscreens are made here, or they won't buy a car and sooner or later...[there will be less demand for windscreens, impacting on jobs etc]" [i]. Secondly, the same partner discussed "a big debate with government office about whether the recession affected teenage pregnancy rates [which were already a contentious issue in St Helens, as discussed earlier] and [GOR] just couldn't understand why that would have an impact. To try and explain that fewer people were employed, they haven't got aspirations. That does have an impact on it." Consequently, this lack of understanding of an issue that was already adding pressure to the actors within St Helens only increased the perception that local partners were not the ones driving their local area.

Although it is a subjective view that is difficult to measure, respondents in Liverpool also spoke of the 'human element' that arose from having their locality manager based in their local area. This human aspect emphasised the fact that GOR's presence made it easier to conduct business that would favour the city. For example they felt that that the locality manager was able to attend more meetings with partners, particularly those later in the afternoon without worrying about travelling or family commitments which might preclude travelling from distance. Although similarly difficult to quantify, partners also spoke of the benefit of informal meetings with the locality manager that could arise, for example through chance encounter at other meetings/appointments.

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6.14.2 Personal Attributes

However, whilst there is a clear case that the location/base of the Locality Managers is a factor in the performance discrepancies on the intra-regional scale, there is a strong indication that the personal attributes of the individual locality manager was also a key factor in this finding.

This was a view that was strongly held by Civil Servants in particular, who believed that personal attributes and relationships held more importance, given that there would be higher proportion of LAAs who would not have a locally based locality manager. Instead, they accounted for the areas reporting a poor relationship as having a locality manager "who, for whatever reason, took a fairly strong line in terms of what his instructions were" linking back, once more, to the issue of whose side the GOR were on and the perceptions about this.

This need for good relationships and the personal attributes of the locality manager was something that was felt at a ministerial level, although here it was considered – in the view of John Denham - that being of sufficient calibre was essential to "earn the respect of the chief executives in terms of their talent, their ability" [1], before noting that, "too often local authorities found themselves meeting people who weren't operating, and would never operate at that level" [1]. However this view doesn't really reflect the need for a locality manager to satisfy the needs of actors across the partnership beyond the chief executive/local authority in order to create a workable LAA. This broader view was – not unexpectedly – something that found wide acceptance and strong support amongst both of the case study areas. One partner in Liverpool enthused about how GOR would take soundings from different stakeholders and attend the various meetings to ascertain the local feeling in order to do their job better, giving the stakeholders a sense that their views (and consequently local views) were being represented.

Most pertinently, the locality managers themselves felt that success in their role was reliant on good relationships. In particular the locality manager for Liverpool

attributed the survey responses to "really good working relationships with people in Liverpool. We can have a really open discussion about what's important [and] what's not important they understand what I've got to deliver, I understand what they've got to deliver and as a consequence, negotiating the LAA was a relatively straightforward process" [b]. Unlike the Civil Servants based in Whitehall, Liverpool's locality manager was keen to reflect that there was a combination of personal attributes, relationship building and local knowledge at work, pointing out that in his view, "the key to a successful LAA from my point of view is about understanding the evidence, understanding the area and then having the right relationships. But that takes time" [b].

One partner in Liverpool confirmed the practical reality of this approach, feeling that because "[we] know these people, they're not going to sit at a meeting and embarrass you" [g]. Another partner felt that GOR representatives sought to understand "the culture, they understood the organisations, they understood in essence what would work in communities" [n] and although, as stated before, their loyalties lay elsewhere, they utilised this working knowledge to engage with the partners effectively.

One former senior civil servant also contended that, further to not embarrassing partners in meetings, these good working relationships led to a more realistic working environment where a development of trust allowed GOR representatives to give frank feedback during negotiation, i.e. indicating what was likely to be signed off. Although this still amounted to assisting local partners in engaging in gamesmanship with a centrally loaded system, it illustrated (to some extent) that GOR representatives were prepared to act locally using their discretion.

To emphasise the point about how developing good working relationships with partners led to better outcomes from the negotiation process, one senior actor within Liverpool drew a comparison with the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process undertaken by the Audit Commission, feeling that the Audit

Commission representatives had "low empathy and low/little understanding of the issues [in Liverpool]" [k] which created a difficult working environment. This was a view that was widely felt amongst interviewees and highlights how low empathy and understanding of local issues and concerns leads to a poor working relationship and mistrust.

6.14.3 Which Model Best Represents the Situation?

The evidence suggested through the interviews indicates that one of these factors in isolation is not sufficient to explain the divergence in intra-regional approaches. Yet the two models complement each other and when combined can help to explain why Liverpool, in particular, felt that they had a better relationship with GOR and in turn felt like they were able to be more locally responsive with their LAA.

However, of the two, the concept of local understanding and personal attributes finds a significant amount of traction with local partners, with many indicating that a locality manager who is based in, and familiar with, the local area and the issues it faces is more likely to assist in the negotiation of an LAA that is generally welcomed by the locality.

6.15 Were GORs a 'force for good'?

Within the discussion about how GOR undertook their role and the reasons why disparities in approach occurred, there were two clear viewpoints amongst the interviewees about GOR's role in the LAA process. Those viewpoints discussed whether GOR were a helpful presence, which acted as a 'force for good', or whether their presence was even needed in the process at all. Whilst this issue will be discussed and analysed here, this will also be picked up again in chapter eight, which focuses explicitly on improving future practice, given that the role of GOR (or to be more precise, its absence given their abolition) would significantly change the way that local public services are agreed upon and delivered.

There were a number of local actors that praised the GOR locality managers for providing "a very professional analysis to both government policy and local action, they challenged us, they asked if we were avoiding some of the issues and should be doing something a bit more" [r]. Indeed, even amongst partners who had misgivings about the wider role of GOR, it was difficult to find partners who would directly criticise the professionalism of those locality managers.

However, whilst some partners made the case that GOR's were a force for good in the delivery of local public services, others questioned the need for GOR at all, instead suggesting that Central Government could undertake that role directly. The most critical view of the GOR came from a senior member of the LSP who, while at pains to emphasise that their effect was in no way negative, felt that GOR offered little to no added value through conducting their role. Consequently they questioned "whether or not there is a need for that structure to sit in the middle between central government and local delivery bodies?" before suggesting that now "we've all got computers now haven't we, it doesn't take long to send stuff along," [j] intimating that this process could be done more efficiently, with reduced central bureaucracy.

Ultimately, there is a wry irony surrounding the involvement of GOR in the LAA process. This reflects the fact that they were involved in the LAA process specifically in order to allow LAAs to be more responsive and free from central government diktat, yet, by experiencing this involvement, many local partners have questioned why Central Government could not do this directly, thus seeking to replicate what came before it.

6.16 Which relationship matters most? – CLG or GOR

Given the results of the national overview survey, in which numerous partners felt that a relationship with a higher tier of government/governance was important to the success of the LAA, it is now pertinent to explore which is more important and why. This will be considered within the context of the findings outlined

throughout this chapter.

When asked to reflect on why some partners considered maintaining a good relationship with CLG to be essential to the LAA process, despite the fact that in a normal LAA central government would have little direct involvement, the response from those in central government was divided. Hazel Blears, did not accept that CLG were not centrally involved in the process, in a way confirming the strong central involvement indicated earlier in the chapter, particularly throughout the indicator selection process. However John Denham was aware of the contradiction of this view, speculating that LAA managers who said that the relationship with CLG was more important than GOR 'don't know what they're talking about' [1].

John Denham also rejected the notion that – in light of the evidence that GOR acted on behalf of central government and not as local champions – LAA managers might conflate the two higher tiers of governance in their answer. However, regardless of this, these findings clearly indicate the importance of good vertical governance relations in order to deliver an effective LAA. This once again demonstrates the strong influence of central government on local public service delivery, chiming with many of the themes outlined throughout this chapter.

As a final note on this section, there is also the potential for partners – noting the highly centralised nature of UK governance – to cite relationship building as a key factor not just for the importance of LAA delivery, but as an act of gamesmanship. This would be with the intent that in the future, a positive relationship with central government would serve as a significant benefit when delivering a scheme which does require a good working relationship with Whitehall.

6.17 Chapter Six: Theoretical Reflections

Referring back to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Four, there were two key theories that were identified as helping to analyse and understand the findings surrounding central-local relations: the Strategic Relational Approach and Regulation Theory. Given that the present chapter has pointed towards strong central control over the LAA process, particularly over indicator and target selection, a consideration of how this reflects the theories is now possible.

Regulation Theory is particularly applicable to the LAA in these circumstances. Based on these findings, it can be argued that the indicator/target process does indeed represent a mode of regulation by the state, through which the state attempts to influence the direction of policy in local areas. Consequently, by influencing the direction of service delivery at the local level, it implies that this will influence the area's economic development through job creation, public health, education and so on. The extent to which this method of regulating growth was a success could reasonably be expected to vary from area to area, but a full study of LAA indicator/target achievement – lasting until their abolition in 2010 – could reveal this in significant detail.

In terms of the SRA, the central question was whether the machinery of the LAA privileged any particular group of actors over another. Given that the findings presented in this chapter point to a strengthening/retaining of the power of central government – despite indications that the opposite would be the case – there is evidence that such privileging has taken place. So far, the findings show that the groups that have been privileged are the Whitehall departments, which have been given a greater ability to see their department's particular policies implemented in local areas, even if the local area itself did not see it as a priority. This points to a re-accumulation and (re)assertion of the state's power, and a continuation of the centralisation of English policy, masked in a context of devolution.

Chapter Seven – Horizontal Governance and Local Partner Relations

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to shift the emphasis away from the vertical aspects of governance discussed earlier and to focus on the horizontal governance issues that affect LAAs. The nature of this means a move away from the actors in Whitehall (although they will still make a contribution), to focus on the local partners involved in the two case study areas and their interactions. Drawing upon interviews taken with local partners across two LAA case studies in St Helens and Liverpool, the chapter will focus on which, amongst those local partners, stood to benefit from the LAA process. On a similar note, the chapter will discuss which has been actively engaged throughout the process as well as partners that have not. It will investigate how an organisation's internal cultures either helped or hindered their work within the LAA and their subsequent impact on public service delivery. Finally the chapter will look at the organisational structure of the LAA itself in order to consider how effective it was as a vehicle for facilitating the work of the partner agencies in delivering effective local public services.

7.2 Negotiation of the LAA

The first process that the local actors would have to navigate - and thus their first governance test - was the negotiation of the LAA targets and indicators.

Focusing specifically on the issues of horizontal governance, partners were broadly positive about the negotiation process, with no partners noting any strong animosity arising at this point. However, there was criticism that the process was more suited to certain actors than others – most notably the local authority, which had previous experience of working with central government on similar schemes.

The main issue to arise was that the negotiation process favoured those organisations that were used to dealing with bureaucracy and the workings of local government, as they could quickly adapt to the process. Consequently, other organisations that traditionally had less experience of these processes were perceived to struggle.

Closely linked to this, the second issue to arise was that of the timescale in which the LAA had to be produced. This was seen to favour certain organisations over others because of their structures. In particular, the timescale process was felt to disadvantage the voluntary sector as, in the words of one partner "the voluntary sector, understandably liked to be able to communicate with all the constituent members, so they have to go out, collect the data, feed it back, and there just wasn't the time to do that." This meant that certain organisations, whilst engaging with the process, felt cut out before the actual implementation of targets had even begun.

7.3 Stronger Local Actors

One of the central criticisms to emerge from the literature around LAAs was about the presence of stronger actors and the distorting impact that they could have on the entire process (Gillanders and Ahmed: 2006, Glasbergen: 2007). In particular this focused on how either the LAA agenda suited their way of working over other actors, or how they were naturally positioned, through resources or experience, to benefit more than others. For instance, actors such as the police and PCT have a long history of working on local public service delivery initiatives and thus were more likely to already be familiar with the nature of the policy process, as well as have developed interpersonal relations with other key actors.

During the case study interviews, every partner was asked to relate which, in their view, was the strongest actor operating at the local level within the LAA. From these questions two trends emerged. The first was that the Local Authority was identified by most partners as being the strongest actor. This could be

considered unsurprising given that the Local Authority acts as the lead partner for the LAA, takes on the convening role and carries much of the ultimate accountability. Indeed many partners' testimonies cite these reasons for their answer. However, the more interesting trend emerged when partners were asked to name which they believed was the strongest actor at the local level, discounting the local authority. In this new context, a sizeable number of partners across both case studies identified the PCT as being the strongest actor. However (perhaps tellingly) those representatives from the PCT - while speaking elsewhere about the strength of the negotiating position that health held – did not name themselves as the strongest partner and instead continued to name the local authority.

This view amongst partners that the PCT/Health Representatives were the strongest partner within the LAA is significant. This would lead to the perception that competing for LAA priorities could prove to be difficult, making actors less likely to want to do so and as a consequence, result in a situation where more time and resources were being allocated to health priorities. That is not to say that those health priorities would not, in fact, be the most pressing and needing of those resources, but this perceived strength could stifle debate about those allocations and potentially lead to organisations missing out.

Indeed there is an indication of this domination happening in both LAA case studies, not only from health partners, but other partners which were perceived as strong in the literature review due to significant central linkages – in particular the police[27].

The fear – as raised in chapter three – of the development and presence of stronger actors within the LAA is that they would then use their position in order to further their own agenda or attempt to have resources allocated to them. Whilst there is little evidence to show that this happened on a large scale,

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[27] Whose accountability structures run directly to the Home Office, in Whitehall

partners from the agencies identified as the stronger actors have discussed utilising these tactics.

The actor that affirmed that they did use this kind of approach was the police force, which admitted to 'negotiating hard' but as a result faced accusations of 'bullying their way through [negotiation]'. However, police officers attempted to justify this by saying that "people have a tendency, in my experience to listen to the police. If the police are saying that [indicator] has got to go in because it's so critical, you can tend to get your own way quite a lot of the time" [g]. The same officer also spoke favourably of how this process ensured that several crime indicators were included in the LAA, that might not have been otherwise.

What became clear is that some partners, through familiarity with the process or previous working relationships, were able to exploit the LAA process and their organisation in a way that others couldn't, in order to ensure their agenda was considered over that of other agencies.

7.4   Weaker Local Actors

In the same vein, there were also a number of actors that emerged that were not able to have this effect, thus rendering them less able to make an impact in the process. Throughout the interview process, the partners related stories both of how the LAA process and structures didn't suit a particular organisation's way of working, thus compromising their ability to work fully on the LAA, but also of instances where that organisational culture was a factor in limiting LAA working. They are two distinct issues and will be discussed in turn.

The first instance occurred when an organisation wanted to engage more deeply with the process, yet its own internal structures prevented this from happening. The most prominent instance where this occurred – already briefly discussed in the negotiation section earlier - involved the voluntary sector and was a by-product of the way that voluntary sector representation was structured. Although

the voluntary sector was represented on the LAA board through the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS), they were acting only as an umbrella for the views of all the various charitable organisations acting within the area. The issue of lack of engagement came about as a result of the timescale within which the LAA had to be produced, which gave the CVS insufficient opportunity to engage with all of their members and relay back their views in a manner representative of 'the voluntary sector' as a whole.

Ironically, however, whilst other partners were critical of the short timeframe in which the LAAs were produced (something that will be covered in significantly more detail in the following chapter) actors from within the voluntary sector were not amongst those vocal critics. Instead, they were pleased that the LAA allowed them to participate at the 'top table' of local decision making, and therefore any involvement, however limited, was a significant improvement on their ability to engage with the policy making process. This reflected some of the discussions about earlier methods of public service delivery where voluntary sector views were not present, but this gratitude at being allowed to participate in a flawed process that didn't favour them only added seemed to confirm that the voluntary sector was one of this group of weaker actors.

Commenting from a central government perspective, John Denham felt that "the one [actor] that was slowest to the party was probably schools" [/], which presented a challenge particularly due to the fact that they held the largest number of targets organisationally within any LAA. In Mr Denham's view, this was due to a "huge part of the schools budget [being] closed to local authorities and wasn't really available for flexible working" [/]. Thus, while they had the largest slice of the LAA, those working in education had limited scope through which to act in a locally independent way.

The second group of actors that failed to engage with the LAA system were as a result of organisational scepticism towards the process. Actors gave varying

accounts of the extent to which this was the case, but a senior manager for the LAA in Liverpool felt that there were no examples of "a partner point blank refusing to engage" [a] with any aspect of the process. Instead, in cases where an actor did fail to fully engage, it was more subtle than an outright refusal. Most of the instances where a partner failed to fully involve themselves arose out of a situation where, in the view of the partner agency, the work of the LAA was viewed as 'peripheral' to that of their own, or they failed to see the cross-benefits. One prominent organisation that embodied this view was the Chamber of Commerce which, as the LAA developed had, in the view of partners, little to take from the process and consequently "got more and more frustrated, thinking 'what's this all about?'" [g], which in turn led to them disengaging. Indeed one partner related a story of the Chamber withdrawing resources and funding from the LAA in the period when it became clear that the LAA was about to be scrapped/replaced, indicating that at that point they had little confidence in the structures moving forward and no longer wanted to participate.

There were also instances of those actors previously identified as being 'stronger' through their ability to influence the LAA process, as failing to engage for similar reasons i.e. seeing the LAA as peripheral to their internal work. One of the groups that received mixed reviews about their involvement was the police. Whilst they were widely praised across the partners for their work on the Community Safety Partnership they were criticised as being one dimensional in their work, spending little time on thematic partnerships which did not focus primarily on crime reduction. Much of this can be attributed to some of the earlier discussions about the work of the police, where they didn't see the value to their organisation of any type of working that did not directly help them reduce crime figures in the short term.

Similarly, although many people were careful to avoid naming organisations directly when discussing them in a negative light, reference was made to 'sleeping partners' within the LAA. This was a reference to partners which, whilst

attending the requisite board meetings and meeting their other obligations were less keen to participate than others. While this was seen as a source of frustration to those active partners, it was acknowledged that some of this involvement was due to "capacity and capability", which was not always under the control of those partners e.g. their funding/resource allocation.

7.5 Actors missing out?

Up to now, the discussion has focused on those actors that chose to actively involve themselves with the LAA process and those that either failed or struggled to engage. However there is another group of local actors to consider – those that missed out on the opportunity to engage.

The most significant local actor that missed out on the process was identified as being the universities and higher education institutions within the Merseyside area (Most prominently: The University of Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores and Liverpool Hope), although they were included towards the end of the process. Colin Hilton, the former Chief Executive of Liverpool City Council acknowledged this and expressed regret that they had not been included, putting it down "to the fact that the universities weren't properly recognised for the contribution they could make until relatively late – 2008-09" [k]. While initially this may seem surprising, in that an organisation like a university would play a core role in the education process and subsequent entrants into the job market, as well as being a significant local employer, when considered against the 35 indicators of Liverpool's LAA, this oversight becomes more understandable – up to a point. Given the scale and depth of deprivation, as well as the social and economic issues facing Liverpool, the indicators that were selected principally focused on improved public health and reducing crime, as well as the statutory indicators covering basic education up to the age of 16. As such it is difficult to find indicators that the University may lead on – i.e. students going into higher education – in an area facing more pressing issues. However, the fact that the universities were not involved on any level at the early stages of LAA negotiation

is alarming, given the ability to contribute – through expertise and resources – to progress against many indicators, without having to act as a lead partner.

This oversight is not exclusive to the Merseyside area, however, and is something that was recognised by John Denham who, prior to becoming Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, served as the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, a role which covered higher education. Indeed John Denham felt that he made a significant engagement with the LAA process while at BIS, after becoming "aware that very few local authorities were engaging with the skills agenda, and [BIS] as an organisation was not engaging the LAA process." What followed was a wider departmental movement to encourage BIS actors working at a GOR level to actively engage with the LAA process in order to develop a stronger skills agenda, including the role of higher education. Consequently the higher education sector was acknowledged, separately at a local and central level, to be an actor that was overlooked by the initial LAA process.

Beyond this, partners made little mention of actors that were missing from the LAA process that might have been able to make a significant contribution to the delivery of more effective local public services. However, there are actors operating at the local level that may have missed the opportunity to participate – most notably community groups.

7.6 Differences in Operational Approach

The fact that the LAA is the delivery document for a partnership of actors should lead to an expectation that each actor may approach issues in a different way. Much of this can be attributed to the internal structures and cultures of each organisation and the way that these structures contribute to each actor's particular operational approach. Indeed most actors spoke at length at how this was the case and how particular aspects of their agency's operational approach could help or hinder their work on the LAA. Many of these differences can be

grouped into two broad categories based on the organisation's working methods (see table 7.1). The first focuses on short term orientated organisations (i.e. operationally over a few days or weeks), and the second refers to actors which act more strategically over a longer period (i.e. operationally over years).

Table 7.1 - Differing Operational Approaches of Local Partners

Short Term Focused	Long Term Focused
• Fire and rescue service • Police	• Local authority • Primary Care Trust

7.6.1 Short Term Focused

The most prominent actors in this category are the police and fire and rescue service. They are actors that work on a day to day basis, as the situation requires i.e. responding to individual instances of crime/fires. As a result, while they do have longer term strategies for incident reduction, they place less emphasis on long term planning, or as one senior fire officer put it "you never see the skeleton of a cat left up a tree. We've always got the cat down, but what we've never done is plan how the cat is going to stop ever getting up there again" [h].

The police also noted that, unlike other office based actors, they and the fire service are "a genuine 24/7 service. A lot of people claim to be, we genuinely are. We have people here [at the station] all the time, we don't have to turn them out of bed. I can change the direction of this policing division three times in every 24 hours. So my tactical teams, the people the public don't see, they are briefed every 8 hours and we can send them this way or that way" [j]. In this light the police cited the case of social care workers, who were technically a 24/7 service due to their overnight on-call work, but were limited in the amount of resources they had, hampering police efforts to deal with instances of domestic violence and other issues due to a lack of readily accessible case workers.

The actors in this group were also the most likely to express frustration with LAA working as a result of this operational outlook. As these organisations go out on a daily basis to resolve a set problem, they were less likely to relate to the long term strategic planning of the LAA and what they perceived as short-term inaction that would stem from meetings which focused on long term strategic planning. As a result several of those actors were considerably more likely to criticise or even dismiss the partnership meetings as "talking shops" which held little relevance to their own work.

7.6.2 Long Term Focused

In the longer term category, the most prominent actors are the PCT and local authority, but private sector business can also be found here. These actors are typified by the use of longer term strategy documents to define the goals of their organisation and how they will be achieved, as opposed to the short term intervention based activity utilised by the fire and police services. This response is characterised by the nature of the issues that these organisations face. Comparing their work to the police, one partner noted wryly that it's not possible to "send a hit squad to stop people being obese" [r].

This stance was elaborated upon by several other actors, focusing particularly on the role of the PCT, which epitomised this grouping of actors. One senior representative from the private sector commented on the long-term nature of health work in general, which has "massive targets against it and the health service were being harangued about what are you going to do to make people live longer" [i] when the time frames required to monitor such progress were not the three years of the LAA, but closer to the 20 year life of the SCS.

Further to this, one partner felt that the PCT's work didn't compare well with actors such as the fire and rescue service because of the nature of their work. They went on to describe the Health Service as the 'Ill Health Service' by virtue of the fact what the PCT primarily deals with is spending time/resources on

influencing public behaviour in order to improve health conditions. In the actor's view this would be akin to saying that "the police are simply there to advise people on self defence and how to safeguard their property and how to be nice people and how to deal with anger"[r] and that this approach wouldn't see a quick (positive) change in crime statistics.

Even within these groups operating on a longer time horizon, actors highlighted how a difference in operational approach and the way that their results were measured contributed to a range of perceptions as to how they were performing. Again, citing the example of health as a comparator, a senior official from the St Helens' PCT felt that "getting people to die less of various diseases is quite a complicated issue, whereas starting up 10 new businesses is a little bit more tangible." This aspect of the LAA target system made comparison between different actors difficult. As a result, one of the main criticisms of the larger, long-term orientated organisations was that their organisational structure and bureaucracy likened them to an oil tanker, in that it was difficult for them to change direction in a similar way to organisations such as the police.

Another critique of the organisational structures came about when two partners of differing size were required to work jointly as part of the delivery of an LAA outcome. This was particularly highlighted when one of the partners was one identified as having a more bureaucratic structure i.e. the PCT or Local Authority. When these groups were working with smaller organisations such as the chamber of commerce or voluntary sector, partners discussed difficulties over arranging meetings which involved people at an appropriate decision making level. One partner commented that some organisations were "so huge, that everybody senior enough isn't going to be interested in what we want to do with them and then you get too junior and you can't make anything change"[i]. When discussing these organisations using the 'oil tanker' analogy the same partner felt that some of these organisations were so large that it was difficult to "even find the door"[i] in terms of who to work with, let alone deliver outcomes. Thus, while

joint working was essential to delivering LAA targets and, as indicated earlier, the sign of an effective partnership, the sheer size and structure of some organisations could often be seen to frustrate work and limit action.

Overall, what became evident was that the organisational structure of the individual partners within the LAA played a central part in how effective they were at the local level. Although it is fair to say that the LAA introduced an extra level of bureaucracy to local government and local public service delivery, this did not strictly suit those organisations that are traditionally bureaucratic in nature – i.e. PCT, local authority. This, in part, can be attributed to the fact that these organisations often operate on much longer time horizons (i.e. on the scale of a decade) as opposed to the 3 year timeframe of the LAA. This shortened timeframe can make it difficult for them to plan and mobilise in the way in which they are accustomed to working and indeed on the scale that may be required to both deliver and monitor effective outcomes. Indeed, converse to original expectations those organisations that suffer less from institutional bureaucracy and operate on shorter time horizons are far more likely to be considered to have flourished under the LAA. The outcome based characteristics of organisations such as the fire and rescue service have enabled them to work quickly and effectively to deliver against their targets. This is coupled with the fact that the short time horizon of the LAA is more suited to the issues that they face, which do not strictly require long term planning and action in order to achieve the most effective results.

7.7   Taking a Long Term View – Invest v Spend

One of the starkest ways that variations in partner outlook became clear was through the concept of investing or spending. In essence this revolved around whether a partner was more likely to view action on the LAA in the shorter term as a concept of 'spending' money, or the same action in the longer term as a concept of 'investing' money for longer term benefit. While many partners discussed this viewpoint throughout the interview process, a representative from

the PCT in Liverpool described it most cogently as acting out of "enlightened self interest" [n] and when this happened it was the point where the partnership working became most effective.

One of the clearest examples of a partner taking the longer term view of investment was that of the fire and rescue service, which were praised by the partners across both case studies for consistently working in areas that were not considered to be their core business. This occurred as the fire and rescue service representatives were aware that harm and deaths resulting from fire were, in their own words 'not the biggest threat' to the area. However they pointed to statistics stating that over 80% of the people that die in fires have health issues such as heart disease, coupled with high instances of 'chip pan fires' and fires caused by cigarettes. They felt these qualified as 'lifestyle issues' and therefore by working with other LAA partners on themes like health to reduce activities such as smoking amongst the general population, they could reduce the instances of fires and fire deaths because, as one senior fire officer put it, 'their statistics today are mine tomorrow.' This long term strategic view of 'less fires – less responses' is one that was singled out for praise by a senior police officer as 'bringing something to the party, despite not being a 'natural fit'. The same police officer went on to compare this style of working embodied by the fire and rescue service as akin to the lifeboat service whose work focuses on a preventative aspect to reduce call-outs. This fire and rescue service approach also led to the awarding of 'beacon status' – created by the LGA and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and awarded to instances of good partnership working that is exemplar to other institutions (Martin: 2005) – giving some indication of how successful this policy stance was.

However, this willingness for a partner organisation to act outside of its core business was not readily accepted by all LSP partners. Fire officers spoke of being questioned "why are you here?" [h] at partnership meetings and during the interviews one partner dismissed the fire service as a group which should "just

put out fires," although this was an isolated voice in this regard. This highlighted that taking a long term strategic view was a process that took time to establish, with the "maturing of the partnership from a group of partners to a partnership where there was a realisation that we could contribute to other people's priorities" using "just a little bit of imagination and forethought." This developing of the partnership and the trust issues arising from successfully working with other partners, proved to be a central aspect of the governance of the LAAs and is something that will be expanded upon later in the chapter.

Yet, despite encouraging evidence of true partnership working taking place, there were also occurrences of a high degree of scepticism about cross partner working and short term action for long term saving. While the development of partners taking a longer term investment view was something that was encouraged by Government Ministers, Hazel Blears admitted that despite improvements, by and large the issue "never got to the point where I wanted to get [it] to" [e]. Indeed the former secretary of state felt that the issue was still one that needed developing to the point where partners would be willing to share resources and work outside their core business for long term benefit.

One detailed example of partners grappling with the nature of longer term strategic action within the LAA arose between the police and PCT in relation to violent crime, as a senior police officer outlines;

> "We've reduced violence by 40%, but if you want a pub fight, [St Helens is] still not a bad place to come, because you'll find one. We get people coming in with black eyes, broken noses, victims of crime, victims of assault, very often catch the offenders, we're up in that 70-80% detection rate for violent crime. We will take a statement of somebody who says yeah that person thumped me, we've got that person in custody. It is a legal requirement to have medical evidence to say what the extent of the injury is. We were waiting months for

medical evidence. So this means that offenders were being bailed back into the community, they're not being charged and in a lot of cases that has no detrimental effect other than the victim gets frustrated because apparently nothing is being done. But in some cases, these are violent people who will go on to assault other people, and other people, and other people and if you have that medical evidence they can be charged and they can be put into prison on remand or what have you." [j]

The senior officer saw it as a point of immense frustration that, even after writing to each doctor in the area and raising the issue with senior members within the PCT, it proved difficult to get them to change their methods of working due to the bureaucratic inertia of the PCT itself. This was despite the police officer pointing out their belief that providing the medical evidence the police required could also contribute to reduced workload for the doctors themselves. The same officer had some sympathy for the PCT's position however, noting the systematic and robust inspection regimes that they already faced could often leave them feeling inundated, even before considering external LAA business. The partner went on to say that, in order to ensure buy in from an already busy organisation, sometimes partners required a clear demonstration of the benefits. [j]

Another striking example was another senior police officer discussing attending a health seminar where child rearing methods were being linked to crime rates;

"You can send as many professors as you want to give us talks about how babies that are breastfed create less crime, it is of no interest to senior police officers because that aint going to be making a difference[sic] [over a short time frame]" [g]

This view can be considered a reflection of the short term nature of targets faced by the police, yet it still reflects an unwillingness to take action in the longer term

– something that the LAA should aim to do, as the delivery document for the SCS. However this outlook was one which was challenged by other partners, with one representative from the local authority questioning why the police officer even attended such a meeting, given that they would know its subject and thus be aware of the usefulness or otherwise that the meeting would hold for them.

The difficulty of taking a broader view was a perspective which was understood, although not supported, by senior civil servants from CLG. They acknowledged that it was "very difficult for departments to understand why they should be interested in helping DEFRA, when what they're interested in is anti-social behaviour". This highlights a failure of the LAA process, particularly in the initial negotiation phase, in that raising the awareness of partners in relation to the cross-boundary impacts of each other's work could lead to significant delivery improvements.

What is abundantly clear, is that those organisations that took a long term view of the LAA, working and engaging with other partners in joint action which might not yield immediate results, were essential to good partnership working. By appropriately deploying resources partners could, to an extent, mitigate the impact of future policy problems thus allowing better and more efficient use of their resources across both timescales.

7.7.1 Funding

Throughout the process it became evident that much of the power in the LAA rested with those actors that had access to significant funding but, moreover, significant trust issues developed where it became difficult for them to cede funding to other partners due to accountability fears. Indeed senior civil servants viewed the surrendering of 'sovereignty over funding' as a barometer of how much partners believed in the partnership [o].

However, it was contended by several participants in the process that the LAA only worked because it served as the venue through which the actors could access the Area Based Grant. As a result people engaged with the process. One actor put this in its most simple terms: 'people follow the money'. This attitude came sharply into contrast when it became clear amongst the partners that the LAA was in the process of being phased out in late 2009, but particularly after the 2010 general election when LAAs were abandoned altogether. As partners grew more aware of the fact the LAA did not have a future – and therefore funding attached was drying up – people spoke of how attendance at meetings would decrease and support for projects would reduce. This indicated, that for some agencies, the LAA remained on only a vehicle for furthering their own agenda whilst being compelled to be involved, rather than remaining supportive of the broader principles of local partnership.

7.8 Internal Accountability – Which Accountability Structure Takes Primacy?

So far, the chapter has investigated the issues that can arise from having a partnership made up of organisations with differing operational cultures. However, there is another theme identified in the research questions that also impacts upon the horizontal governance of LAAs: the internal structure of each agency. Whilst having their own internal culture, each individual partner will have accountability structures that are unique to their organisation[28]. This will mean that each partner which sits on the board will have somebody that they are upwardly accountable to, and in the cases of the PCT and police in particular, this accountability chain will ultimately extend to Whitehall. Therefore, there are issues as to how these differing accountability structures align themselves with those of the targets within the LAA and ultimately, which takes primacy over the other. This, in turn, has significant implications for the legitimacy of the LAA itself, and how it is governed.

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[28] For example, a Police Chief-Superintendant will report to the Chief Constable (who has responsibility for the policing of the whole area in question, who in turn will report to the Home Secretary.

The most striking example of the prioritisation of internal accountability structures came when talking to senior police officers. They described how the police authority targets, set by their Chief Constables, operate on a yearly basis - compared to the three years of the LAA. Like the LAA, they are monitored on their performance against these targets. Yet, when asked which of the targets would take priority, senior officers in both areas were emphatic in their view that those set by the police authority would take priority. Indeed one officer suggested that this view would be universal within the police, saying that "I doubt you would ever get an area commander who would say anything different. If you do, they don't understand what their job is" [j]. Another senior officer said that in a situation where a target set by the police authority was lower than the LAA target, they would still consider themselves satisfied, providing that the police authority target was met. Thus, the police were more influenced by their own internal targets and the accountability structures that can have a more significant impact on their job (i.e. through disciplinary measures) than those of the LAA. This raises further questions about how effectively those that are delivering the LAA can be held to account for their actions by the LSP structures.

The timeframe issue raised by police officers proved to be a sticking point for other partners too, with one partner discussing how difficulties arose in getting partners to buy into indicators/targets because of the timeframe the indicator/target operated across. This – coupled with the views of the police officers – confirms some of the earlier discussions about how an organisation's bureaucracy and structure can act as an impediment to LAA working, particularly when noting that significant changes can take place within the 3 year time frame of the LAA.

Whereas some partners evidently struggled to draw together the two domains of accountability, one partner took a novel approach to this problem. The Chamber of Commerce in St Helens ran what they termed a 'two-strand' approach to the issue. They acknowledged that there was a gulf in technical language/

understanding between the Chamber members that operated in the private sector and those public sector actors within the LAA. Furthermore, they were well aware that the use of technical language and bureaucracy could turn their members away within a short time frame. Therefore, the private sector opted to keep the groups separate and instead, in the words of a Chamber representative, "had an almost entirely private sector board where they can use their own language and put their own views and nobody will put them right or put them down and then we will try and translate that into a partners group." This would then aim to reflect the views of business leaders in a manner that would be suitable for those familiar with policy work.

The Chamber leaders in St Helens found this to be effective, ensuring that they maintained the full engagement of private sector business which had the opportunity to express their concerns, in turn allowing the Chamber to fully represent the business sector in LAA meetings, thus balancing their internal and external organisational cultures.

7.9 Trust of Resources

The development of trust amongst the partners was one of the issues that was identified as being essential for the effective delivery of the LAA. Trust, (particularly over the sharing of resources and the subsequent accountability for those resources) whilst having the potential to undermine LAA working, was also subject to a feedback loop. This meant that partners were required to display trust in one another in the first instance to share resources, and the positive results and generation of trust between the partners could allow this practice to continue and spread. This issue is closely linked to the concept of 'invest to save' discussed earlier, in that much of this trust involves ceding funding and working with partners across accountability structures in order to work on areas of common interest.

Many of the partners agreed that trust, and the development of trust, was a core issue that impacted on LAA success. What varied, however, was the extent to which partners felt that these trust relations were able to develop. As part of this, partners cited several examples showing how trust, or the lack of it, could affect partnership working.

One of the principal issues of where a lack of trust hindered the LAA was cited by the fire service, and came in the form of data sharing. They discussed a programme whereby the fire service could identify those at a high risk of death or injury from house fires and visit those citizens, in order to help reduce that risk. However, due to a fear of litigation based on how the data was used which led to, in the words of one fire officer, "this [bad] feeling in the back of my stomach, so I'm not going to do anything, because I don't know what you're going to do with the data" [h]. This fear of litigation led to organisations not releasing data and, in turn, giving "money up at the end of the year because they hadn't spent it" rather than risk funding a scheme with another partner that may have long term beneficial impacts.

This lack of trust was also, in the view of one partner – and reflecting the earlier discussion about internal accountability – symptomatic of a failure to take a 'whole partnership' view, saying that partners became 'blinkered' to any LAA target that did not directly impact on work for which they had responsibility for. Thus, these 'blinkered' partners passed up the opportunity for joint working that could have far reaching benefits.

7.10 Personal Relationships

Although the partnership is a coalition of actors working together towards a common purpose, often much can be placed on the role of the individual within any specific organisation who is charged with interacting with that partnership. This development of personal relationships has already been touched upon in the previous chapter, when discussing the role of GOR representatives and the

vertical governance arrangements for LAAs. However, the evidence clearly demonstrates that these personal relationships are just as important for horizontal governance. Indeed, it was almost universally agreed amongst the local actors that personal relationships were essential to successful delivery.

One partner felt that in this regard, the LAA was comparable to any other aspect of their organisation's business in that "you put people who you know will deliver the outcomes that you want to deliver. You don't put people around you who you're unsure of, or don't deliver, because why would you?" [q] They then continued to define what they viewed as good characteristics for a partner stating, a good partner would be "willing to engage in a discussion, to take seriously what are the issues and to answer and deal with things appropriately" [q]. In outlining these criteria, the same partner stated that in their view, "all business is people business and people don't do business with people that they don't like". Therefore an absence of those core qualities may serve as a barrier to partnership working.

However, one partner described this process as not something that happens instantly, but rather a "journey over years to build that trust and that relationship" (reflecting some of the issues of trust in the previous section). As partners realise that "the personal relationship is reflective of the organisational relationship, they recognise that everyone within that organisation is driven" [q] and thus they want to work with each other in the future. Commenting further, one former senior civil servant felt that developing personal relationships could lead to a state of 'shared understanding' which in turn would lead to more efficiency for example:

> "*if you've got people doing neighbourhood policing, as part of what they do, could they be observant about other things? It could be identifying problems around the maintenance of the estate, but they'd know exactly who to alert. So rather than saying it's nothing to do with*

me, they could say, I sat in a planning meeting with people, I know these people, I know they're good people, I'll just get on the phone to them and say by the way there's a few problems." [m]

Good personal and working relationships were also viewed as being core to the effective delivery of LAAs by those working in Whitehall. One senior civil servant at CLG compared the LAA to a marriage certificate, in that "It's a contract. People sign up to it.. But it's no good unless the marriage is strong behind it, right?" [o]. Consequently if one aspect of the marriage of the partners – to continue the metaphor – isn't working, then it is likely to break down and ultimately prove unsuccessful. In terms of improving those relationships between the various local actors, the same civil servant felt that "the LAAs have brought us a long way" towards achieving that harmony, although he did accept this was not the case in every instance.

Partners also spoke of the dangers that could arise when it came to delivering LAA on a day to day basis, where working tended to devolve downwards to a more appropriate level for effective working. As indicated earlier in the chapter, if the organisation was too large (i.e. the PCT), then this could often limit the ability to achieve practical outcomes, as the actor conducting the work might lack the capacity to effect change. Hazel Blears acknowledged that "if you don't trust people and you send junior staff, then you get nothing done" [d]. The fact that organisations had, in Blears' view, become 'risk averse' meant that this was more likely to happen, as partners were keen to cover their own internal bases in a manner discussed earlier.

Ultimately, whilst there partners were effusive about how good personal relationships from individual actors were essential to the delivery of the LAA, there was recognition that this was not always an easy process and often it required considerable effort. One senior representative from the PCT described the process as being "like lining ducks up", meaning that "success in anything

doesn't rely on one factor, it relies on a series of things being lined up and if one of those is out of whack and the partnership doesn't correct it then you're not going to get there" [n].

7.10.1 Good Leaders

Whilst it was evident that the partners felt that good interpersonal relationships with the other partners were essential to working, it also became clear that having a chair that embodied these values, and thus created the appropriate working environment, was also a core feature during this process.   Indeed, partners in both areas were full of praise for their leaders throughout this process, particularly Carol Perry (Chief Executive of Liverpool First) and Carole Hudson (Chief Executive of St Helens Council) who were able to make this happen.   One sentiment that embodied this way of working was that a good leader was:

> *"somebody that will just say, well let's just try it, let's do it, let's give it a go. And if it goes wrong they might kick you, but you know that you can have a sensible conversation on what works and doesn't work and take sensible risks, not daft risks but try new things out and she also lets people take responsibility… Now they keep a close eye on us, they audit us, they tell us if they're not happy with it, which is fine. But on the whole they trust us"* [m].

At the central level it was also felt that a high quality of local leadership was essential for the LAA project to be a success. John Denham compared a good leader to his experience of the schools system and how they adopt the national curriculum;

> *"You can go into a really strongly led school and the head teacher will say 'of course we deliver the national curriculum, it's amongst the things we do' and you can go into a poorly led school and the head*

teacher will say 'well we're so constrained by the national curriculum that we can't teach the way we want to'.

I think you would go to some local authorities where the LAA was simply a part of telling the story about what the local authority was trying to achieve. It sits comfortably with it, but they would have wider objectives and a broader picture, and they found it helpful in defining their role. If you go to another place where they say well we've got this LAA but we'd rather be doing something else, then you say, well why don't you do the other things as well? Or they'd say this is what we're trying to do, oh, and we've also got this LAA over there". [l]

He identified that those leaders which actively worked the LAA into their area's wider structures and projects were far more likely to achieve success than those that simply viewed the LAA as an extra level of bureaucracy above the work that they were undertaking anyway. It became evident that Liverpool and St Helens - and the style of leadership that they had – embodied these values of using the LAA to augment their working. This also transferred down to the agency level, with those agencies that viewed the LAA targets as simply being burdensome being less likely to gain under that system (see the debate about long term v short term). Conversely, those organisations that actively embraced the LAA as a way to innovate their modus operandi (i.e. the fire service) were widely seen to flourish.

Within this discussion of personal relationships, there is a question of serendipity i.e. can an area have all the people in each role that have the characteristics necessary to work successfully in partnership? Of course, it could also equally illustrate good promotion and hiring strategies for those organisations to have the people involved and in those roles. Most partners felt that the latter was the case, with one representative from the private sector saying that "you anticipate

having a respect and a regard for these people because they're successful professional people and you meet them always, I was going to say almost always, but no, always it's the case you go away thinking these guys have got where they are because they know what they're doing" [f]. Thus, the element of professional respect that the senior actors delivering the LAA targets have for each other is also key. It is assumed that to attain such a position within an organisation, an actor must have a reputation for good working and delivering against targets, which is a skill they would be expected to bring to the LAA. Therefore, these two aspects of professional respect and the general attitude cultivated through joint working with partners are closely linked and core to successful LAA delivery.

Partners were also keenly aware that this state of good partnership could be fleeting, and depended heavily on the need for effective promotion to perpetuate this state, especially in organisations with a high operational turnover (i.e. the police, whose senior staff regularly moved roles). As well as this, the ability for these relationships to continue in a post LAA environment was also recognised.

The former Chief Executive of Liverpool City Council noted that, while the LAA was "always slightly susceptible to rotation of people … generally there was not sufficient turbulence to make that fracture," although he did wonder if the post LAA restructuring of local government and subsequent staff loss/rotation would generate that turbulence and make such a fracture more likely. When asked if they felt that the relationships that were built through working on the LAA would remain in place following its demise, one partner in St Helens felt that whilst "the personal relationship that we've built up will be there [it will] only be for a certain amount of time" [h], implying once more that the subsequent staff rotation, as well as the absence of an LAA structure under which to convene partners.

The link between LAA success, personal relationships, trust and good leadership was summed up by Hazel Blears who said that:

"the LAA frameworks were about relationships and if you've got good relationships you trust people and if you get the right people around the table who can make the decisions, then things will happen"

7.11 Thematic Partnership v LAA Board

The two-tier structure of the LSP (see figure 4.2), comprised of an LSP Executive Board containing all the key actors, as well as smaller thematic boards (focusing on strategic issues such as community safety and housing) provided a microcosm of some of the central questions about the governance and accountability of the LAA model. In particular, questions revolved around how well partners would work together to hold each other to account and the dynamics of such a relationship. Furthermore, it gave an indication of how well the partnership working on the LAA would break down the silo mentality that prevailed in both central and local government (Sullivan: 2006), or whether the smaller thematic groups would result in an 'expanded silo' of core actors to the exclusion of others (Davies: 2009).

7.11.1 Executive Board

The image that partners presented with regards to the executive board was mixed. Fears that junior partners would be sent to those meetings, thus undermining their ability to achieve any particular stated aims, proved to be unfounded, with partners unanimous in their belief that the executive board of the LSP was a place where the key (high ranking) actors met on a regular basis. Where partners couldn't attend, it was felt that they sent appropriate replacements (i.e. with the necessary authority) to act on their behalf. However instances where this happened were rare.

Similarly, partners praised the forum which they had to hold each other to

account, citing the ability to raise issues with those senior members directly. However, rather than engaging in public dressing downs, many of the senior members themselves alluded to the fact that often, they conducted their conversations discreetly on the fringes of the meeting. Although stronger actors did emerge throughout the process, this did not mean that they became immune from scrutiny at the board meetings, with one partner described seeing "a couple of heads of service have a slap at those meetings on occasion, if they needed it" [g], while another described how the chief executive would take partners to task over their contribution to various targets they might be able to impact upon. However, partners, particularly in St Helens, were at pains to point out what they described as the 'maturity' of these conversations in that they could have robust and open discussions with senior partners without, as one senior police officer put it, resorting to fits of pique and "taking their teddies home" [j]. This links back to the earlier discussion of how personal relationships tended to shine through, often proving to be one of the lynchpins of effective working. The fact that the each partner respected the other enough to accept what could amount to a public rebuke is key to the success of the executive board, as if this was not the case, the partnership would be rendered ineffective within only a few meetings.

Partners were also keen to discuss the usefulness of the executive board to obtain external opinions on their internal business, particularly about how various actor's agendas and outcomes might cross over. One example cited by a business leader in St Helens was a discussion around improving health and how contributing towards those targets would in turn lead to a stronger business sector and economy. What this highlighted was that partners did not go into these meetings purely to pursue in their own agendas, but instead there were instances where they were keen to participate and work with other partners.

However, some partners were critical of the LSP executive board meetings and how the meetings linked through to partnership working. One senior partner related a story of how, during one executive board meeting, the chair "didn't talk

about anything to do with the LSP. It was all council business and the council want this to happen and the council want this to happen. So, it isn't [distinct from] the council." This strongly links back to the concept of stronger actors once again, illustrating that a local authority does have the potential to dominate proceedings. Again, as discussed earlier, this stems from the local authority's convening powers and the resultant ability to both set and circulate the agenda prior to the meeting. However it is understandable that other partners, particularly those which have less links to the council and its business, would find this frustrating and even regard it as a waste of their time.

By observing the interactions of the partners at the executive level, and by discussing these observations with the partners individually, an interesting theme began to emerge with regards to their perceptions and their expectations of others. Those partners which were identified earlier as being the 'stronger actors' (i.e. local authority, police and health) had a higher degree of expectation placed on them, compared to those newer or weaker actors. As an illustration of this, during executive board meetings, the response that was given to the work that the 'stronger actors' were doing was one that could be seen to be bordering on complacency. Much of this can be put down to expectation due to the experience that these partners have in their respective fields, but the process gave the impression that these actors were in fact the lynchpin of the entire LAA process.

In contrast those smaller partners, which were not identified as being 'stronger' were treated with far more reverence in terms of their contribution to proceedings, almost like a child reaching a first milestone in their life - such as learning to walk. However it was unclear whether this was because the partners wished to further encourage such behaviour, were genuinely impressed, or some balance between the two.

7.11.2 Thematic Partnership

The working groups that operated beneath the executive board – thematic partnerships – were widely praised as being the venue where much of the decisions about the delivery of the LAA targets were made. One senior representative from Liverpool's local authority put it down to the fact that they were much more issue based, with a higher level of detail. As a result, in the view of the same partner, "the people that were actually driving performance were sat on those sub groups". [k]

Indeed, this issue based outlook meant that those present on the partnership could attempt to get beneath certain problems, to the extent that a monthly two hour executive board meeting would not necessarily allow. One way that this presented itself was the ability to invite experts into a meeting format, reflecting parliamentary select committees, where partners could ask a number detailed questions about performance or delivery without facing the limitations of a multi-purpose meeting agenda.

However, this praise was not universal and, like the broader executive group itself, there was frustration amongst the partners about the varying quality of the work being done through the thematic partnerships. Yet, this can at least in part be attributed to the actors within each group and their style of working (see: earlier discussion about long term v short term based organisations). Those groups which were widely seen to be successful were those which had a short-term action based outlook. In particular the Crime and Community Safety Partnership in both areas was considered to be the most successful thematic partnerships, with one partner in particular citing the involvement of only a few key actors as a main reason (the over-population of partnerships being seen as a downside – something that will be discussed later) which made working towards common goals easier.

Indeed one partner who sat on the Community Safety Partnership was of the

view that this was more effective than the LAA and LSP board structures in reducing crime in the area, citing examples of joint working to reduce violent crime and drug use that was undertaken through the thematic partnership. However, this is something of a short sighted view, overlooking whether or not the various partners would turn up to a 'community safety partnership' were they not compelled to by the LAA structures.

Again, reflecting trends discussed earlier, the thematic partnerships that were perceived as being less successful were those involving long-term strategy oriented partners, where there was more of a risk of them becoming 'talking shops' – a derogatory phrase referring to a meeting where lots of discussion took place, but resulted in little action as a result. Confirming this, partners discussed how the thematic partnerships, particularly surrounding public health, became forums for reporting progress – much like the executive board – as opposed to forums for deciding action. One actor who became disillusioned with this discussed how they were not convinced that these groups were responsible for instigating action on LAA targets, but instead that "people would go out and [deliver LAA priorities separately] within their own organisation". As a result, the partner felt that the thematic partnership groups were about ensuring all partners shared the same set of priorities, which they would then take back to their organisation to deliver.

This practice can also be better understood by considering the membership of groups where one partner is clearly stronger in the delivery aspect and so is likely to dominate the partnership and its action against its targets. Indeed, another partner[ͬ] confirmed that in their view, some partnerships became a venue for reporting progress, particularly if a target was not being achieved. Developing further, the same partner said that if any target was not being achieved, the question would not be "'what are we doing about it as a group?" Instead the partner with responsibility would discuss their response, with the emphasis not being placed on a collective decision to change approach.

Again the difference in organisational approach and the danger of 'talking shops' came to the fore with one partner [h] noting their view that everybody attended with 'best intentions' yet they 'couldn't understand why or how we could talk for 6 or 7 months around a problem and not have fixed it'. Indeed for the partner it was one of the dawning moments of how the partnership required working with actors whose institutions moved at different paces, providing them with a realisation and that it would require a significant culture change in order to effect meaningful delivery in that environment.

As well as dominant partners, which drove the partnership from within their own organisational structures, there was also the allusion to 'sleeping partners' which, whilst present on the various partnerships, did little to contribute. This was a source of significant frustration for some of the more action orientated partners. While partners involving themselves in, and contributing to, a wide range of LAA business was cited as being amongst the top examples of best practice to emerge from the local governance of LAAs, when partners only wanted the perception of involvement, this drew strong criticism. One partner [i] discussed how 'you still get some people who feel they want to be on groups because it's there' whilst offering little to further joint working. The same partner also alluded to the fact that the groups which had made efforts to curtail this kind of practice, either by actively involving the partner, or limiting the attendance of the thematic partnerships to those that would contribute, were more likely to be those achieving success.

Despite this, there was muted criticism amongst partners for some groups which sought to limit membership, even when partners felt they may have had something useful to offer. One such example was the housing thematic partnership, which sat with the relevant bodies in the area relating to housing provision (i.e. registered social landlords) only. This was cited as being due to them discussing market sensitive issues. This led to criticism, not only of the fact

that it prevented good joint working across the partnership in the vein of cross-sector working discussed earlier, but also that it showed a lack of trust that has identified as being essential for effective partner relationships.

As discussed throughout this chapter, one partner touched on the fact that the LAA was the delivery document for a partnership of distinct organisations which required being able to respond to "different cultures and that could be down to even an operational level in a particular area of the city." This reflected the thoughts of another partner [n] on the subject who noted that "culture is very important inside organisations; leadership and culture … supported by action". The same partner then summed up the key ingredients for success in a thematic partnership in that partners should share a common vision without it feeling like it was "pushing water uphill".

What became clear was that effective thematic groups (and by extension the partnership itself) became about regulating each organisation's involvement, being seen to act as a useful partner without being over or under involved. The challenge of hitting this Goldilocks zone of being 'just right' was one which few partners achieved in the eyes of their peers, even when being praised universally for other aspects of their work. The danger of falling outside of this zone was summed up by a respondent from the fire and rescue service who said that "if nobody turns up to your meeting, then there's something wrong with your meeting" but given that, broadly speaking, this did not occur, the executive board and thematic partnership aspects of the LAA can be considered a success.

7.11.3 A Comment on Davies' Expanded Silo Theory

One of the main reasons behind introducing partnership working, delivered through the LAA, was an attempt to break down the silo mentality that ran through both central and local government (Sullivan: 2007). Davies (2009) contended that contrary to achieving this, partnership working would maintain the silos, albeit slightly expanded to cover actors with similar interests, as different

groups broke away to pursue their own relevant goals/targets.

After considering the responses of partners, Davies' expanded silo theory appears to closely resemble the reality of LAA delivery. This is given that the thematic partnerships proved to be the real driving force behind the effective aspects of the LAA, coupled with the fact that those effective thematic partnerships attained this due to an exclusivity of membership. The most effective partnership in the eyes of the partners (community safety) contains two examples that amply illustrate this point. The first is the fact that while the police were the key movers on this partnership – despite being strongly criticised as being 'one dimensional' elsewhere (i.e. outside of their silo) - as well as the fact that limiting membership of the partnership to only the key stakeholders was perceived as key to its success.

Ultimately, in this regard the LAAs failed to assist in the breakdown of the silo culture, either at a central level or more pertinently at the local level, but instead helped to foster a new sense of silo working, albeit within an expanded context. However, testimony from the partners has largely shown that despite this, these expanded silo groups can still be amongst the most effective methods of attaining delivery, as opposed to a wide ranging, multi actor partnership.

7.12 Local Politics

One of the main avenues of investigation at the national overview stage was whether party politics – particularly in areas where control of the council was in opposition to that of central government – played a role in the effectiveness of the LAA. The overview survey clearly demonstrated that party politics had no discernible effect, with the exception of where there was no overall political control.

However, when exploring this in the case studies, partners broadly reported that party politics had little impact on the implementation of the LAA[29]. One partner in St Helens reported that party politics was kept out of the LAA process, citing their belief that this took place in other, more appropriate forums. Indeed across both case studies, the view that the LAA delivery remained broadly apolitical was widely held.

However, partners did comment on councillors and their perceived level of helpfulness. This was largely attributed to the difference between what the council and the electorate believe to be 'core-business'. The former Chief Executive of Liverpool City Council spoke about the dynamic between 'visible core' and 'invisible core' business; "Visible core is what the public perception often is, so it's bins, streets, potholes, street lights, parks, dog fouling, parking. But there's a huge invisible core which is actually more expensive, which is care for the elderly, child protection, things that people don't see but actually can sap a huge amount of money." Confirming this, one partner in St Helens spoke of how the Leader of St Helens Council, Marie Rimmer, would say "her biggest mailbox issue as the leader of the labour party [in St Helens], and now the leader of the council, is dog fouling. Now we were sat [in a] group meeting, and we were talking about, I'm interested in education and employment, as a voter, and the case of employment and where these people go and what we do with them, and health and she said "but all I get is letters about dog fouling"" [h].

In seeking to understand why councillors were like this, one partner in St Helens discussed a rationale where it's important to "never forget, the councillors main aim is to get re-elected. That's all they're interested in, how do I get re-elected? And they will not do anything to jeopardise that, and therefore if you keep that in mind you'll always know where they're coming from" [h]. Thus, while the visible aspect of council core-business might not tally with the strategic aims of the LAA,

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[29] Even in St Helens which was of no overall control and reported that elected representatives were of little help

councillors are duty-bound to represent their constituents and their concerns in order to be seen to be effective in their jobs.

Although there is little evidence from the overview or the interviews that party politics amongst councillors had any impact on the ability to deliver the LAA, there was a hint that the same was not always true when the local area's members of parliament were considered. In Liverpool (an area which has only had one year of government that has matched the political affiliation of Whitehall since 1979), one partner commented that "cities which had the same political affiliation had much stronger political politician to politician relationships with ministers" and where this was not the case in Liverpool "you almost got to a position at times where your own local MPs of a different party would undermine your position with their own ministers [in government] and I think it did not supply the advantage that certain cities have had".

The fact that Whitehall politics could be seen to have a significant impact on LAA delivery links back to a significant number of the findings detailed in the previous chapter on vertical relations. While partners did not feel that local politics was an issue, with many people acting for the good of the area, the cultivation of good links at the central level could lead to the undermining of a scheme that could benefit a politician's local area. This illustrates once again the importance that vertical relations hold in the implementation of a local public service delivery scheme and the danger that can arise from actors which – in theory at least – are broadly external to the project.

7.13 Chapter Seven: Theoretical Reflections

Referring back to the theoretical framework in Chapter Four, and building on the theoretical reflections at the end of Chapter Six, the significant theoretical considerations with regards to this chapter were the Strategic Relational Approach and New Institutionalism/Path Dependency.

Chapter six allowed us to consider the application of the SRA to centre-local relations in order to consider which actors (if any) were privileged by the LAA process. Now, following the discussions in this chapter, we can consider whether any actor(s) at the local level were privileged by the LAA. Compared to the national level there are no clear beneficiaries from this process. However, it is clear that some actors were better suited to participate in the LAA than others. In particular the police and Primary Care Trust were consistently discussed as actors to whom the LAA process suited. This was due to their funding levels in particular, but also their past experience of dealing with local authority work. It is no coincidence that these actors are same ones which have direct accountability ties to central government. Indeed, this should be seen in conjunction with the findings presented in Chapter Six, which point to central actors (and central priorities) being able to dominate the local decision making process.

However, the emergence of a group of actors which sought to maximise their opportunity to work at a strategic level through the LAA (most notably the fire and rescue service) indicate that, at the local level, this privileging was not as clear. Given that these actors forged a strong role for themselves in an environment to which they were not accustomed, whilst also winning the respect of other partners, it indicates that in some cases, the LAA had particular success in delivering a more effective partnership of local actors, rather than a pure delivery of central priorities at a local level. However, this also reflects Goodwin and Pemberton's earlier work on the SRA, in that actors sought to maximise their opportunities to work within a system for the benefit of their organisation, whenever such an opportunity arose (Goodwin and Pemberton: 2010). However,

in the case of the fire and rescue service especially, this did appear to be for more altruistic reasons than selfishness.

A consideration of path dependency allows us to reflect on how actor's behaviour influenced the LAA. In short, this theory contends that actors act the way they do based upon past behaviour and working practices which are applied to new situations despite the fact that they may be inefficient. Several actors in particular embody this, most notably the police. The police's reluctance (bordering on refusal) to embrace measures which – while having a long term effect on their statistics – did not immediately help to reduce crime figures is an example of this.

The other prominent example of this is how partners could not adapt to either short or long term working, based on their organisation's original preference. The fire and rescue service in particular struggled to adapt to long term strategy meetings, deriding them as 'talking shops, while organisations such as the PCT struggled with short term action.   This inability to adapt was one of the most prominent indications that an actor's prior methods of working (which they deemed to be effective) could limit their ability to work with other actors, even when this may have been beneficial.

In all, studying the LAA at a local case study has shown that there is strong evidence to support the notion of path dependency in terms of local actors and the way that they act. Any further study could explore how these paths might be broken in order to deliver greater efficiencies and better partnership working.

Chapter Eight – Policy Lessons and Improving Future Practice

8.1 Introduction

Whereas the previous two chapters have looked at how LAAs were implemented – both vertically and horizontally – the aim of this chapter is to provide more of a forward looking perspective. With this in mind, the chapter aims to establish whether the LAA project was a success, drawing on partner's views to identify the significant policy failures and successes.

Following on from this, the chapter will firstly discuss how the Labour Government envisaged the LAAs developing under a hypothetical fourth term in office, before moving on to evaluate the Coalition Government's proposals for local public service delivery. This exercise will attempt to provide an analysis of the extent to which the policy failings/successes identified in the first part of the chapter might be remedied in future schemes.

8.2 Were LAAs a success?

During the interview process every participant was given the opportunity to hold forth on whether they believed the LAA project was a success or not in terms of facilitating good partnership working, local governance and most importantly effective local governance. As became apparent during the previous chapters, there is a spectrum of views, yet despite this a broad thread emerges which tends to reflect most views. Overall, although the partners took a generally positive view on LAAs, these views were largely qualified.

8.2.1 Yes

Few partners gave unreserved praise to the LAA. One might expect the 'weaker' actors identified in chapter seven to be more likely to consider the LAA a success, given the boost that these organisations have received in terms of their ability to operate within a local area. However one of the partners from an organisation widely regarded to be the strongest, i.e. the PCT, has also

considered the LAA a success indicating that it is not solely self interest that led the partners to take this view.

One of the most significant reasons cited for the success of the LAA was the fact it was a major component of a one document system providing the direction of local public service delivery for an area as opposed to strategy/delivery documents for a plethora of agencies. In the words of one partner it was "the first time I remember the electorate in St Helens could go and draw a single document off and see what the place was like… what the priorities were, and then the performance management on them and say how are we doing on each?" [h] As an example of this, figure 8.1 illustrates an example of an indicator and target from St Helens' LAA.

Outcome	Indicator	Description	Base-line	Outcome 2008/09	Outcome 2009/2010	Outcome 2010/11	Partners	Block
Support families to take action on the major causes of ill-health, smoking, obesity, physical activity and	N123	Number of smoking quitters per 100000 population.	846	848	882	919	St Helens Council, **Halton and St Helens PCT**	Healthier Communities and Older People

Figure 8.1 - An example of indicator reporting from St Helens' LAA

(Source: St Helens Together: 2008)

Similarly the partnership angle of the LAA was noted as a contributing factor, with one partner praising the LAA as being "a really good way of trying to identify the things that matter to local areas and get those as the things that people are focused on jointly" [d] although, as the earlier chapters have illustrated, the extent to which this worked in practice varied significantly.   Another partner praised the LAA for its ability to "bring people together to address common issues" [q] citing its ability to do this where previously those partners existed in silos, as a key indicator of its success. However, the same partner pointed to the difficulty of rating the LAA as a quantitative target based exercise, noting that many of the

benefits such as improved partnership working are largely qualitative and difficult to accurately measure.

Most interestingly of all, the LAA won plaudits at the national level, not from the politicians - whose political baby it was - but from the senior civil servants who implemented the scheme and were tasked with designing and implementing the LAA's successors.   They point to people within Westminster that "launched investigations[30] into LAAs and then dropped them because … [they] were impressed actually, as a policy" [o]. This led the civil servants to describe the LAA as 'the dog that doesn't bark' [o] as it proved to be effective despite any overt showiness.

The civil servants also pointed to how LAAs caused a shift in the culture of Whitehall. This resulted in ministers becoming reluctant to force departmental priorities into an LAA because it meant they had to potentially pick a fight, not with the area, but with their cabinet colleague with whom they were competing for resources.   This mean that that rather than attempting to "unstitch an LAA…[politicians] backed down because they realised that actually, the way the system has been created, everyone has to jump together" [o] otherwise, a politician can be seen to be bringing about difficulties for local areas based purely on selfish reasons. This in turn could have implications for the politician (and the government) on a national scale i.e. through negative media headlines over divisions and arguments within the cabinet.

8.2.2 No
There were a limited number of partners, many of whom delivered the sternest criticisms of the LAA, who believed that it was not a success. One representative from the private sector used this analogy:

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[30] i.e. To find evidence that the LAA was ineffective, wasteful or inefficient in order to discredit the LAA and by extension, the government.

"It's like turning up at Stratford, expecting to see a full production of Hamlet and finding the Reduced Shakespeare Company on stage doing the whole thing in three minutes. You get the flavour of what the play was about, you get a little bit of the humour, a little bit of the drama, but you don't really see any of it." [f]

By this, they meant that the LAA only assisted with telling part of the story of local government, later referring to it as a 'guttered approach' which led to missing much of the nuance that they felt was important to local government work.

One of the other more prominent critics of the LAA – the police – also summed up whether they believed the LAA model was a success in one word: "no". When asked to elaborate, they cited the difficulties of joining up the work of various thematic partnerships to the wider LSP group, so that all partners were working towards delivering LAA targets. This points again towards the expanded silo theory (Davies: 2009) in which the LAA/LSP structures broaden the silo, but still ultimately prevent full partnership working. They also pointed to their belief that the LAA failed to deliver 'added value' in breaking down/expanding these silos, stating their view that they "would put any money on the targets that have been set in the LAA would've been achieved in any event because each of the individual partners would've been working on those targets anyway. So nothing different has come from it."

This strong criticism of the LAA and it's ability to deliver added value is notable for the irony in the fact that the partner that held this view represents the one partner most singled out for praise as being the most effective in terms of actual target delivery. This links back to the discussions held in chapter seven about whether the LAA suited a particular actor's working methods, illustrating that whilst the police were one of those actors identified as being better suited to the LAA's bureaucracy, this does not guarantee that those actors will buy into the system as a result.

8.2.3. To Some Extent

However, perhaps as one might expect, the majority of interviewees were more measured in their analysis, with one partner summing this feeling up by comparing the LAA to the curate's egg. By this most partners contended that the LAA contained elements of both success and failure.

One partner struck an ambiguous note declaring it to be "probably no worse, or no better than many other structures that have tried to do that in the past and probably will try to do it in the future" [j], before going on to place the LAA as simply a necessary function of the New Labour style of government through performance management. Developing this, another partner felt that, while the LAA hasn't been an overall success, it helped to "foster better relationships and partnership working" [c]. One partner felt that while the LAA itself was a good, credible policy document, it remained to be seen how it would be delivered, stating that "it will only succeed if it is accepted by government and is properly resourced."

The tenuous post general election position of the LAA was one that was shared by a former Chief Executive of Liverpool City Council. He felt that the LAA arrangement was 'fragile' and susceptible to the "new environment of the public sector [which] is going to be a big test [of their resilience]" [k] In particular he felt that "partners in successful areas will continue to work together" but any scheme ran the risk of those partners working in less successful parts of the LAA seeking to extricate themselves from the process at the first opportunity, causing fragmentation and a return to organisational silos.

8.2.4 LAAs as a 'Staging Post'

A viewpoint which seems to best fit the overall findings of the research requires a reframing of the question as to whether the LAA has been a success or not. There were a notable number of partners that felt that the LAA could be

considered a success as a staging post for local public service delivery rather than an end in itself.

The idea was first discussed by a senior civil servant from GONW who felt that the LAA was an effective "stepping stone towards central-local devolution, rather than the culmination of central-local devolution". If the LAA was considered in those terms then, in the civil servant's view, it would be fair to consider it a success. However if the LAA was to be considered the culmination of this process, whereby all policy development would stop and continue along this model, then it was not a success – owing to the sizeable number of weaknesses identified during the course of the previous chapters. In this regard, the civil servant was clear that much work was still needed on a policy system that was showing signs of being effective.

This was a view that was largely shared by John Denham who emphasised the importance, once again, of viewing the process as a journey in continued need of review and adjustment. Under this premise, identifying the two areas of centre-local relations and cross-service cooperation as major themes, John Denham felt that it "has been a success because we are in a lot better place than we were before we started." Again, echoing the thoughts of the representative from GONW, John Denham felt that if you asked if the LAA had "sealed the deal; has this re-defined [local governance] forever? then no, of course it hasn't" [i].

One senior police officer best summed up the LAA model through the use of a simple 'marks out of 10' concept. He gave the LAA 7/10, praising it for its freedom of choice and its effectiveness as a regime, before citing weaknesses in some of the targets. However, while noting that 7/10 was not a perfect score, 'you'd pass most of your exams with that' [j]. This statement really best reflects the majority of partner views on the LAA, in that it was a relative success as a policy programme, yet still retained room for improvement in future schemes.

8.3 What where the policy successes?

It has already been mentioned that success in an LAA is akin to the successful family of Anna Karenina, whereby "successful families are all alike, but unsuccessful families are different in every way" or, as one partner put it "It's like lining ducks up, Success in anything doesn't rely on one factor, it relies on a series of things being lined up and if one of those is out of whack and the partnership doesn't correct it then you're not going to get there". However within this, there were a number of specific policy successes identified by partners, which contributed towards effective LAA delivery, although it is fair to say that the strengths identified by partners were outweighed by weaknesses.

The indicator and target system which formed the spine of every LAA was identified as being one of the central successes by John Denham, as it enabled local areas to be stretched in order to attain results that they might not achieve otherwise. He used the example of A&E waiting times to illustrate the point, saying that while high targets were rarely met, hospitals often attained waiting times that were very close to this target– something that they would fail to do without being stretched.

Another partner praised the executive board and thematic partnership aspect of the LAA delivery mechanisms as being a significant success as it allowed for 'jointly celebrating' achievements as a partnership and publicly demonstrated how things were going well as a spur for further action, rather than just a forum for criticism of partners.

8.4 What where the significant policy weaknesses?

Compared to the strengths, partners were much clearer about what the policy failings and weaknesses of the LAA were and held forth on a variety of issues.

One partner spoke of how the various sub-partnerships tasked with delivering the LAA lacked formal accountability to the partnership, which could limit the action

that might need to be taken if indicators were not met. Instead the sub-partnerships were described as just "a gathering of likeminded people." Reflecting on the accountability measures for partners, another partner spoke of the need for clearer, and more partner-specific financial rewards, feeling that "if the PCT succeeding affected my funding, I'd be a lot closer to the PCT and probably vice versa" [g]. Thus, while the LAA proved an effective vehicle for getting partners to engage on likeminded ventures, partners clearly felt that the methods of tying them together in order to deliver results could be improved.

A number of partners felt that the lead in time to develop the LAA served as a particular weakness, particularly in an environment where there were a wide range of views to be considered and filtered. While the case of the voluntary sector was considered in the previous chapter, one respondent also pointed to the nature of the two-tier district and county structure of local government (although largely dismissed within the national overview survey as significantly impacting LAA delivery) and how reflecting the needs of multiple districts within a short timeframe could be considered a limitation.

The other significant weakness identified by several partners was the presence of indicators on which they were unable to take any action against due to limitations on legislation. In many cases this required primary legislation from Westminster in order to create the environment where local areas could take meaningful action. A full account of this is provided in the previous chapter.

8.5 Learning Lessons: Improving Future Practice

Whilst this chapter is largely dedicated to identifying the policy lessons from LAAs and thus improving future practice, different anecdotes emerge from the case study process which cast doubts over some partners' willingness or ability to seek out and learn these lessons. This is despite the essential need for partners at all levels to engage in a lesson-learning process to improve their own practices at the very least given the cyclical nature of government. One partner

who formerly worked for the Civil Service identified this need, quoting Former United States of America President Harry Truman who said "there's nothing new, only the history that you don't know yet" [m] and pointing out how this is telling of public policy. Similarly, although oft repeated, an awareness of the line 'those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it' is also pertinent, in order to prevent the needless repetition of pitfalls in future schemes.

However, despite this, in the period following the election of the Coalition Government – when it became clear the LAA model was to be scrapped – some partners were reticent to participate in an exercise that involved reflecting upon previous initiatives. Although widely praised as a strong leader, and a key driver in the success of their LAA, the Chief Executive of St Helens council epitomised this view, declining to take part in any interview because "as the LAA's have been abolished, views of the LAA's now seem largely irrelevant."[31] When this was raised with other officers within the council, they replied that this represented a willingness to look to the future rather than the past despite, as outlined earlier, the importance of learning lessons, especially in an environment which will still largely involve the kind of partnership working that occurred under LAAs.

Thankfully, this outlook was limited to only a few actors, and most people were willing to reflect upon the LAA process.

8.6   What did partners want to see?

After considering the overall successes and shortcomings of the LAA, both in overall terms and in terms of detailed aspects of policy, all the partners identified aspects of the LAA that they would like to see changed in order to improve the future practice of local public service delivery. They can be placed in several broad categories covering the range of the life of the LAA.

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[31] In an email communication.

8.6.1 Learn from Pilots

One of the central themes for improvement is that of better lesson learning – particularly from the LAA pilots. One senior civil servant who formerly worked at GOR noted that "[Central Government] would undertake these pilots, but before the ink was dry... they were rolling out the main initiative without any period of learning" [m]. As a result the main LAA programme was instigated without really addressing any of the shortcomings that would arise, thus allowing them to filter through to the full rollout. The same partner saw little scope for change in this regard (something that this chapter will focus on) due to "the political environment and the imperatives of the timescales and so forth that we were not very good, in a systematic way, of piloting things, learning from the pilot, adjusting and then rolling out" [m].

8.6.2 Negotiation

Reflecting on some of the policy weaknesses and focusing on the genesis of each individual LAA, many of the partners wanted to see more time allocated to the initial negotiation of the LAA, with the addition of a 'front loading process.' One of the reasons cited for this was down to the fact that "it was local authority led and some of the other partners were unfamiliar with the process" [q] and the time it took them to get up to speed left some partners "a little bit behind in relation to the knowledge and understanding of what it means and what the implications are" [q] Another partner felt that this short timeframe was exacerbated by the need to build "good partnership relationships and systems" before work could begin properly in order to "get a meaningful local area agreement" [r]. However, if LSP structures remain when moving forward into any successor to the LAA, this issue might be negated. To help this process, the same partner felt that "clearer information at the outset around the process… would've been nice" although they accept the difficulties of achieving this with a new policy scheme.

Consequently, what is required is an adequate period, prior to formal negotiation on any potential document, dedicated to relationship building. With this in mind,

one partner said that any future partnership initiative should attempt to frontload the process. This could be achieved by allowing the partners to meet beforehand to discuss their responsibilities and shared interests, in order to build a more effective agreement, and consequently a more deliverable agreement that partners are happier with.

However, reflecting the evidence of central predetermination of indicators discussed in chapter six, one partner working in Liverpool's local authority felt that a shorter negotiation period would be helpful, cutting out what they termed 'artificial negotiation' [a] (i.e. negotiation on targets that they believed were subject to top-down pressure) and thus avoiding significant wasting of time and man hours. They suggest that if this predetermination is the case, central government should be open about this, saying that "if there's only room for manoeuvre on 5% of it…let local authorities across the country get on with delivering [the other] 95% of it and have a much smaller streamlined process to just tinker with the edges" [a] with the resultant process taking a matter of weeks rather than months.

While there is validity in avoiding a costly and time consuming, but ultimately pointless target negotiation process, the points made by the other partners of 'front loading' the process in terms of the partnership remain valid. The time taken to introduce partners to each other, their priorities and organisational structures has the potential to yield greater results as the scheme develops, reflecting the Invest v Spend argument discussed in chapter seven.

8.6.3 Fewer Targets

Reflecting on the discussions raised in chapter six, the number of national indicators contained within each LAA was a popular issue in terms of improving future practice. Interestingly, no partner argued for an increase in targets, even at the central level, and few argued for the status quo of up to 35 to remain. Yet, the issue of striking a balance between too many/few targets was also felt in order to set a reasonable, but workable agenda.

Overwhelmingly, the opinion of partners was for a further reduction in the performance indicators, continuing the trend which initially reduced them to the 35. Partners focused on the unmanageability and the unrealistic aspect of having 35 priorities for an area, with even senior civil servants questioning if an area really could have 35 priorities. One partner also reflected that the statutory education targets only added to this burden, and even without these statutory targets it led to "about 20 targets too many" suggesting an area have no more than 15 targets. This figure of around 15 targets was frequently raised by partners in terms of a realistic number of targets to focus upon. Interestingly, this is the same number of outcomes as is utilised in the Scottish Local Output Agreement (Scottish Government: 2008).

The furthest that a partner goes in terms of indicator reduction is the selection of 3-4 top priorities for an area, supported by 50 other indicators for central priorities – again a reduction from the 198 that were initially used/monitored in the original LAA. This returns to the issue of stronger actors and their potential domination of the local agenda, and has the potential to significantly amplify these concerns if there are only a few priorities within a local public service delivery scheme.

8.6.4 Outcomes

In many regards, the performance management aspect of the LAA was considered to be an essential factor of any future scheme with one partner noting that "if [tax payers] are spending money on this, [they] really should know what [they've] got for that" [d]. Similarly they noted that the performance management aspect is useful for engaging partners by illustrating how they can contribute, and how the LAA affects them.

However, there were calls for more uniformity of the indicator/target selection to end the occurrence of instances where LAA targets could differ from the internal targets set by individual agencies with one partner calling for LAAs to "respect

local drivers within different statutory bodies who are trying to deliver things" [j] by ensuring that LAA targets were set at the same level as each partner agency and across the same timeframe. Otherwise, in the same partner's view "all you're doing is confusing people" [j].

8.6.5 Realistic Outcomes

Whilst there was a significant amount of praise for the indicator/outcome based model of performance management – albeit with in depth criticisms – partners indicated that they would welcome a move which gave some of the indicators a more realistic slant.

Several partners pointed to indicator targets that required primary legislation in order to be effectively delivered. As indicated in chapter six, the most prominent example of this was traffic congestion, with an indicator LAAs were compelled to adopt, yet local areas lacked the powers locally to make effective changes to public transport provision to deliver against the target. While no partner made a realistic argument about the creation of such powers for local areas, instead they suggested that a greater awareness of what was in the power of local authorities to deliver would be more beneficial. As such some partners wished to see the suite of indicators more closely vetted to reflect this.

8.6.6 Less Top Down

Reflecting some of the significant themes to arise from chapter six, one of the common themes for partner improvements focuses on the central-local aspect of LAAs. Within this a common theme was reducing the amount of top-down control that the centre has over local areas, although numerous ways of achieving this are suggested.

There was a conflict about how GOR fitted into this procedure, with one partner in St Helens wanting to see "less involvement from Government Office North West, which had become an irritation to the LSP" [h], reflecting some of the

themes about how GOR exercised their role as centre-local intermediary. However Whitehall saw it slightly differently, indicating that their analysis made a case for a stronger 'Executive Regional Minister' presiding over a more powerful regional infrastructure which – in the words of John Denham - would "create precisely that level of regional autonomy of action from central government that the councils perhaps were looking for in their regional bodies" *I*. A move in this direction, contended Whitehall, would simultaneously solve the problem of GOR which is perceived (and is, in practice) to be delivering a Whitehall agenda whilst also reducing the perception of top-down control by providing some element of distance between Whitehall and the local authorities.

However, echoing thoughts expressed by a wide variety of partners, John Denham points out that a total 'let go' by central government is unlikely to happen when "50% upwards of your money comes from central government, in a political culture in which central government is held to account for local failings" *I*. In making his point he alluded to the 'Baby P Case'[32]. He spoke of how a "local government minister went to Utrecht to a European government conference at the time of the baby P scandal and [they] couldn't find anybody from any other European country who could understand why the central government was involved in the Baby P case" *I*. Explaining this, and contrasting Britain with Europe, he felt that an environment exists in the UK where "people look to the government to hold Haringey council to account" *I*. In many ways this merely reflects the highly centralised culture of UK government alluded to throughout this research, but remains something that should be considered when considering the reflection on how to create a less top-down policy environment.

Given the contention that a total 'let go' by Whitehall is an unrealistic option, one partner instead called for a clearer distinction to be drawn over what central government see as mandatory within any local public service delivery. Pointing

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[32] [A child abuse case which caught the public attention in 2009/10, principally involving the child protection services from Haringey Council, but in which Central Government became involved]

to the pressure that was placed on local areas by Whitehall departments (as discussed in chapter six) the partner felt it "would've been helpful for us to be very clear how local an agreement it was" [r], suggesting that instead of Whitehall departments placing pressure on the local authority to adopt indicators (including through threat of funding withdrawal etc) they should simply make more indicators mandatory – should a case be made that they were of sufficient importance that all local areas should be required to report on them. This also reflects the notion of 'artificial negotiation' of targets that would be included in an LAA regardless, discussed earlier in the chapter.

8.6.7. Partnership

One of the popular themes amongst partners was a focus on improving the strength of partnership working in future schemes, and in doing so responding to weaknesses in the LAA process, particularly in its earlier stages. Indeed John Denham notes that "the LAA process in retrospect didn't provide such clear incentives to participate" [l], although this has been shown to vary across partners.

The biggest way that partners suggested this could be achieved was through the 'front loading' negotiation process outlined earlier in the chapter. However, rather than focusing on the selection and negotiation of indicators and targets, the partners felt that time would be best spent on 'simple relationship building' – i.e. allowing partners to forge working relationships before negotiation began. Before beginning work on the detailed aspects of the LAA, partners felt it would be useful to spend some time "developing an understanding of what each other's objectives are" [n] before then trying to identify a common purpose which links these objectives and consequently forms the basis of mutually beneficial partnership working. Furthermore, to achieve this partners pointed to the importance of the creation of an environment where each actor could approach each other with an 'openness and candour' about their objectives, something which would be helpful both at an early stage, and throughout delivery as well.

There was also a feeling that this process, whilst very important at the beginning in order to establish a sense of common purpose and understanding, needs to be a continuous one in order to be effective. One partner's experiences of the LAA suggested it would be unwise to "assume or take for granted what a partner said five years ago is what they still think" due to the fact that all organisations move on" [n]. This reflects the fact that organisational priorities can change, particularly noting those organisations like the police which operate on a short time scale, but also actors within institutions can change i.e. through promotion or retirement. Given the importance of personal working relationships cited in chapter seven, a constant process of fostering these relationships and ensuring that partners are all aware of their priorities and current operational outlook is essential.

Amongst the 'weaker' actors identified in chapter seven, there is also an indication that they wish their new found involvement in the partnership to continue, but for any new scheme to consider the contributions and effectiveness of organisations that were involved in previous schemes, rather than them having to earn recognition from square one. Indeed, one senior partner from the fire and rescue service felt that any future scheme do more to make partners feel involved in the process, rather than having it imposed upon them. Indeed, there was a palpable fear amongst these actors that, if a successor to the LAA went back to the 'traditional' actors, they could see themselves sidelined, and many of the benefits they had delivered and the role for which they had earned wide praise amongst partners could be undone.

One senior civil servant also felt that while the LAA was full of successful leaders, and identified this as part of its success (see discussion in chapter seven), more could be done to facilitate collaborative leadership whereby partners work together to seek out and maximise the opportunities that could benefit all the participating organisations.

8.6.8 Budgets

One of the most telling statements to arise from a partner was 'people follow the money' (as discussed in chapter seven). By this the partner meant that organisations were only really interested in schemes which had funding attached and were viable, or would only work with other partners if it meant extra funding being available. However partners pointed to the failure of the LAA to effectively create the environment of pooled funding that would bring partners closer together.

As well as the issue of pooled budgets one partner [g] pointed to the financial reward system for target delivery. They suggested that, by tying partner organisations together, and making them jointly responsible for achieving targets – and the accompanying reward money – this would make them more likely to work together, stating that the police and PCT would likely have closer ties if their funding was dependent on each other's success.

The same partner commented that a failure to do this would simply see a return to the silo working that characterised previous methods of local public service delivery, and to avoid this any scheme requires funding, or compelling accountability structures, otherwise "you might as well not bother, because everyone's busy. That's the way it works" [g]. In the view of the partner, a lack of either of those vital characteristics would lead to it being viewed as a talking shop creating the same issues of disengagement faced by some of the thematic partnerships within the LAA model.

8.6.9 Concentration of Power

Although the research has indicated that the power within partnerships has been spread around slightly, particularly amongst a wider group of local actors, control of the LAA still lies with a few key organisations. To combat this one partner suggested that more work can be done to dilute this concentration of power, particularly down to a community level (moving towards some of the principles

outlined in the early LAA policy documents). They referred to the Bishop of Liverpool, James Jones, who said that 'at the end of this process, those with power should have less of it' [r]. This statement does hold up for the LAA, as those in power do have slightly less of it, but in terms of a mass dilution of power to local areas, this process has a not achieved this goal.

One of the ways that Hazel Blears suggested to effect this concentration of power was through more agreements sitting beneath the LAA at a neighbourhood level, feeling that an agreement between the Local Authority and a neighbourhood community could add further depth to the process. In particular she felt this could prove useful in particularly deprived areas (as discussed in chapter six) with high concentrations of deprivation, allowing specific areas to focus on the issues of importance in a bespoke manner, allowing for targeted responses.

8.6.10 International Examples

One of the most surprising revelations to arise from the interview process surrounded the use of international examples. What became apparent was that CLG made little attempt to look at international case studies when developing LAAs – in effect developing them in isolation.

Both John Denham and the senior civil servants from CLG admitted that there was little attempt to utilise international examples in the process, particularly during the initial development of LAAs, with the process instead focusing primarily on the lessons to come from the Lyons Inquiry into local government.

The only person who alluded to any form of international examples influencing LAA development was Hazel Blears, who related a strange story about how the main international inspiration for CLG local government policy arose from a private holiday taken by Ms Blears to Cordoba, Spain, where elected mayors have high degrees of autonomy and funding. This is telling when coupled with

the admission by civil servants' admission that they themselves did no international fact finding. When considered together, and reflecting upon the international examples in chapter three, this represents a missed opportunity to draw upon best practice from similar schemes (most notably Canada's Vancouver Agreement) in order to improve the LAA.

At the local level, one partner in Liverpool touched upon using international examples in order to improve practice in the UK. They noted that:

> *"Sometimes we don't see all of the solutions and sometimes the solutions are invented elsewhere and we have to have thoughtfulness and a generosity of spirit to accept that we didn't invent everything here" [g]*

Whether this holds true for CLG, or whether they simply were driven to comply with more pressing currents[33] within Whitehall at the time of the LAA's development, the near total failure to draw upon international examples in order to improve UK practice represents one of the most significant policy failings of the LAA.

8.7 Where now for LAAs?

As briefly discussed in chapter four, following the general election in 2010, LAAs were abolished – something that was likened by one partner to the costly scrapping of several brand new, unused Nimrod bombers which had taken place days previously, as an example of wasteful government spending, that had 'thrown the baby out with the bathwater'. However, while cautioning against wastefulness, another partner was clearly aware of the need for economic prudence in the post-election policy environment, speaking of the financial pressures facing local public service delivery due to budget cuts.

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[33] I.e. responding to the findings of the Lyons review, as well as the wider LGMA agenda

Yet despite this, many partners were forthright about the will to continue with partnership working in this new environment, with one partner in St Helens noting that "we've done [partnership] now for 20 years so it would be called something different every five years[34] but the same principle remains of getting the key public and private sector partners around a table" [i].

Whilst considering the concerns of the local partners, the following sections of this chapter will discuss what the near future of local public service delivery is likely to look like, whilst also assessing the extent to which they seek to respond to the wishes of partners.

8.7.1 Where would Labour have taken it?

One of the hypothetical questions surrounding the research is how the Labour Government of Gordon Brown proposed to continue the development of the LAA model and other forms of local public service delivery, had they won a fourth term following the general election in 2010. Given that this didn't happen, what follows is largely an exercise in 'what ifs'. However it provides useful insights into what Labour ministers saw as the deficiencies in the LAA model as it stood and how they sought to rectify them. Indeed, in the much the same way as current Coalition Government policy can be analysed, these potential policies can be considered in terms of how well they would reflect the changes that the various partners wished to see in order to improve LAAs.

As indicated earlier, John Denham indicated that a fourth Labour term would have seen a move to a stronger regional level of governance with the creation of 'executive regional ministers with a cheaper but much more powerful regional infrastructure' where the aim would have been to create 'autonomy of action from central government.' John Denham continued to argue that the emphasis would shift towards the locality with the 'central-local relationship' being increasingly

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[34] Referencing the various local public service delivery schemes that local areas have worked with

handled at a regional level – with Whitehall only receiving 'advice'. This was a policy that featured in the 2010 election manifesto, with talk of 'an enhanced role' for regional ministers (Labour: 2010), although it did little to elaborate beyond this. In principle this development would have gone some way to responding to the critique of GOR representatives and the confusion over their role, although the extent of this autonomy would've still raised the same questions about whose side the Minister was ultimately on when making policy decisions – London or the Locality?

Former Secretary of State Denham also discussed how a simplification of the structures of regional governance was to have been presented to Government for consideration (indicating that this was not official policy, only a potential direction - Indeed, this policy did not feature in the Labour Party's 2010 election manifesto (Labour Party: 2010)). This proposal would entail a streamlining and consolidation of the various regional bodies (GOR, RDA etc) into one single organisation overseen by the Regional Minister.

One of the main criticisms of LAAs was the number of indicators that local areas had to adopt, with partners calling for the total to be reduced from the maximum of 35. This a view with which those in Whitehall concurred, with John Denham, Hazel Blears and senior civil servants indicating that this was something that would have been likely to occur as Labour developed their local public service delivery agenda. The Civil Servants went on to argue that indicator reduction would continue the trend of reducing performance indicators – continuing from the reduction from over 2000 performance indicators leading into the LAA (CLG: 2008).

One idea raised by Hazel Blears was a change in the concepts and culture of central government to reflect those at the local level. One of the key criticisms of central government raised in chapter six was that the various Whitehall departments continued to act within their respective silos, despite the expectation

from Central Government that the various local agencies would pool their budgets to deliver public services.   Echoing the sentiments raised by one local partner that partnership working became more effective when partners' futures (i.e. funding) were linked to one another, Hazel Blears intimated that discussions were held with Sir Gus O'Donnell [Cabinet Secretary] about the creation of pooled budgets at the central level, forcing partners with responsibilities for local public service delivery to work in a more joined up manner. It was also indicated that this move towards pooled budgeting would help to end the Whitehall culture whereby "a minister's success is judged on how many bills they've brought, how big is their budget and how much power can they wield over everybody else" towards a culture where success was "the ability to make a difference" [d]. Whilst it could be argued that the two models of Ministerial success are not mutually exclusive, a shift towards Whitehall reflecting local partnership structures and not simply adopting a 'do as I say, not as I do' attitude would represent significant steps in allaying partners concerns over top-down control. In particular, if central policy documents were produced which advocated cross-sector working and the ways in which this could be done, this would help to reduce the number of organisations which have difficulty aligning their own internal organisational structures with those of an LAA or other scheme, as this process would largely have already been done for them.

8.7.2 Total Place

However, beyond this, those in Whitehall envisaged local public service delivery moving beyond the LAA model in the longer term, with an indicator and target model like the LAA becoming, in the words of John Denham "the default position for those parts of the country that at this stage didn't have the capacity to go further" [l]. Some of this shift in policy direction was intended to be addressed through 'Total Place'.

The Total Place model of governance, first piloted in the 2009 budget (Treasury: 2009) and rolled out towards the end of Labour's final term of Government was

intended to take on a central role in local public service delivery. This would address concerns about single-pot funding by reducing the amount of funding that was 'ring fenced'. By doing this, the aim was to provide a larger amount of money available to spend, which in turn was intended encourage partners to work together more efficiently and effectively.

Many of the interviewees from Whitehall felt that a move towards the Total Place model of governance would occur, with two avenues developing as the LAA and Total Place models combined. The first would be a continuation of the target reduction agenda (i.e. from 35 to 15 and further). Civil servants envisaged this taking place along the lines of recommendations from the Local Government Association (LGA: 2010) calling for significantly fewer targets and 'far greater freedom for the local areas in the selection and definition of those targets' [o], all of which would contribute to a much more focused policy.

The second point, on which the Whitehall actors elaborated, was a shift towards a greater emphasis on the pooled-funding seen as a significant barrier to progress, both centrally and locally. Hazel Blears envisaged that this would focus on vastly improving the efficiency of the single capital pot / area based grant model, encouraging partners to share resources, i.e. through building a 'one stop shop' for council services, rather than spreading them across multiple sites. However, while this would generate fiscal efficiency, it doesn't particularly cover any solutions to the institutional barriers that are still evident in local partnership working.

It was envisaged that, as the fourth term developed, the LAA would consequently serve as a basic expectation of local authorities, with those areas which – to quote John Denham - had the 'ambition and attitude' to stretch themselves further given the opportunity to do so, referencing the analogy of schools and the national curriculum discussed in chapter seven.

Now, the chapter seeks to draw the emphasis away from the hypothetical direction of a fourth term Labour government, and move towards a consideration of Coalition policy. In this regard, the partners also discussed how Total Place – in principle if not in name – retained its relevance within early Coalition policy.

Partners first discussed this in light of how Total Place remained in place, despite other schemes such as the entire structure of regional governance and LAAs being abolished in the flurry of departmental closures and cuts following the 2010 election, which was dubbed as the 'Bonfire of the Quangos' (Telegraph: 2011). They indicated that the fact Total Place remained in this environment indicated that the Coalition saw some value in the programme – and the fact its name was not changed immediately in order to distance itself from its political origins also surprised partners.

Now the chapter will move to consider Coalition policy, whilst providing a more detailed consideration of how the Coalition sought to reflect and respond to the policy lessons created from LAAs.

8.8 Coalition Agreement

The first major policy to be published by the coalition was the 'Coalition Agreement' (Cabinet Office: 2010) which set out the principles that would define the programme for Government. Ostensibly, the aim of this document was to provide a reference point for the two parties of coalition – the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats – so that the general direction of future policy could be agreed beforehand, thus avoiding political arguments at later stages of the Coalition's time in office.

Although they Coalition Agreement set out the principles that would guide all aspects of government, once section focused on the proposals for Communities and Local Government.   One of the major moves was the abolition of many of the structures of regional governance. The Coalition Agreement proposed the

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abolition of the Regional Development Agencies as well as GOR London, with a view to scrapping other GORs as the term progressed (Cabinet Office: 2010).

In terms of establishing new policy, the Coalition Agreement proposed to deliver increased localism including allowing more citizens a say in decision making in their area. In principle this is not dissimilar to the stated principles behind much of Labour's local government initiatives of the previous ten years. However, where the Coalition proposed to differ was in terms of Elected Mayors. The Coalition Agreement proposed that the 12 largest cities would be granted the opportunity to vote on whether they wished to have an Elected Mayor (Cabinet Office: 2010) although the agreement did not specify what new powers these mayors would have.

At this stage it was evident that the Coalition Agreement did not go into explicit detail about the policies and what they entailed. However, it did offer an indication of what would be delivered in the period following the election.

8.9 The Big society

One early initiative from the Coalition which caught the attention of the partners is the concept of 'the Big Society'. However, despite forming a central plank of the Conservative Party election manifesto (Conservative Party: 2010), the Big Society scheme has been one of the most misunderstood (about what it entails, how much it costs and who it involves) policy initiatives of recent years, requiring several re-launches.

Along with the LEPs, the Big Society formed part of a wider push towards renewed localism, with the policy forming 'a massive transfer of power from Whitehall to Local Communities' (Cabinet Office: 2011). At its heart, the Coalition aimed for this to be achieved by encouraging charities and community groups to take on the running of local services, most notably, perhaps, through the creation of free schools. However, commentators have decried the initiative

as a smokescreen for cuts to public services forced by a need to reduce expenditure as a result of the financial downturn (New Economics Foundation: 2010). Again, like with the previous discussion of LEPs, the aim here is not to provide a full critique of the big society itself, but to discuss how it responds to the policy lessons of the LAAs.

The issue of the Big Society is particularly pertinent for Liverpool given that in 2010 it was selected as one of the four vanguard areas[35] to pilot the proposals, only to withdraw from the scheme in February 2011 citing difficulties arising from the impact of austerity measures (BBC News: 2011).

Again, the fluctuation of stronger and weaker actors comes to the fore with the Big Society proposals, prominently elevating the role of the voluntary and third sector to an even greater level than they would've experienced within the LAA.

However, even though this move would increase their role in local decision making and the running of local public services, one of the most fervent critics of the big society scheme were representatives of the voluntary sector. One representative of the third sector questioned their capacity to take on such a role in delivering local public services and the confidence (or lack of) that the public would hold in them performing the delivery of those services, feeling that;

> *"If somebody's going to operate on my prostate, I want them to have done 400 previous operations first, I don't want somebody with a manual in one hand saying I'm not quite sure where it is, but it's got to come out."* [r]

By this they meant that while campaigning for better run and more responsive local services, those groups still believe that by and large the people that run

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[35] The four vanguard areas were Eden – Cumbria, Liverpool – Merseyside, Sutton – London and Windsor and Maidenhead – Berkshire.

them at present are the most appropriate to run them, and the capacity that they have built allows them to run a more efficient organisation. Indeed, there were worries that, as a result, local services could descend into 'mob rule' with decisions being made 'by a text poll on Sky News' which might lead to reactionary decisions being made, which in turn could inhibit the local area.

Perversely, voluntary sector actors also felt that the Big Society proposals could reduce the capacity of long standing activists within the area. There was a worry amongst the voluntary sector that, in order to facilitate voluntary sector working, representatives either from or endorsed by central government could arrive in the area. They questioned whether as a result, "a community organiser who has worked at their kitchen table for 20 years is no longer a community organiser because somebody has turned up with a badge?" As a result this leads to questions as to whether, albeit inadvertently, the Big Society can still maintain an aspect of centralism by failing to engage with/draw upon existing community capital.

Latterly, the Big Society faded from the frontline of local public service delivery, having failed to capture the imagination of the general public. This could be largely attributed to a lack of clarity about its role, and the presentation of an unrealistic vision of how to deliver public services for local areas. In turn, new initiatives emerged which offered a more coherent vision of how this could be achieved.

8.10 Coalition Policy - Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

On the 29th June 2010, a letter was published by CLG, signed by incoming Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government; Eric Pickles and the Secretary of State for Business Innovation and Skills; Vincent Cable, inviting local authority and business leaders to submit proposals for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) (CLG: 2010b). The aim of these LEPs was to 'provide the strategic leadership in their areas to set out local economic priorities' as part of

the Coalition's plans for sub-national economic growth (CLG: 2010b). Citing the belief that the local authority boundaries might not be analogous to the 'functional economic area' in any locality, these new LEP structures encouraged neighbouring authorities to collaborate.

Structurally the LEPs were intended to replace the Regional Development Agencies which were abolished in 2010 as part of the wider removal of regional governance in the UK. However, their structure and purpose mirrors not only the Multi Area Agreement (the cross authority initiative brought in under Labour) by involving multiple local authority areas for sub-regional strategic decision making, but also the Metropolitan County areas which were abolished in 1986 as discussed in chapter two.

As an addendum, whilst this section seeks to contribute to the emerging literature around LEPS, particularly through a discussion of how the LEPs respond to the policy lessons of LAAs, it will not include a detailed literature review of the LEP.

8.10.1 The Basics
Currently, there are 39 LEPs in England (see figure 8.2), varying in size from two local authorities (Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly) to 15 top tier authorities (Heart of the South West, with London forming its own LEP and several authority areas opting to participate in more than one LEP (The LEP network: 2012). In October of 2010 the government announced that 24 of the proposed LEPs were suitably advanced in order to proceed, whilst another 15 have been agreed in the following period to date (CLG: 2012a).

The number of the areas that have chosen to align themselves with more than one LEP is indicative of the fact that for areas that sit geographically between two major centres, or have multiple authority boundaries believe there are benefits of participating in more than one LEP, even if this means opening up to two sets of pressures faced under schemes like the LAA. However, this raises questions as

to how these overlapping LEPs can truly be effective, given that actors in those areas will have to sit on two sets of boards and be responsible for two sets of outcomes – both of which will require twice the resources.
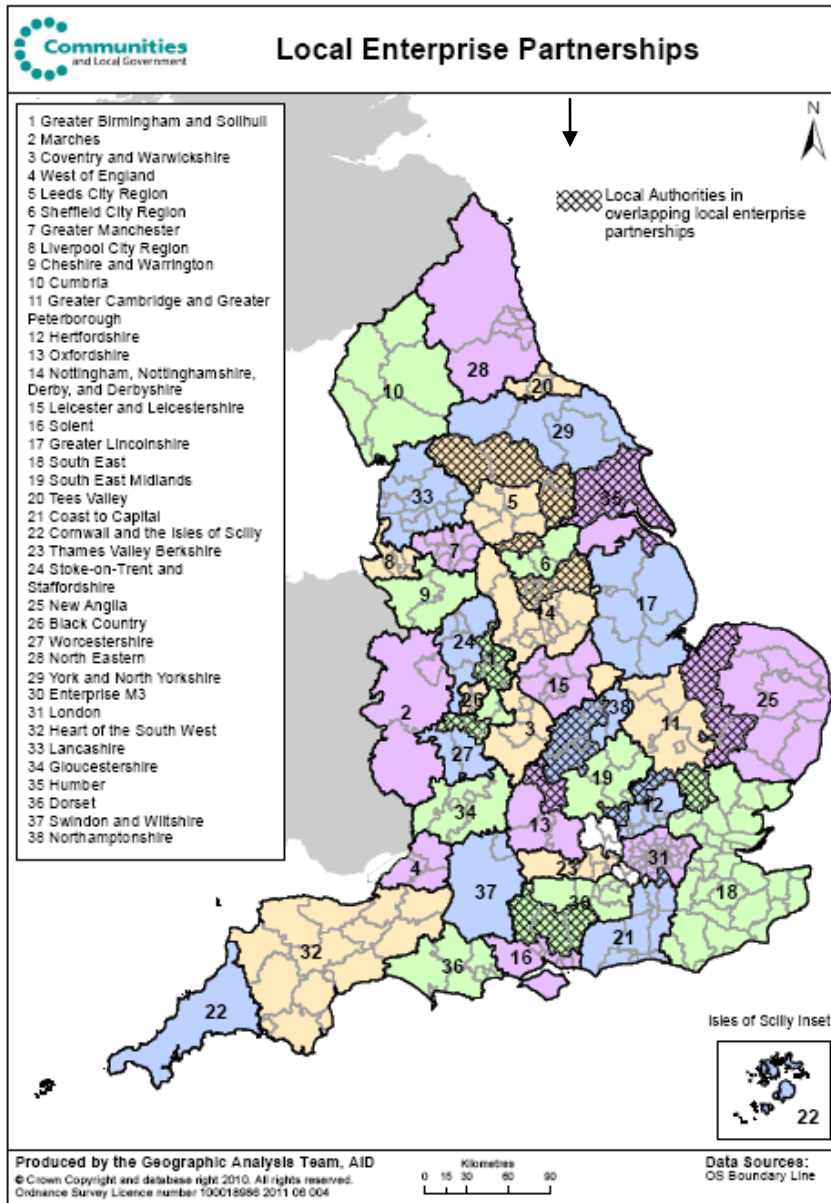

Figure 8.2 - Local Enterprise Partnerships in England
(Source: CLG: 2012b)

8.10.2 To what extent do LEPs address the LAA's Policy Failings?

The LEP structures did offer some element of response to the policy failings of the LAA, although they also raise a significant number of questions in their own right.

Replacing 'social' with 'economic': One of the principal departures from the LAA – and indeed much local policy under labour – is the shift in the focus towards economic development, which in turn can act as a driver for social improvement, as opposed to the more balanced three-pronged sustainable development avenue favoured under New Labour (ODPM: 2003). Indeed environmental development is barely mentioned in the initial letter to prospective LEPs (CLG: 2010b).

This has far reaching implications both for actor involvement and the relative number of people that can practically and realistically be involved with such an undertaking. However, most importantly, this can present a significant barrier to improvements on a wide range of policy areas, particularly including social exclusion and deprivation, which are influenced by a number of factors beyond economic development, such as education and health.

Silos: Prior to the inception of LAAs, one of the major criticisms of government (central and local) working was that silo working was a major barrier to working (Sullivan: 2007). This research has also pointed to the validity of Davies' 2009 notion of expanded silos, showing that the governance structures of the LAA failed to break down these silos. This was coupled with actors from Whitehall admitting a strong departmental silo culture was prevalent throughout Whitehall, inhibiting cross-departmental working. At the central level early indications show that these silo structures and the associated problems are likely to continue, with early assessments of the LEPs pointing towards poor coordination between departments, for example inconsistencies in the link up between government skills policy and how any LEP would go about delivering it (Bentley et al 2011).

Involvement of Stronger/Weaker Actors: As well as strengthening silo walls, the LEP has the potential to create a new dynamic of stronger and weaker actors that can influence the direction of local public policy. As indicated, some of the weaker actors that came into the LAA process could find themselves on the periphery of decision making once more (although in theory, at least, the Voluntary and Third Sector could forge a new role in the big society proposals).

However, these proposals are also likely to see the rise of new 'stronger actors' as well as those which will maintain their status quo, including the elevation of some actors that were previously identified as being on the fringes of local government working. Most notably the LEPs will see private sector interests via local business leaders and the chamber of commerce come to the fore, especially given that the government wish each LEP to be chaired by a prominent business leader.

This is a stark turnaround from the LSP/LAA period, during which business groups were amongst the harshest critics. However while this represents a role reversal for these partners, this change is evidently not all inclusive, and indeed more closely resembles a game of institutional snakes and ladders.

Partner Capacity: On early inspection it appears that the LEP may lead to significant disparities in performance, based on the capacity of an area's business community and business leaders to take on such a scheme. It is reasonable to expect a major urban centre or industrial area such as Liverpool, Manchester or Birmingham to have a plethora of business leaders, often from large companies (e.g. a look at the Merseyside LEP reveals representatives from Tesco, Peel Holdings and Jaguar Land Rover amongst others) (Mersey Partnership: 2011). However, smaller areas, particularly containing towns which are not home to large companies, may not be able to draw upon the same level large businesses and business leadership. In turn, even taking the

Government's message that economic growth will tackle social exclusion and deprivation on face value, this will mean that these areas could be less equipped to drive growth on a massive scale. This could impinge on their ability to focus on areas of 'hidden' deprivation, which are masked by the overall wellbeing of the area (Nurse and Pemberton: 2010).

However, even these arguments rely on the capacity of the business leaders themselves to chair a multi-agency partnership. This is despite the fact that business leaders have discussed the difficulties of relating to, and working with local government – particularly surrounding the timescales and technical language. Given these concerns, it is reasonable to raise questions about the extent to which these business leaders are capable of fulfilling this role.

For a period in 2010/11 it seemed that LEPs would be seen as 'the vehicle' for local public service delivery, despite their wider regional outlook. However, in late 2011 they were to be sidelined in this role by a policy which seemed to provide a much better fit for service delivery at the local authority level: the city deal.

8.11 City Deals and Elected Mayors

The last policy to be instigated, and arguably the one with the most impact on low local areas are governed and deliver their local public services, was that of Elected Mayors.

This process began in late 2011 with the publication of 'Unlocking Growth in Cities' (HMG: 2011). In this, the Government proposed the creation of 'City Deals' focused on the 12 largest cities outside of London – owing to their economic potential. In creating these City Deals, areas were allowed to choose from a 'menu' of initiatives which the government believed would help cities to increase economic growth. Amongst the proposals was access to a Regional Growth Fund amounting to £1bn, as well as local funding being streamed into a

single capital pot allowing for local leaders to direct it as they see fit (HMG: 2011).

However, in introducing these proposals, the government explicitly stated that it would be a 'two way deal'.   In particular, in return for being granted these initiatives, areas were expected to show a commitment to 'strong accountable leadership' (HMG: 2011).   By this, the inference was that these cities would adopt the directly-elected mayor mode of governance.

However, many cities were allowed to sign off their city deal with government on the basis that they would hold referendums[36] for local citizens to decide whether to accept the elected mayor model.   Despite this, two areas – Liverpool and Salford – opted to accept these proposals without holding a referendum.   This generated significant controversy in Liverpool, largely owing to the irony that localism proposals were being introduced without consulting local citizens (Liverpool Daily Post: 2012).

Therefore, on the 3rd May 2012, while several cities held referendums on elected mayors, including Bristol, Manchester and Birmingham, Liverpool held elections for who would actually hold the post of Elected Mayor.   However the proposals were dealt a significant blow, with the citizens of Birmingham, Nottingham and Manchester rejecting the initiative – although Bristol did vote in favour.

This led to questions amongst Liverpool practitioners as to whether the city needlessly adopted a model of governance without holding a referendum, in order to ensure access to City Deal funding, when other cities did not.   Privately, practitioners across Liverpool also questioned whether Liverpool's eagerness to gain funding also meant that the City did not secure as good a deal as other cities.

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[36] These referendums took place on May 3rd alongside the local government elections

As a result, whilst the government only partially succeeded in creating directly elected mayors in the major UK cities, the City Deal represents a shift towards more locally responsive service delivery, with areas able to decide upon their own priorities. However, questions remain as to how any Mayor will be able to direct actors within the area in order to deliver those schemes and whether this will respond to any of the criticisms raised by previous schemes such as the LAA.

In particular the state of centre-local relations in the post referendum will be under scrutiny. This will focus on whether the government will accept and honour the City Deals in cities that have rejected the referendum proposals in lieu of restructured governance arrangements (Planning: 2012), or whether those cities – such as Liverpool – which eagerly adopted the government scheme will receive preferential treatment as part of the 'two way process'.

8.11.1 A Future for Partnership?
The attitude of refusing to reflect on past initiatives, exhibited by some of the interviewees raises significant questions about whether there is a real desire to learn the lessons from past schemes in order to improve future ones.

However, despite seeking to quickly move on as the legislative agenda changes, actors in both case studies indicated more than just the passing whim of partnership, pointing out that in both areas the roots of partnership were laid down well in advance of the LSP/LAA structures. Similarly, most – though not all – partners indicate that the culture of partnership working is one which has considerable value, and is something they wish to retain, even if not explicitly mandated by central government. One senior partner involved in Liverpool's LSP said that "[Liverpool is] in agreement on what our issues are. We've got our own local agreement. Get jobs, get skills, improve housing, trade our way with the world and get more people living and working in this city, more businesses here. That's our local area agreement. We know what we need to do" ʳ. Given the strong guiding and funding role of central government they expressed

disappointment that, in light of funding cuts, this role was substantially weakened. However they remained defiant and that they would continue their aim of delivering upon what they saw as their raison d'être.

For any of these schemes, or those that follow them, it is essential to be aware that, in the words of one partner, the current generation does not have a monopoly of wisdom, and so they must continue "to look into the past in order to plan for the future" *m* and that even if a policy is 80% right, there is still 20% that can be improved in order to make a significant impact on successful delivery.

Chapter Nine - Conclusions

During the course of the previous chapters the research has reached several important conclusions which have significant implications for the future of local public service delivery. These findings focus on centre-local relations and vertical governance, as well as local actor relations and horizontal governance.

Chapter one began by identifying some of the methods of delivering local public services in the post WWII period up to, and including, the early New Labour administration before chapter two explored the LAA in more detail. These two chapters established the main themes of the research – that of vertical and horizontal governance – and the key research questions.

Following this, chapter four examined some of the theories and concepts that could be used to analyse the research questions. This culminated in the design of a conceptual framework that identified the 'Strategic Relation Approach', 'Regulation Theory' and 'Path Dependency' as the key concepts that would be utilised.

Chapter five outlined the methodological considerations that would guide the research. This included the methodology for a national overview survey of LAA practitioners, the results of this survey, and the rationale for the selection of two detailed case study areas: Liverpool and St Helens.

Chapters six, seven and eight outlined the results that were found following a series of detailed interviews with practitioners from the central, regional and local level. These chapters focused on vertical governance, horizontal governance and the future of local public service delivery respectively.

Throughout, the research process sought to contribute to knowledge by identifying and filling in gaps in the existing body of research. This included Brenner's (2008) notion that much of the existing literature about the state and

central-local relations did not focus explicitly on local actors and how they worked within this process and Matheson et al's (2011) note to a similar effect, pointing towards a lack of research on local partner relations.

In concluding, what follows is a brief discussion about the most significant findings to arise from the research. This will be split into the three main themes, as identified in chapter three: vertical governance, horizontal governance and improving future practice. These themes relate to the findings covered in chapters six, seven and eight, respectively. Following that, there will be a section reflecting upon the research methods and how they might be improved for future research, a section on avenues for future research and a discussion on the post LAA policy environment and the key questions that sit within this.

9.1 *Centre Local Relations and Vertical Governance*

The most overwhelming conclusion to arise surrounding centre-local relations, as discussed in chapter six, is that despite the LAA being hailed as a solution to the centralisation of British politics, it proved to have the opposite effect and in many ways could be seen as a preserver of the status quo.

Amongst other things, there was a strong indication that large elements of the indicator selection process were pre-determined according to an area's socio-economic profile, which meant that large numbers of areas took up a broadly similar profile of indicators in response to the issues facing their area, in a way that didn't accurately reflect local priorities.

More specifically, and even more telling of the strong hand that central government still held over the localities, was the suggestion that areas were essentially forced to accept individual indicators into their suite of up to 35 priorities that they did not consider a priority – thus potentially wasting their local resources on something they did not perceive to be a important for their area. This occurred when an area was in receipt of central funding, and the relevant

Whitehall department wished to ensure that the area showed sufficient commitment through its LAA. Areas reported being subject to threats of the removal of the funding if they did not adopt the specific indicator, as well as peer pressure when an area sought to rebel where neighbouring authorities had succumbed.

This strong top down pressure signified that even before the LAA was in place there was a strong suggestion in many cases that it was not a 'local area agreement' in spirit, where many areas had indicators which they might not have picked had they been given a totally free hand. The role of various actors in the vertical governance of the LAA also had a significant impact on its effectiveness and its ability to reflect the principles under which it was established i.e. to be a locally reflective policy document.

The most significant issue to emerge from the vertical governance of the LAA concerned the role of representatives from GOR, particularly over the gulf of understanding over their role. Rather than being local champions, GOR were keen to point out (and most local actors became keenly aware) that they were civil servants representing Whitehall and that as a result this ''local champion' that would act on a locality's behalf" role was unlikely to transpire.

Instead, what emerged was that the effectiveness of the GOR representatives was influenced by two issues: a combination of their ability to engage more with the area and its issues, followed by the ability to reflect this knowledge in their negotiation and subsequent dealings with the LAA. Where this was less likely to happen, local actors were more likely to report less satisfaction with the negotiation process and the actions of their GOR negotiator – particularly in relation to reflecting issues of local importance.

It also became clear that the 'human element' of relationships with GOR representatives was crucial. It was noted that the personal attributes of a GOR

representative, such as the knowledge of their area, good working relationships and the ability to speak candidly were all significant contributors to the success of negotiation and the continued LAA process.

The presence of stronger actors is something that affected the LAA in terms of its vertical and horizontal governance. However the implications for the vertical governance and the top down control of the LAA are considerably more telling. Several actors emerged – most notably the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and police force – which were not convinced by the LAA, and indeed they were able to openly question it and its value to their organisation. It is no coincidence that the organisations that were most able to do this were those with a strong accountability chain which operates on a national scale, with accompanying funding and policy priorities which operate on much the same scale. As such these organisations – whilst participating fully in the LAA – stood as barriers to the total effectiveness of the LAA as a *local* policy initiative, especially in areas facing pressing issues such as deprivation where these 'stronger' partners would play a key role.

Reflecting on how the research relates to the theory, in many ways, the findings in terms of vertical governance serve to echo the wider discussions about the Strategic Relational Approach. Indeed the fact that central government retains strong control over local priorities indicates that by and large local areas had not been privileged with greater power in any meaningful way, but instead that Whitehall departments had seen a greater ability to pursue their own agendas at a local scale.

It could also be argued that, referencing the discussions about regulation theory, that the LAA did represent a mode of regulation, specifically given the direct and indirect measures about improving economic development. However, given that the 2008 recession would be classed as a 'crisis' within the regulation theory literature, and the fact that this period coincided with the lifespan of the LAA,

questions remain as to whether this mode of regulation was successful or not. In particular, these questions revolve around whether the LAA provided a robust platform for areas to continue to regulate their economic development throughout this period of economic turbulence, or whether a new form of regulation was required in order to achieve this.

9.2 *Local Relations and Horizontal Governance*

The findings in chapter seven about local relations and horizontal governance demonstrated that the two strands of governance (horizontal and vertical) did not operate in isolation. In particular, the stronger actors discussed in the previous section had significant impacts on the horizontal governance of the LAA, particularly on the effectiveness of the LAA's accountability structures. This was due to the fact that these actors (most notably the police) believed that their own internally set targets and accountability structures were more pressing than those set by the LAA, and in turn they would be satisfied if the internal targets were met – even if the LAA targets for the same period were not. This dealt a serious blow to the credibility of the LAA targets as it raised the serious prospect that a major partner could set the precedent of failing to meet its targets and then effectively 'shirking' the consequences.

More interestingly at the local level was the identification of 'weaker' actors, i.e. those which might not have previously played a traditional role in local public service delivery yet, made the most of their opportunity to engage with the process. This simultaneously illustrated the valuable contribution that actors can make, even when it may not be immediately clear. These actors embodied the 'invest versus spend' model of public service delivery, taking a long term view of how action in the short term could affect their organisation and its needs. Widely viewed as those which have most benefited from the process, they did this through modifying their organisational models to respond to what they saw as an opportunity – in stark contrast to the stronger, nationally driven, organisations that saw the LAA as secondary to the delivery of their own internal agenda.

The draw of funding was shown to be one of the main drivers through which partners engaged with the process, with many openly stating that, if no funding was attached, their interest in joint working would be drastically diminished. Similarly, when the LAA was scrapped in 2010 and the accompanying funding began to recede, it was evident that some partners were eager to withdraw from the process – seemingly unwilling to spend any more time than was necessary on a programme that did not benefit their organisation financially. Emphasising the findings about invest versus spend, this illustrated that for some organisations, the culture of partnership didn't exist beyond engaging out of compunction, rather than a deep seated desire to work with other partners on wider reaching issues affecting the area.

In many ways one of the reasons for this reflected a lack of effective relationship building between partners, particularly over the development of trust – something that was identified as being essential to delivering within a partnership. Where these relationships were absent partners were less likely to be cede funding (for which they still held accountability) to other agencies, thus acting as a barrier to effective delivery. Indeed, these personal relationships and personal attributes were cited as being one of the most essential tools of an effective partnership with the characteristics of the actors present being more important than simply the presence of a 'title'. All of the results from the horizontal governance aspect indicate that for an effective partnership to occur the culture of partnership has to be present, with actors that want the partnership to work. Simply forcing various local actors to work together will not have the desired effect unless that culture is in place.

These findings can be explained through notions of path dependency – whereby actions are predetermined both by past action and organisational structure. In particular, path dependency helps to understand why larger organisations such as the police look towards their traditional central accountability chains over

those of the LAA, while those organisations with little experience of local public service delivery at this level (and thus little path dependency) were able to avoid being limited by any such agenda.

Reflecting upon the SRA and its implications for horizontal governance, it became clear that, at the local level, certain actors were more able to adapt to the LAA and thus could be seen to be privileged over others. In particular the police and PCT stood out in this regard. This links back to the discussions about the SRA in chapter six on vertical relations, and how central actors (and central priorities) can dominate the decision making process.

Yet, the group of actors – most notably the fire and rescue service – which sought to maximise their opportunity to work at a strategic level demonstrate that this privileging is not as clear at the local scale. This was especially so, given that their attitude seemed to be forward looking and altruistic in nature, embodying a true sense of partnership. These actors do echo Goodwin and Pemberton's (2010) work, however, about how actors seek to maximise opportunities to work within a system to benefit their organisation whenever such opportunities arise. By this it could be argued that a failure to be privileged in the past means that any opportunity for involvement that arises has to be maximised to ensure future opportunities for involvement.

9.3 *Improving Local Public Service Delivery*

Regarding the improvement of the future practice of local public service, there are several lessons which can be taken from this research that should influence any future local public service delivery scheme.

The first is the importance of looking at international contexts. One of the most surprising findings was the admission that no effort was made to consider international examples that delivered similar things / operated on a similar scale to the LAA and that instead the LAA was conceived purely out of response to the

UK policy climate at the time. This is despite the fact that this research has uncovered several existing schemes (i.e. Canada's Vancouver Agreement) which bear striking similarity to the LAA and could offer useful lessons to improve aspects of practice before, during and after the implementation stages.

This lesson learning should not be limited to international examples. There are many past examples of schemes within a UK context which are akin to a 'policy pendulum' which merely swings between ideological positions as elections are won and lost. Indeed, the schemes which are now replacing the LAA as the vehicles for local public service delivery bear a striking resemblance to some of the schemes that were in place in the 1980s.

One of the most prominent examples of this is the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which shares many similar characteristics with the Urban Development Corporations. The striking similarity to policy in the 1980s lies in the central role for private sector businesses over other actors as the drivers of local economic growth, which in turn is viewed as the solution to social problems. Given that the private sector is one of the groups of actors that struggled most with the LAA– particularly the requirement to engage with bureaucratic style structures – the move towards LEPs indicate a shift that will be looked upon favourably by these organisations, whilst potentially leading to the alienation of partners that have developed with the LAA.

One of the principal recommendations of this research is the establishment of a stable policy platform as opposed to the 'policy pendulum' which currently exists and leads to partnership and policy fatigue identified by Huxham (1996). Indeed the move to LEPs represents well over 10 major policies brought forward in the last 3 decades that cities such as Liverpool (and Merseyside as a Metropolitan County Council and latterly City Region) have had to acquaint themselves with and deliver. This constant changing of the policy landscape – which Jones (2010) described as a 'peculiarly English disease' borne of the centralised policy

environment - proves wasteful and disengages actors from a process which many already show signs of failing to engage.

9.4 *The Future of Local Public Service Delivery*

Following the 2010 general election and the abolition of LAAs, several policies emerged relating to local public service delivery (as discussed more widely in chapter eight).

The first was the concept of 'The Big Society': a scheme which encouraged local citizens to run local public services by themselves. This quickly faded in large part due to a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the public coupled with widespread misunderstanding about its role. Although upon its launch (and subsequent re-launch) the Big Society appeared to be one of the prominent methods for delivering local public services, it was largely dismissed by local actors, and soon subsumed by two more rounded policies: The LEP and City Deals.

The LEP, as discussed previously, provided a means for the private sector to lead on local development issues. This is based on the understanding that economic prosperity will, in turn, lead to an improvement in social conditions. While the functions of LEPs remained (and to some degree, at the time of writing, remains) unclear, what became apparent is that they possess the ability to grow into their role, to adopt a wide range of functions across a multi-local authority area, operating on a scale not dissimilar to that of the Multi Area Agreement.

The City Deal however, introduced in November 2011, offers perhaps the most complete model for local public service delivery, as envisaged by the Coalition. At the heart of the City Deal is greater funding and the improved ability for local areas to designate spending priorities, in return for demonstrating a commitment to improved local leadership. Ostensibly, this meant the Elected Mayor model of governance – an issue on which referenda were held in May 2012, which many

cities opted to reject. In the meantime, Liverpool and Salford opted to adopt the Elected Mayor model without such elections.

In Liverpool and Salford, in particular, clear questions remain about the implications for instigating a mode of governance designed to increase local autonomy without asking local citizens if it reflects their wishes. Beyond this, there are questions about whether such a large number of 'no' votes will lead to a two-tier hierarchy of cities in the UK, or whether some cities have needlessly changed their modes of governance in search of funding that they might otherwise have still received.

9.5 *Reflecting on the Research*

Although the research is substantial, at this point it is necessary to provide a moment of reflection in order to identify how, if the research was being conducted anew, it could be improved.

The biggest challenge to the research came in 2010 with abolition of the LAA, which forced the research to follow an unusual trajectory. Beginning as a study of current government policy, following the LAA's abolition it was essential to carefully place the research within a newly developing policy environment. In reality, this did not particularly inhibit the research, despite requiring a fundamental reconsideration of how it was structured and presented.

The main strength of the research comes from the calibre of people that were interviewed. The research is able to draw from the views of elected ministers, former chief executives and senior policy makers across two case studies. This is as well as a national overview survey of LAA managers, which received a response rate of nearly 40% - something that CLG failed to achieve in a parallel study of LAAs undertaken in 2010 [o]. Broadly speaking, the people who were interviewed provided helpful contributions and thoughtful, constructive criticism of their experiences in dealing with the LAA. Indeed, with only one exception, if

conducting the research again, the same participants would be used owing to a combination of their seniority, experiences and insights.

Although more interviews, with more people, across more case studies would clearly be ways in which the findings could be strengthened even more, the case studies and the interview schedule sat quite well within the research process. However, there are specific interviews which would have stood to add even greater strength.

Initially, the intention was to interview the elected leaders of the councils within both case studies, in order to gain their insights about the LAA process and their experiences of cross partner working. However, in both case study areas (but particularly in St Helens) contacts within the local authorities felt it was inappropriate to involve the elected members/leaders citing a desire not to place them in a position where they might criticise the work of other elected members.

Similarly, despite being able to offer key insights, there were a number of people who were approached that declined to participate. The case of the St Helens Chief Executive and the belief in being forward looking were discussed in chapter eight on the future of local public service delivery. When approaching ministers from central government, care was taken to approach both current, former and shadow ministers from all parties with responsibilities for CLG in order to gain a range of views. However, whilst two Labour ministers agreed to be interviewed, the Conservative ministers who were approached all declined to participate. Although it is difficult to see what might persuade them to participate in future research, their participation would be welcome.

The final group of people who would have been a welcome addition to the interviewees are those from organisations which had been disbanded by the time the research reached its data collection phase, or had opted to participate in the

redundancies which became characteristic of local public services in the period following the 2010 general election.

Ultimately, however, whilst the inclusion of those people would have added further depth to the findings, there is more than sufficient coverage from the actors that were interviewed at all three tiers of government/governance.

Reflecting upon the theories and concepts, as outlined in chapter four, it appears that they were broadly useful in analysing the findings – i.e. that they remained relevant throughout and allowed for deeper consideration of the findings to emerge from the case studies. In many ways the Strategic Relational Approach, in particular, proved to be an excellent lens through which to investigate LAAs given the strong element of central control that has emerged. This theory has also helped to identify which actors have benefited over others from the LAA. However regulation theory and path dependency have also helped in understanding the LAA and partner interactions, while the other theories and concepts discussed in chapter four and the contributions that each made should not be overlooked.

9.6   *Avenues for Future Research*

As part of the conclusions, some consideration should be given to the direction that future research may take in further exploring this subject.

Given that the LAA has been concluded and its successors brought into place, a continued consideration of how these schemes respond to the policy lessons of the LAA is welcome. In particular, there are outstanding questions about the management mechanisms of the LEP and how accountability will be sought – both centrally and locally - against those actors tasked with delivering economic development for their area.

There are also questions about the continued involvement of actors which have been identified as benefiting from the LAA system, given that the LEP contains no provision for their continued involvement. What happens to this capacity, and who is likely to benefit from any opportunity to participate, could also form the basis of future research.

As a still emerging policy, there is a wealth of research that can be conducted on, and about, the City Deal. In particular the exploration of whether the rejection of Elected Mayors will lead to a two-tier governance system with regards to dealing with Whitehall. Beyond that, issues of privileging and 'stronger' and 'weaker' actors can also be explored within this new policy environment, in order to better understand which organisations will benefit from the City Deal.

Although conceived as two separate projects, it is clear that City Deals, LEPs and 'The Big Society' have aims that may often conflate given that they both seek to improve an area's fortunes. A consideration of the cross-sectoral impacts that arise from delivering these two schemes side by side and the implications to arise from this could also be explored in further detail.

Further to these avenues, given that the research has identified a shortfall in comparative studies of local public service delivery mechanisms, there is scope for future research to fill this gap. However, the aim should be for this comparative study to take place at, or, at the least influence, the central level of policy making. As one of the principle recommendations of this research is the establishing of a stable policy platform for local areas, learning from other contexts – as well as past examples from the UK – is essential. Ignoring best practice, and its ability to be transferred to an English context, should be actively discouraged as future public policy develops.

9.7 *Concluding Thoughts*

Ultimately, what the research shows is that, despite the LAA being intended as a way of deepening the devolution of powers to local communities, the centralised nature of the main agencies in this process meant that this reality never transpired. Instead, we saw glimpses of this intended policy outcome, with overtones of strong central control of the process. Despite this, the LAAs remained broadly well received by actors, providing for the fact that improvements were required to improve upon the LAA's limitations.

To draw the thesis to a close, two perspectives appear to best sum up the findings, particularly about the relative success of LAAs. The first (paraphrasing a view held by many partners) is that if the LAA is viewed as the end point of local public service delivery then its' flaws would not merit calling the project a success. However, if one was to view the LAA as a staging post from which minor changes could be made to the model to address these flaws, then the LAA represented a substantial success.

The final perspective is closely linked to this. This view holds that, despite several flaws the LAA was, fundamentally, a good piece of policy which was viewed favourably by those practitioners that were tasked to deliver it. In seeking to replace the LAA, many aspects of governance – most notably the need for strong partnership working – have been lost in an act of 'throwing the baby out with the bath water'. Any future local public service delivery scheme should aim to avoid doing this at all costs. To date the UK has not perfected a model for delivering local public services, however that is not to say that previous schemes, including the LAA, have not developed effective modes of working. Only by learning from these schemes – both good and bad practice - can we ever hope to reach a point of stable, effective local public service delivery.

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Appendices

Appendix I - Full Suite of Indicator Questions

Appendix II - List of Interviewees and Organisations

Appendix III - Paper Published in the Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal

Appendix IV – List of Liverpool First Executive Board Members

Appendix V - Liverpool's LAA

Appendix VI – List of St Helens Together Executive Board Members

Appendix VII - St Helens' LAA

Appendix VIII – National Indicator Suite for LAAs

Appendix I – Full Suite of Interview Questions

1. Can you briefly discuss your role and how you work within the LAA?

LAA DEVELOPMENT AND THE REGIONS

2. What was your experience of producing the LAA in the first instance, particularly in reference the guidance and help that was available to you from central government?

3. What was your experience working with GOR in signing off the LAA?

4. To what extent did you feel the GOR considered issues specific to your local area when negotiating and signing off on the targets within your LAA?

5. How do you feel these requirements were balanced against national policy prescriptions?

6. Can you describe your relationship/dealings with regional government office in the period since your LAA targets were signed off?

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

7. Can you briefly describe the role that the Local Authority had in developing and continuing the work on the LAA?

8. To what extent do you feel that the LAA reflects local government policy documents/positions and vice versa?

ROLE OF PARTNERS

9. Since beginning work on the LAA, how do you feel that your organisation's relationship with other partners within the LSP has changed?

10. Can you give any examples/details of where you have worked with other statutory partners to deliver on the aims of the LAA?

11. Of the statutory partners, who do you feel is the strongest actor acting within the LAA? Why do you feel this?

12. Has there been an actor who has been particularly pro-active in pushing their goals/agendas while developing the LAA? How have they done this?

13. Have there been any instances where a partner's internal accountability structures has limited action on any particular indicator?

14. Can you discuss the methods that were used to remedy this?

15. Have there been any instances where a statutory partner has not given their complete support to the LAA process?   If so, what are the circumstances surrounding this?

16. Did this reduced participation limit the ability of the LAA to meet any particular target?

17. Where there any implications in the future ability of the LAA to deliver against its targets as a result of this?

ACCOUNTABILITY

18. Can you discuss the extent to which elected officials are involved within the LAA process, including negotiation and delivery?

19. To what extent do you feel the LAA considers and reflects concerns raised by elected officials?

20. Ultimately, who are all LAA partner's responsible to?

21. Are there any methods where local residents can effect change on the LAA once the targets have been signed off?

22. How are the targets delivered by statutory partners reported and held accountable to the general public?

23. Can you outline the methods by which the partners are held accountable for the indicators they are responsible for delivering against?

24. Have there been any instances where any of these procedures have been instigated?

25. If so, please can you provide further details?

26. Are there any other specific methods by which LAAs become accountable to local residents?

LAAs AND THE FUTURE

27. In your view, who is the biggest benefactor from LAAs.
28. In your opinion, how will a potential change of government in the 2010 general election impact on the LAA agenda, both on a wide scale and within your area?
29. From your experiences of working within the LAA system, what would your suggestions be in order to improve it?

QUESTIONS FOR LOCAL PARTNERS SPECIFICALLY

30. To what extent do you feel your organisation's aims are included and referenced within the LAA
31. Are there any instances where the LAAs specific targets are not shared by your organisation?
32. If yes, what are your procedures for remedying this?
33. With regards to your work relating to the LAA, who do you believe you are ultimately accountable to?

QUESTIONS FOR REGIONAL PARTNERS SPECIFICALLY

34. What is your understanding of the role of GOR in the LAA process?
35. What specific guidance where GOR given by central government over their role in the signing off process and the wider LAA system?
36. How closely did GOR work with LSPs in producing their LAAs in the first instance?
37. How long did the negotiation process take on average?
38. Were there any areas which presented particular difficulties in their LAA negotiation process? If so can you elaborate?

39. In your experience, which took precedence between local indicators and national policy priorities?

40. Can you cite any examples where this was the case?

41. Where there any instances where GOR would not sign off on any particular indicator?

42. What were the reasons surrounding this?

43. How was it remedied?

44. [Provide discussion of Regional practitioner's Allegiance (Goodwin et al)] Do you believe this is an accurate portrayal? Why?

QUESTIONS FOR REGIONAL PARTNERS SPECIFICALLY

45. How effective do you feel GOR has been in negotiating LAAs on behalf of the state?

46. Has CLG ever played a direct role in any LAA?

47. What comparisons can be made to other examples from the devolved UK e.g. Scottish Single Output Agreement?

48. To what extent did CLG seek to learn from international examples whilst developing the LAA model?

49. Who do you think the overall beneficiaries are of LAAs?

50. What changes would you make to LAAs to improve their practice?

Appendix II – List of Interviewees

Label	Date	Interviewee/Organisation
a	20 Oct 2009	Liverpool First[37]
b	21 Apr 2010	Government Office North West
c	15 Jul 2010	St Helens Primary Care Trust
d	26 Jul 2010	St Helens Council for Voluntary Services
e	5 Aug 2010	Hazel Blears – Former secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
f	17 Aug 2010	Liverpool Chamber of Commerce
g	19 Aug 2010	Merseyside Police (Liverpool)
h	21 Sept 2010	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (St Helens)
i	30 Sept 2010	St Helens Chamber of Commerce
j	1 Oct 2010	Merseyside Police (St Helens)
k	6 Oct 2010	Colin Hilton – Former Chief Executive, Liverpool City Council
l	7 Oct 2010	John Denham – Former secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
m	22 Oct 2010	Former GONW civil servant
n	9 Nov 2010	Liverpool Primary Care Trust
o	18 Nov 2010	Senior Civil Servants – Communities and Local Government (Dual interview)
p	26 Nov 2010	St Helens Together[38]
q	10 Dec 2010	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (Liverpool)
r	23 Feb 2011	Liverpool Council for Voluntary Services
s	16 Mar 2011	Liverpool First[39]

The interviewees, where anonymised, comprise senior representatives from their agency. These representatives had direct experience of the LAA and in most instances sat on the LAA executive board for their area.

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[37] Liverpool's Local Strategic Partnership
[38] St Helens' Local Strategic Partnership
[39] This was a follow up interview with the initial interviewee 'a'

Appendix III – Paper published in the Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal

This is where the unabridged thesis included the following third party copyrighted material:

Nurse, A. and Pemberton, S. (2010). 'Local Area Agreements as a Tool for Addressing Deprivation within UK Cities' *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal* **4**(2): 158-167.

Appendix IV – List of Liverpool First Executive Board Members

- Business Liverpool
- Greater Merseyside Learning Skills Council
- Government Office North West
- Housing Corporation
- Jobcentre Plus
- Liverpool Chamber of Commerce
- Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services
- Liverpool City Council
- Liverpool Community College
- Liverpool Community Network
- Liverpool Hope University
- Liverpool JMU
- Liverpool Land Development Company
- Liverpool Vision
- Liverpool Primary Care and NHS Trusts
- Merseyside Police
- Merseytravel
- North West Development Agency
- Strategic Housing Partnership
- The Pension Service
- University of Liverpool

Appendix V – Liverpool's LAA

Priority	LI/ SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
Competitiveness							
	** PRG PSA 8 *	**NI 151 Overall employment rate** *(refer to footnote)*	63.7% (July 06 to June 07)	65.3%	66.5%	68%	**Richard Nutter LCC * Liverpool First for Economic Growth**
	PRG	**NI 165 Working age population qualified to at least Level 4 or higher PSA 2 ***	23.1% (2006 APS)	22.4% (2009 APS)	23.4% (2010 APS)	24.40% (2011 APS)	**Richard Nutter LCC * Liverpool First for Economic Growth**
	PRG	**NI 171 New business registration rate** *(refer to footnote)*	42.6 per 10,000 population (2007)	42.6 per 10,000 population (2008)	42.6 per 10,000 population (2009)	44.0 per 10,000 population (2010)	**Richard Nutter LCC* Liverpool First for Economic Growth**
	LI	Local Indicator - Environment for a thriving third sector - positive impact of local statutory bodies on local third sector organisations	19.3% (2008)	Baseline Year	No Survey	To Be Confirmed 24.3% (2010)	**Alan Lewis LCVS * Liverpool First Executive Board**
	LI	Local Indicator- number of jobs and % in Knowledge Economies	Total Jobs (2006) - 226,432 Know Jobs (2006)-25.7%	232,954 25.9%	236,285 26.0%	239,664 26.1%	**Richard Nutter LCC* Liverpool First for Economic Growth**

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Priority	LI / SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
	SE	**NI 72 Achievement of at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage with at least 6 in each of the scales in Personal Social and Emotional Development and Communication, Language and Literacy** PSA 10	61.6% (2007/08)	68.1%	68.5%	68.5%	**Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People**
	SE	**NI 73 Achievement at level 4 or above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 2 (Threshold)** PSA 10	67.6% (2007/08)	73.0%	73.1%	74.7%	**Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People**
	SE	**NI 74 Achievement at level 5 or above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 3 (Threshold)** PSA 10	62.4% (2007/08)	72.1%	Indicator deleted	Indicator deleted	**Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People**
	SE	**NI 75 Achievement of 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths (Threshold)** PSA 10	37.1% (2007/08) **Children & Young People**	43.5%	45.3%	48.5%	**Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for**
	PRG	**NI 80 Achievement of Level 3 qualification at age 19 PSA10***	35.4% (2006/07)	37.2%	38.9%	40.5%	**Helen France LSC * Liverpool First for Economic Growth**
	SE	**NI 83 Achievement at level 5 or above in Science at Key Stage 3** DCSF DSO	66.0% (2007/08)	73.0%	Indicator deleted	Indicator deleted	**Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People**

Priority	LI/ SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
	SE	**NI 87 Secondary school persistent absence rate** DCSF DSO	7.5% (2007/08)	6.5%	5.5%	5.0%	**Helen Winrow LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People**
	SE	**NI 92 Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest** PSA 11	38.2% (2007/08) **Children & Young People**	34.6%	34.6%	33.5%	**Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for**
	SE	**NI 93 Progression by 2 levels in English between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2** PSA 11	No baseline data available	83.0%	83.0%	84.1%	**Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People**
	SE	**NI 94 Progression by 2 levels in Maths between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2** PSA 11	No baseline data available	78.0%	79.0%	82.2%	**Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People**
	SE	**NI 95 Progression by 2 levels in English between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3** PSA 11	No baseline data available	28.0%	Indicator deleted	Indicator deleted	**Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People**
	SE	**NI 96 Progression by 2 levels in Maths between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3** PSA 11	No baseline data available	53.0% (2007/08)	Indicator deleted	Indicator deleted	**Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People**
	SE	**NI 97 Progression by 2 levels in English between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4** PSA 11	No baseline data available	50.4%	Indicator deleted	Indicator deleted	**Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People**

Priority	LI / SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
	SE	NI 98 Progression by 2 levels in Maths between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 PSA 11	No baseline data available	25.9%	Indicator deleted	Indicator deleted	Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People
	SE	NI 99 Children in care reaching level 4 in English at Key Stage 2 PSA 11	53.2%	60.0%	50.0%	68.0%	Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People
	SE	NI 100 Children in care reaching level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2 PSA 11	55.3%	55.0%	47.0%	57.0%	Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People
	SE	NI 101 Children in care achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and Maths) PSA 11	No baseline data available	11.0%	12.0%	15.0%	Tim Warren (Acting) LCC Children's Services * Liverpool First for Children & Young People
	PRG	NI 116 Proportion of children in poverty PSA 9* *(refer to footnote)*	36.4% (2007)	33.5% (2009)	32.1% (2010)	30.8% (2011)	Richard Nutter LCC Liverpool First for Economic Growth
	** PRG	NI 117 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEET) PSA 14 *	11.5% (Nov 2007 to Jan 2008)	10.5%	9.9%	9.3%	Keiran Gordon Connexions * Liverpool First for Children & Young People
	** PRG	NI 153 Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods DWP DSO * *(refer to footnote)*	35.01% (May 07)	33.9%	32.5%	31%	Richard Nutter LCC Liverpool First for Economic Growth

Priority	LI / SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
	** PRG	**NI 163 Working age population qualified to at least Level 2 or higher** PSA 2 *	61.3% (Based on APS 2006)	63.9% (Based on APS 2009)	65.7% (Based on APS 2010)	67.6% (Based on APS 2011)	**Helen France LSC *** **Liverpool First for Economic Growth**
Connectivity							
	LI	Local Indicator Increase in tonnage through port	Port (2007) Ro-Ro units (k units) = 635	651k	667k	684k	Steve Holcroft Liverpool City Council * Merseyside Docks & Harbour Company **Liverpool First for Economic Growth**
	PRG	**NI 167 Congestion - average journey time per mile during the morning peak PSA5 ***	2005/06 (no 2006-07 data available) Person Miles Growth Index = 100% Ave Person Journey Time per Mile Growth = 4.12 min.sec/mile	4.3% = 4.23 min.sec/mile	4.7% = 4.24 min.sec/mile	5.1% = 4.25 min.sec/mile	Steve Holcroft Liverpool City Council* Merseytravel **Liverpool First for Economic Growth**

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Priority	LI / SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
	PRG	**NI 175 Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling** DFT DSO * *Percentage of all individuals 'at risk' within 20mins of the nearest strategic investment area by Public Transport and Walking*	2007= 63%	64%	65%	66%	**Steven Holcroft LCC* Merseytravel Liverpool First for Economic Growth**
		Percentage of all individuals 'at risk' within 20mins of each Strategic Investment Area by Public Transport, Walking and Cycling	Atlantic Gateway 2007 = 40%	41%	42%	43%	
			Approaches 580 2007 = 30%	31%	32%	33%	
			City Centre 2007 = 62%	63%	64%	65%	
			Eastern Approaches 2007 = 67%	68%	69%	70%	
			Speke/Halewood 2007 = 40%	41%	42%	43%	

Priority	LI/ SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
Distinctive Sense of Place							
	LI	Local Indicator - Total room nights sold in Liverpool (000)	808 (2006/07)	966	851	890	**Peter Harris LCC * TMP Liverpool First for Economic Growth**
	LI	Local Indicator LCC Cash Related efficiency targets		£27.4m	£28.2m	£29.1m	**Robert Corbett LCC * Liverpool First Executive Board**
	PRG	**NI 154 Net additional homes provided** PSA 20 * *(refer to footnote)*	1,592 (April 07)	1,950 (08/09)	2,234	1,950	**Cath Green LCC Neighbourhoods * Liverpool First for Housing**
	PRG	**NI 156 Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation** PSA 20 *	185	130	100	92	**Cath Green LCC Neighbourhoods * Liverpool First for Housing**
Thriving Neighbourhoods							
	PRG	**NI 4 % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality** PSA 21 *	27% Place Survey (2008)	Baseline Year	No survey	31% Place Survey (2010)	**Lesley Thompson LCC Neighbourhoods * Liverpool First for safer, stronger, communities**
	PRG	**NI 195 Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of graffiti, litter, detritus and fly posting)** Defra DSO *	Litter 18% Detritus 23%	17% 21%	15% 19%	13% 16%	**Andrew McCartan LCC Neighbourhood Environmental Services * Environment Task Group**

Priority	LI/ SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
	PRG	**NI 15 Serious violent crime rate** PSA 23 *	*Recorded Most Serious Violence rate per 1,000 population in 2008/09 (based on mid-2007 population estimates) - to be finalised in 2009. Please note the 2010/11 figure will be calculated using mid-2009 population estimates".*	Baseline Year	-5% from baseline	-10% from baseline	**Alison Stathers-Tracey Liverpool First for Safer, Stronger, Communities**
	PRG	**NI 16 Serious acquisitive crime rate** PSA 23 *	28.26	26.56	25.7	25.15	**Alison Stathers-Tracey Liverpool First for Safer, Stronger, Communities**

Priority	LI/ SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
	PRG	**NI 19 Rate of proven re-offending by young offenders** PSA 23 *	1.66	1.62	1.58	1.54	**Aileen Shepherd * Liverpool First for Safer, Stronger, Communities**
	PRG	**NI 20 Assault with injury crime rate** PSA 25 *	*Recorded Assault with Less Serious Injury rate per 1,000 population in 2008/09 (based on mid-2007 population estimates) - to be finalised in 2009. Please note the 2010/11 figure will be calculated using mid-2009 population estimates".*	Baseline Year	-7.5% from baseline	-15% from baseline	**Alison Stathers-Tracey Liverpool First for Safer, Stronger, Communities**
	LI	Local Indicator Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and Police	2,814	Baseline Year	2,603	2,408	**Alison Stathers-Tracey Liverpool First for Safer, Stronger, Communities**

Priority	LI/ SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
	PRG	**NI 29 Gun crime rate** PSA 23 *	0.7	0.67	0.63	0.6	**Alison Stathers-Tracey Liverpool First for Safer, Stronger, Communities**
	PRG	**NI 30 Re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders** HO DSO *	For 2008/09 (April 07 - March 08 = 375) For 2009/10 (Oct 07 to Sept 08 = 313) For 2010/11 (baseline year to be confirmed)	26% reduction in offences from 375 baseline (no more than 278 offences	28% reduction in offences from 313 baseline (no more than 226 offences)	The target will be arrived at by applying the common ratio of 1.31 to the performance ceiling % target identified after the cohort has been refreshed	**Alison Stathers-Tracey Liverpool First for Safer, Stronger, Communities**
	PRG	**NI 32 Repeat incidents of domestic violence** PSA 23 *	26% (2008/09)	Baseline Year	30%	27%	**Alison Stathers-Tracey Liverpool First for Safer, Stronger, Communities**
	PRG	**NI 115 Substance misuse by young people** PSA 14 *	9.2%	Baseline Year	8.6%	6.8%	**Samih Kalakeche * Liverpool First for Children & Young People**

Priority	LI/ SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
	LI	Local Indicator number of ASB incident per 1000 population as reported by the police	125.1 **Stronger, Communities**	121.3	117.6	114.1	**Alison Stathers-Tracey Liverpool First for Safer,**
	PRG	**NI 1 % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area** PSA 21 *	69.3% Place Survey (2008)	Baseline Year (2010)	No survey **Equalities Task Group**	73.5% Place Survey	**Lesley Thompson LCC Neighbourhoods * Liverpool First Cohesion &**
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
Health and Wellbeing							
	PRG	**NI 39 Alcohol-harm related hospital admission rates per 100,000 population** PSA 25 *	Rates of alcohol harm related admissions per 100,000 population 2,642 (2006/07**)**	**3,024**	3,200	3,335	**Paula Grey PCT * Liverpool First for Health & Well-Being Alcohol Task Group**
	PRG	**NI 53 Prevalence of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks from birth** PSA 12 *	22.6% (Q3 2008/09)	Baseline Year	26%	31%	**Paula Grey PCT * Liverpool First for Health & Well-Being**
	PRG	**NI 56 Obesity among primary school age children in Year 6** DCSF DSO * (Aim is to slow increase, halt and reduce rising trend)	17.9% (2006/07)		21%	21.1%	**Paula Grey PCT * Liverpool First for Health & Well-Being**

Priority	LI / SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				08/09	09/10	10/11	
	PRG	**NI 62 Stability of Placements of looked after children **	14.6%	12.9%	11.4%	9.9%	**Sandra Campbell LCC*/PCT Liverpool First for Children & Young People**
	PRG	**NI 120 All-age all cause mortality rate** PSA 18 * (rate per 100,000 population)	Male 948 (2006)	869	838	809	**Paula Grey PCT * Liverpool First for Health & Well-Being**
			Female 663 (2006)	615	597	579	
	LI	Local Indicator (Wellbeing) Absenteeism / presenteeism attributed to emotional / mental distress - being developed	Being developed	To Be Confirmed	To Be Confirmed	To Be Confirmed	**Paula Grey PCT * Liverpool First for Health & Well-Being**
	PRG	**NI 124 People with a long-term condition supported to be independent and in control of their condition** DH DSO *	New data collection Proxy baseline / year 1 = Emergency Bed Days 2006/07 0.78 per head of weighted population Year 2/3	Emergency Bed Days -2% 77% (Baseline Satisfaction Survey)	– 79%	– 81%	**Paula Grey PCT * Liverpool First for Health & Well-Being**

			patient satisfaction from 2008/09				
*	PRG	**NI 130 - Social Care clients receiving Self Directed Support (Direct Payments and Individual Budgets) DH DSO ***	2.4% (100.88 per 100,000 population)	6.4% (266 per 100,000 population)	13.9% (580 per 100,000 population)	30% (1,255 per 100,000 population)	**Joe Blott LCC- Social Care * Liverpool First for Health & Well-Being**

Priority	LI / SE/ PRG/ **	Indicator(s), including those from national indicator set (designated indicators shown with a *)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target, including those to be designated (shown with a *), and including education and early years targets			Partners who have signed-up to the target and any which are acting as lead partner/s (shown with a *)
				~~08/09~~	~~09/10~~	~~10/11~~	
	PRG	**NI 141 Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living** CLG DSO *	50.8% (2007/08)	52.6%	54.4%	58%	**Joe Blott LCC- Social Care *** **Liverpool First for Housing** **Supporting people commissioning Board**
		Single Homeless	47.2%	49.2%	51.2%	56%	
	PRG	**NI 187 Tackling fuel poverty - people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating** Defra DSO *					**Sue Mansfield LCC Housing *** **Liverpool First for Housing**
		a) reduction in the proportion of households with a low energy efficiency rating	(a) 4,991	Baseline Year	(a) - 200 (4% reduction to 4,791)	(a) - 300 (6% reduction to 4,491)	
		b) increase in the proportion of households with a high energy efficiency rating	(b) 29,542		(b) + 450 (1.5% increase to 29,992)	(b) + 450 (1.5% increase to 30,442)	
	PRG	**NI 188 Adapting to climate change** PSA 27 *	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	**Jan Rowley LCC Environment Task Group Liverpool First Executive Board**
	PRG	**NI 192 Household waste recycled and composted** Defra DSO *	12.72%	25%	30%	35%	**Andrew McCartan LCC *** **Environment Task Group**

Appendix VI – List of St Helens Together Executive Board Members

- St.Helens Council Leader
- St.Helens Council Executive Member for Children and Young People
- St.Helens Council Executive Member for Safer Communities
- St.Helens Council Chief Executive
- St.Helens Council Director of Urban Regeneration and Housing
- NHS Halton and St.Helens
- St.Helens Chamber Chief Executive
- Merseytravel Chief Executive
- Chair of Halton and St.Helens VCA Chief Executive
- Helena Partnerships Chief Executive
- Merseyside Police Area Commander
- Merseyside Fire Service Area Commander
- St.Helens College Principal
- Representative from Job Centre Plus
- St.Helens Churches representative
- Community Representatives.
- Chief Executive of Bridgewater Community Healthcare Trust

Source: St Helens Together: 2012

Appendix VII – St Helens' LAA

APPENDIX B

st.helens together
YOUR LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Local Area Agreement 2008/11

LAA Designated Targets

Indicator	Description	Baseline 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Target 2009/10	Target 2010/11	Comments	Partners
N005 LAA201	Overall/general satisfaction with local area.	/	73.9 % (baseline)	75.5%	77.2%	Place Survey Measure. To achieve a statistically significant improvement by Place Survey 2010. In order to track performance locally a people's panel survey will be conducted in 2009/10. This will provide proxy data.	St Helens Council, Merseyside Police, Halton and St Helens PCT, St Helens CVS, St Helens Chamber of Commerce, Helena Housing
N006 LAA202	Participation in regular volunteering	/	21% (baseline)	22.6%	24.3%	Agreed. Place Survey Measure. To achieve a statistically significant improvement by Place Survey 2010. In order to track performance locally a people's panel survey will be conducted in 2009/10. This will provide proxy data.	St Helens Council, St Helens CVS
N015 LAA204	Number of most serious violent crimes per 1,000 population	Recorded most serious violent crime rate per 1,000 population in 2008/09 (based on mid-2007 population estimates) - to be finalised in June 2009. Please note the 2010/11	Introduced in 2009/10	-3.5% from the baseline	-7% from the baseline	Definition for Most Serious Violent Offences has changed for 2009/10 and now includes crime category GBH Without Intent. Target for next two years of 7% reduction over 2 years, based on new definition of MSVC with an estimated baseline for 2008/09 of 158 crimes (0.89). This is subject to confirmation from GONW/Home Office.	St Helens Council, Merseyside Police

APPENDIX B

Indicator	Description	Baseline 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Target 2009/10	Target 2010/11	Comments	Partners
N016 LAA205	Number of serious acquisitive crimes per 1,000 population	14.13 figure will be calculated using mid-2009 population estimates	13.84	13.64	13.42	Agreed	St Helens Council, Merseyside Police
N021 LAA207	Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police		29.1% (baseline)	30.9%	32.6%	Place Survey Measure. To achieve a statistically significant improvement by Place Survey 2010. In order to track performance locally a people's panel survey will be conducted in 2009/10. This will provide proxy data	St Helens Council, Merseyside Police
N030 LAA208	Re-offending rate of prolific and other priority offenders	18%	21% reduction in offences from 45 baseline (no more than 36 offences)	26% reduction in offences from 102 baseline (no more than 75 offences)	Target will be arrived at by applying the common ratio 1.27 to the performance ceiling % target identified after the cohort has been refreshed	In year 2 (2009/10), the agreed improvement target is 26%, based on a ratio of 1.27. 1.27 will accordingly be applied to the expected level of performance for the refreshed year 3 cohort, which will be identified before the beginning of year 3, to produce the percentage year 3 improvement target	St Helens Council, Merseyside Police
N032	Percentage reduction in repeat victimisation for those domestic violence cases being managed by a MARAC.	29.9% baseline		27.9%	25.9%	This indicator will be used in the last two years of the LAA. Current rate of repeat victims to the MARAC is 29.9%. The National average is 28%. Proposed target is a 4% point reduction over the two years.	St Helens Council, Merseyside Police

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Indicator	Description	Baseline 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Target 2009/10	Target 2010/11	Comments	Partners
N039 LAA224	Number alcohol related admissions to hospital per 100,000 population.	1828 (2006/07 baseline)	2037	2096	2129	Agreed. LAA reduction based on a 2% improvement per year.	St Helens Council, Halton and St Helens PCT, Merseyside Police
N040 LAA225	Number of drug users recorded as being in effective treatment	829	1% 837	3% 862	4% 897	Agreed. The baseline figure was revised by the National Treatment Agency. Improvements are expressed as year on year percent improvements.	St Helens Council, Halton and St Helens PCT
N047	Percentage change in number of people killed or seriously injured during the calendar year compared to the previous year.	74	67	62	57	Agreed	St Helens Council
N053a LAA219a	Percentage of infants being breastfed at 6-8 weeks.	12.11%	N/A	21%	23%	Indicator deferred nationally, original baseline has been amended. Future targets remain as agreed in the original LAA.	St Helens Council, Halton and St Helens PCT
N053b LAA219b	Percentage of infants for whom breastfeeding status is being recorded.	0	85%	90%	95%		St Helens Council, Halton and St Helens PCT
N055 LAA220	Percentage children in reception year who are obese.	14.3%	14.30%	14.1%	13.9%	Agreed. Baseline 2006/07 academic year.	Halton and St Helens PCT, St Helens Council
N063 LAA222	Percentage of children looked after continuously for 2 and a half years or more and aged under 16 who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years or placed for adoption.	63.5%	67%	71%	74%	Agreed	St Helens Council
N079	Percentage of young people in the cohort that have passed the level 2 threshold by the academic year in which they turn 19	67.8%	72%	74%	76%	Agreed	St Helens Council
N111 LAA209	Number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system who receive their first substantive outcome or court disposal.	1890 Baseline	N/A	1853	1817	2% reduction per year from the 2007/08 baseline. Achievement of this target will be dependant on the use of alternative disposals i.e. the Youth Restorative Disposal as part of YCAP proposals.	St Helens Council

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Indicator	Description	Baseline 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Target 2009/10	Target 2010/11	Comments	Partners
						Without such change a target of 0-1% reduction would be ambitious based on the past three years outturns. Targets expressed as rate per 100 000	
N112 LAA221	Percentage change in the number of conceptions under 18 per 1000 females aged 15-17 compared to the 1998 baseline rate	-23.1	-37	-43	/	SUBJECT TO REFRESH	St.Helens Council, Halton and St.Helens PCT
N115 LAA223	Percentage of young people reporting either frequent misuse of drugs or alcohol or both		17.7% (Baseline)	16.3%	14.8%	TellUs3 survey has identified a baseline for St.Helens of 17.7%. Targets proposed to show a statistically significant improvement from the baseline at 75% CI level	St.Helens Council, Merseyside Police
N117 LAA233	Percentage of young people aged 16 to 18 years not in education, employment or training (NEET)	8.5%	9%	7.9%	7.3%	Agreed	St.Helens Council, Connexions, St.Helens Chamber
N120a LAA227a	Mortality rate, all age all cause per 100,000 population. (Male)	843	769	743	718		St.Helens Council, Halton and St.Helens PCT
N120b LAA227b	Mortality rate, all age all cause per 100,000 population. (Female)	540	534	519	504		St.Helens Council, Halton and St.Helens PCT
N123 LAA226	Number of smoking quitters per 100000 population.	846	848	882	919	Agreed	St.Helens Council, Halton and St.Helens PCT
N130 LAA228	Number of adults, older people and carers receiving social care through a direct payment (and/or an Individual Budget) per 100,000 population	2.3% (137)	5%	15%	30%	Agreed. Indicator definition /calculation has changed nationally. The new definition is based on 30% of RAP (referrals, assessments and packages) return as at March 2011	St.Helens Council
N135 LAA229	Percentage of carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carer's service, or advice and information (as a percentage of people receiving a community based service)	22%	24%	28%	30.6%	Agreed	St.Helens Council

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Indicator	Description	Baseline 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Target 2009/10	Target 2010/11	Comments	Partners
N136 LAA230	Number of adults aged 18-64/65+ support to live independently per 100,000 population.	3044 (revised baseline)	3044	3200	3400	Agreed	St.Helens Council
N141 LAA231	Percentage of service users who have moved on from supported accommodation in a planned way to independent living.	66%	66%	70%	75%	Agreed	St.Helens Council
N151 LAA234	Rate of employment: (working age)	69.9	69.90	69.9	-	SUBJECT TO REFRESH	St.Helens Council, St.Helens Chamber
N153 LAA235	Percentage of working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods.	31.8%	31%	30.2%	-	SUBJECT TO REFRESH	St.Helens Council, St.Helens Chamber
N154 LAA213	Number of net increases in dwelling stock	496	76	376	-	SUBJECT TO REFRESH	St.Helens Council
N163 LAA236	Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 2 or higher	62.0%	66.80%	68.69%	71.3%	Agreed	St.Helens Council
N166 LAA238	Median earnings by employees in an area.	96.3%	96.6%	97.0%	97.3%	A convergence target has been agreed between the local and North West measures. Performance is currently on target however, St Helens wish to revisit these targets at the March 2010 refresh in accordance with the reward element guidance, when further performance information and the impact of the recession locally is more clear.	St.Helens Council, St.Helens Chamber
N171 LAA237	Number of VAT registrations per 10,000 population.	71.6% of NW figure	71.9%	72.3%	-	SUBJECT TO REFRESH	St.Helens Council, St.Helens Chamber
N176 LAA218	Percentage of people of working age with access to employment by public transport.	84%	85%	86.0%	-	SUBJECT TO REFRESH	St.Helens Council, Merseytravel

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Indicator	Description	Baseline 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Target 2009/10	Target 2010/11	Comments	Partners
N187a LAA211a	Percentage of households in receipt of income benefits who live in a low energy efficiency home.	596	496	396	321	Methodology and targets agreed. This will leave a total of 321 benefit recipients living in properties below SAP 35 at the end of the three years and represents a 46% reduction on our current baseline.	St Helens Council
N187b LAA211b	Percentage of households in receipt of income benefits who live in a high energy efficiency home.	8940	275	+275	+275	Methodology and targets agreed	St Helens Council
N192 LAA212	Percentage of household waste arisings which have been sent for recycling	25%	30%	32%	34%	Agreed	St Helens Council
N195a LAA216a	Percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having deposits of litter that fall below an acceptable level.	20%	22%	18%	11%	Agreed	St Helens Council
N195b LAA216b	Percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having deposits of detritus that fall below an acceptable level.	39%	27%	22%	16%	Agreed	St Helens Council

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LAA Local Targets

Portfolio/ Indicator	Description	Baseline 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Target 2009/10	Target 2010/11	Comments
N007 LAA203	Environment for a thriving third sector.		27.9 % baseline from national survey	30.7%	33.5%	National Survey of Third Sector Organisations (NSTSO) Survey. Local improvement set of 10% improvement on the baseline per year
N167 LAA217	Average journey time per mile during the morning peak on major routes in the authority.		4.3%	4.70%	5.10%	
N170 LAA215	Proportion of the area of previously developed land that is vacant or derelict for more than 5 years.	4.58%	4.47%	4.48%	5.68%	
N185 LAA210	Percentage CO2 reduction from LA operations.			-3%	-3%	Targets to be set from baseline when available in April 2009
N195c LAA216c	Percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having deposits of graffiti that fall below an acceptable level.	18%	2%	2%	2%	
N195d LAA216d	Percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having deposits of fly-posting that fall below an acceptable level	5%	7%	6%	4%	

Appendix VIII – National Indicator Dataset

National Indicator	Description	Notes
1	% of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area	
2	% of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood	
3	Civic participation in the local area	
4	% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality	
5	Overall / general satisfaction with local area	
6	Participation in regular volunteering	
7	Environment for a thriving third sector	
8	Adult participation in sport and active recreation	
9	Use of public libraries	
10	Visits to museums and galleries	
11	Engagement in the arts	
12	Refused and deferred Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) license applications leading to immigration enforcement activity	
13	Migrants' English language skills and knowledge	
14	Reducing avoidable contact: minimising the proportion of customer contact that is of low or no value to the customer	
15	Serious violent crime	
16	Serious acquisitive crime	
17	Perceptions of anti-social behaviour	
18	Adult re-offending rates for those under probation supervision	

19	Rate of proven re-offending by young offenders	
20	Assault with injury crime rate	
21	Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police	
22	Perceptions of parents taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children in the area	
23	Perceptions that people in the area treat one another with respect and consideration	
24	Satisfaction with the way the police and local council dealt with anti-social behaviour	
25	Satisfaction of different groups with the way the police and local council dealt with antisocial behaviour	
26	Specialist support to victims of a serious sexual offence	
27	Understanding of local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police	
28	Serious knife crime rate	
29	Gun crime rate	
30	Re-offending rate of prolific and minority offenders	
31	Re-offending rate of registered sex offenders	Deleted
32	Repeat incidents of domestic violence	
33	Arson incidents	
34	Domestic violence - murder	
35	Building resilience to violent extremism	
36	Protection against terrorist attack	

37	Awareness of civil protection arrangements in the local area	
38	Drug-related (Class A) offending rate	
39	Rate of Hospital Admissions per 100,000 for Alcohol Related Harm	
40	Number of drug users recorded as being in effective treatment	
41	Perceptions of drunk or rowdy behaviour as a problem	
42	Perceptions of drug use or drug dealing as a problem	
43	Young people within the Youth Justice System receiving a conviction in court who are sentenced to custody	
44	Ethnic composition of offenders on Youth Justice System disposals	
45	Young offenders' engagement in suitable education, training and employment	
46	Young Offenders' access to suitable accommodation	
47	People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents	
48	Children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents	
49	Number of primary fires and related fatalities and nonfatal casualties (excluding precautionary checks)	
50	Emotional health of children	
51	Effectiveness of child and adolescent mental health (CAMHS) services	
52	Take up of school lunches	
53	Prevalence of breast-feeding at 6-8 wks from birth	
54	Services for disabled children	

55	Obesity in primary school age children in Reception	
56	Obesity in primary school age children in Year 6	
57	Children and young people's participation in high-quality PE and sport	
58	Emotional and behavioural health of looked after children	
59	Percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within 7 working days of referral	
60	Percentage of core assessments for children's social care that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement.	
61	Timeliness of placements of looked after children for adoption following an agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption	
62	Stability of placements of looked after children: number of placements	
63	Stability of placements of looked after children: length of placement	
64	Child Protection Plans lasting 2 years or more	
65	65 Percentage of children becoming the subject of Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time	
66	Looked after children cases which were reviewed within required timescales	
67	Percentage of child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales	
68	Percentage of referrals to children's social care going on to initial assessment	
69	Children who have experienced bullying	
70	Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people	

71	Children who have run awayfrom home/care overnight	
72	Achievement of at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage with at least 6 in each of the scales in Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication, Language and Literacy	
73	Achievement at level 4 or above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 2	
74	Achievement at level 5 or above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 3	
75	Achievement of 5 or more A*- C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths	
76	Reduction in number of schools where fewer than 65% of pupils achieve level 4 or above in both English and Maths at KS2	
77	Reduction of schools where fewer than 50% of pupils achieve level 5 or above in both English and Maths at KS3	
78	Reduction in number of schools where fewer than 30% of pupils achieve 5 or more A*- C grades at GCSE and equivalent including GCSEs in English and Maths	
79	Achievement of a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19	
80	Achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19	
81	Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19	
82	Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19	
83	Achievement at Level 5 or above in Science at Key Stage 3	
84	Achievement of 2 or more A*– C grades in Science GCSEs	

	or equivalent	
85	Post-16 participation in physical sciences (A Level Physics, Chemistry and Maths)	
86	Secondary schools judged as having good or outstanding standards of behaviour	
87	Secondary school persistent absence rate	
88	Percentage of schools providing access to extended services	
89	Reduction of number of schools judged as requiring special measures and improvement in time taken to come out of the category	
90	Take up of 14-19 learning diplomas	
91	Participation of 17 year-olds in education or training	
92	Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest	
93	Progression by 2 levels in English between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2	
94	Progression by 2 levels in Maths between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2	
95	Progression by 2 levels in English between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3	
96	Progression by 2 levels in Maths between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3	
97	Progression by 2 levels in English between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4	
98	Progression by 2 levels in Maths between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4	

99	Looked after children reaching level 4 in English at Key Stage 2	
100	Looked after children reaching level 4 in mathematics at Key Stage 2	
101	Looked after children achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and mathematics)	
102	Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the expected level at Key Stages 2 and 4	
103	Special Educational Needs – statements issued within 26 weeks	
104	The Special Educational Needs (SEN)/non-SEN gap – achieving Key Stage 2 English and Maths threshold	
105	The Special Educational Needs (SEN)/non-SEN gap – achieving 5 A*- C GCSE including English and Maths	
106	Young people from low income backgrounds progressing to higher education	
107	Key Stage 2 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups	
108	Key Stage 4 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups	
109	Delivery of Sure Start Children's Centres	
110	Young people's participation in positive activities	
111	First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10 – 17	
112	Under 18 conception rate Y Under-18 Conception Statistics 1998-2006	
113	Prevalence of Chlamydia in under 25 year olds	
114	Rate of permanent exclusions from school	

115	Substance misuse by young people	
116	Proportion of children in poverty	
117	16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	
118	Take up of formal childcare by low-income working families	
119	Self-reported measure of people's overall health and wellbeing	
120	All-age all cause mortality rate	
121	Mortality rate from all circulatory diseases at ages under 75	
122	Mortality rate from all cancers at ages under 75	
123	Stopping smoking	
124	People with a long-term condition supported to be independent and in control of their condition	
125	Achieving independence for older people through rehabilitation / intermediate care	
126	Early Access for Women to Maternity Services	
127	Self reported experience of social care users	
128	User reported measure of respect and dignity in their treatment	
129	End of life care – access to appropriate care enabling people to be able to choose to die at home	
130	Social Care clients receiving Self Directed Support per 100,000 population	
131	Delayed transfers of care	
132	Timeliness of social care assessment (all adults)	
133	Timeliness of social care packages following assessment	
134	The number of emergency bed days per head of weighted	

	population	
135	Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carer's service, or advice and information	
136	People supported to live independently through social services (all adults)	
137	Healthy life expectancy at age 65	
138	Satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood	
139	The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently at home	
140	Fair treatment by local services	
141	Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living	
142	Percentage of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living	
143	Offenders under probation supervision living in settled and suitable accommodation at the end of their order or licence	
144	Offenders under probation supervision in employment at the end of their order or licence	
145	Adults with learning disabilities in settled accommodation	
146	Adults with learning disabilities in employment	
147	Care leavers in suitable accommodation	
148	Care leavers in education, employment or training	
149	Adults in contact with secondary mental health services in settled accommodation	
150	Adults in contact with secondary mental health services in employment	
151	Overall Employment rate (working-age)	

152	Working age people on out of work benefits	
153	Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods	
154	Net additional homes provided	
155	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	
156	Number of households living in temporary accommodation	
157	Processing of planning applications	
158	% non-decent council homes	
159	Supply of ready to develop housing sites	
160	Local authority tenants' satisfaction with landlord services	
161	Learners achieving a Level 1 qualification in literacy	
162	Learners achieving an Entry Level 3 qualification in numeracy	
163	Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 2 or higher	
164	Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 3 or higher	
165	Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 4 or higher	
166	Median earnings of employees in the area	
167	Congestion – average journey time per mile during the morning peak	
168	Principal roads where maintenance should be considered	
169	Non-principal classified roads where maintenance should be considered	
170	Previously developed land that has been vacant or derelict for more than 5 years	

171	New business registration rate	
172	Percentage of small businesses in an area showing employment growth	
173	Flows on to incapacity benefits from employment	
174	Skills gaps in the current workforce reported by employers	
175	Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling	
176	Working age people with access to employment by public transport (and other specified modes)	
177	Local bus and light rail passenger journeys originating in the authority area	
178	Bus services running on time	
179	Value for money – total net value of ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains that have impacted since the start of the 2008-09 financial year	
180	The number of changes of circumstances which affect customers' HB/CTB benefit entitlement within the year.	
181	Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events	
182	Satisfaction of business with local authority regulatory services	
183	Impact of local authority trading standards services on the fair trading environment	
184	Food establishments in the area which are broadly compliant with food hygiene law	
185	CO2 reduction from local authority operations	
186	Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area	
187	Tackling fuel poverty – % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency	

	rating	
188	Planning to Adapt to Climate Change	
189	Flood and coastal erosion risk management	
190	Achievement in meeting standards for the control system for animal health	
191	Residual household waste per household	
192	Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	
193	Percentage of municipal waste landfilled	
194	Air quality – % reduction in NOx and primary PM10 emissions through local authority's estate and operations	
195	Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly-posting).	
196	Improved street and environmental cleanliness – fly tipping	
197	Improved Local Biodiversity – proportion of Local Sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented	
198	Children travelling to school – mode of transport usually used	
199	Children and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas	

Adapted from CLG: 2008