



POLICY BRIEFING

May 2007

England

The Local Government White Paper

How Local Area Agreements can make a difference to Carers

'Strong and Prosperous Communities'- the Local Government White Paper was published in October 2006 and marked the next stage of public sector reform with a reformed relationship between central and local government. This included the development of a new performance framework, at the heart of which Local Area Agreements (LAAs) were placed. Carers UK believes LAAs are critical planning mechanisms and present a real opportunity for carers to be sewn into local planning, making a real difference to carers and the services they receive.

What is the Local Government White Paper?

On 26th October 2006 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), released the Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities'. With the overarching aim to strengthen local communities by devolving more responsibility to local authorities, it aims to revitalise local authorities, working with their partners, to reshape public services around the citizens and communities that use them. By giving local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives, the Local Government White Paper hopes to encourage confidence in local government, local communities and other public service providers through more freedom and powers to make positive changes.

It installs **a duty on local authorities** to work with other statutory providers **including the voluntary and community sector** and there is a greater emphasis on the role of overview and scrutiny in local authorities.

The paper covers the need for more efficient and responsive services, stronger cities and strategic regions, local government as a strategic leader and place-shaper, a new performance framework and enhanced community cohesion through empowered communities.

How do Local Area Agreements fit into the Local Government White Paper?

The Local Government White Paper includes the development of a new performance framework at the heart of which Local Area Agreements will be placed. A Local Area Agreement is a three year agreement that sets out the priorities for a local area agreed between Central Government, represented by the Government Office and the local area, represented by the local authority and other key partners through Local Strategic Partnerships, as is already the case with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

What is a Local Strategic Partnership?

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are cross agency, umbrella partnerships that bring together local private, community and voluntary organisations, generally at the level of District, County and Unitary councils. LSPs try to improve the quality of life for the local community by identifying and talking key issues such as crime, education, health, housing and unemployment in a more co-ordinated and joined up way. LSPs are optional, but the majority of local authorities see the benefits of developing a LSP for their area. Local authorities are expected to take the lead in developing the LSP but they do not 'own' the partnership

What are Local Area Agreements?

The objective of Local Area Agreements is to strengthen local partnership working thereby ensuring local service delivery responds to the needs of the wider community. Local Area Agreements (LAAs) also have the secondary objectives of offering a platform from which local authorities can enhance their community leadership role, improve communication and joined up working as a result of strengthened partnership working. In the long term LAAs will form part of the Government's 10 year strategy which seeks to improve central and local government relations and the strategic drive to increased devolved decision-making.

Local Area Agreements are thematically structured around four policy fields:

- healthier communities and older people
- economic development and enterprise
- children and young people
- and safer and stronger communities.

What is the timetable for the roll out of Local Area Agreements?

The Local Performance and Delivery Programme Board agreed to an incremental approach with all the White Paper commitments for LAAs in place for all areas by 2009-using 2008/09 to put in place the main structures for the change. The Local Government White Paper Implementation Plan was published in January 2007 and sets out a narrative for the proposed phased in changes.

Timetable for roll out

| Place Shaping | Consult | Implement Final |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Local Strategic Partnerships Local Area Agreements and Multi-Area Agreements Sustainable Community Strategies | Summer/Autumn 2007 | Late2007/Early 2008 |
| Best Value Guidance including -commissioning -involving local people | Summer/Autumn 2007 | Late2007/Early 2008 2009 |

How can Local Area Agreements help carers?

Carers UK asked local authorities how Local Area Agreements can help deliver for carers. We have heard from across the country on a wide variety of different and innovative ways some local authorities have managed to embed carers issues in their Local Area Agreements, thereby making a real difference to carers lives in their respective localities.

“This is just a start in terms of making sure that carers are on the agenda and the LAA is already making a difference here. It helps to ‘join up the dots’ by encouraging joint working to improve outcomes.” (Carers Development Manager)

“It is already making a significant difference, staff at all levels are far more aware of what carers’ services are and can be and the methods for providing those services.” (Planning and Partnership Officer)

Local Area Agreements working for carers, the evidence:

LAA working for carers in Staffordshire

Carers have been included in the LAA in the Healthier Communities and Older People section and carers are identified as one of the priorities. It states,

“increasing the number of carers identified through primary care and offering them health checks and relevant information and signposting to social services where appropriate”

Local District Delivery Plans have added value to the county wide Staffordshire LAA. In Cannock Chase the Leisure Card scheme will be reviewed to consider whether it could be used to improve access to leisure for carers individually or through carers organisations’ activities, in Lichfield a programme of events for Carers Week is being developed, including the aim to engage with GP’s and in East Staffordshire the aim is to increase engagement with Black and Minority Ethnic communities to increase take up of one-off payments for BME carers and to develop more culturally appropriate services that carers can purchase.

It is hoped that the LAA will be the focus of developments in partnership working, which will be crucial for the success in improving outcomes for carers,

where for instance the Primary Care Trusts will have to lead the work with GP practices, carers associations and Social Services if health checks are to be developed.

LAAs working for carers in Brighton and Hove

Carers have been included in the LAA in the Healthier Communities and Older People section, with the intention of supporting and maximising the quality of life of carers.

Brighton and Hove City Council have commissioned local Carers Centre in two neighbourhood renewal areas in the city to deliver development and outreach work in the communities. This agreement covers the period 1 May 2006 to 30 September 2008.

The aims of the service are: to pilot a locality based development and casework service for older carers and carers of older people (aged 50 plus), to provide emotional support, information and advocacy services to carers and to raise awareness of carers' needs and develop and facilitate access to a range of appropriate opportunities for local carers to meet needs and aspirations.

How can I campaign to make sure carers are remembered and included in Local Area Agreements?

- it is critical that local groups understand this process as it will be the main way of planning local services and measuring how they are performing.
- Identify which sections of the LAA (healthier communities and older people, economic development and enterprise, children and young people and safer and stronger communities) can be linked to carers issues. The feedback Carers UK has received so far indicates that carers has most successfully linked to the healthier communities and older people section.
- Carers UK believes that local authorities will be missing an opportunity if they do not integrate carers into the other streams:
 - e.g. economic development and enterprise – looking at how social care services can help carers stay in work and return to work, working with business on flexible working, etc. generation of social enterprise with carers, etc.
 - Children and young people – including disabled children and young carers strategies
 - Safer and stronger communities – ensuring that services are sufficiently supportive for diverse communities e.g. BME communities so that these carers can play an equal part in local life.
- Identify and approach the key decision makers at the local level who shape the LAAs and “keep carers in the consciousness of the managers involved.” (Carers' Services Manager)

- Identify and approach the key leaders on carers at the local level.
- Relationship and network building, identify which other voluntary or statutory bodies will be promoting carers' issues or should have an interest in carers' issue.
- Make sure carers are involved from the start, are engaged and feed into any consultations/discussions or workshops.
- Informal and formal lobbying at the regional level, working with key stakeholders to identify where discussions/consultations/workshops will be taking place on one of the four sections and feed in.

If you have examples of Local Area Agreements working for carers, please contact: Sally.Bamford@carersuk.org or telephone: 020 7566 7638

For more information, please visit: www.carersuk.org



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