



Briefing:

Putting sustainable development into practice

A new way of working?

The new Sustainable Development agenda calls for action that is coordinated through local partnerships, with full involvement of local communities. This demands ways of working which challenge the top down, narrowly focussed and department-based institutions of old. It requires:

- Good understanding of processes that lead to integrated decisions that promote sustainable development and well-being
- Strong links with the community and community groups and an understanding of how institutions can effectively work with grassroots organisations.
- Good partnership skills, including trust building, inclusive working, ability to develop shared objectives and co-ordinate action (including structural changes which allow for pooling of resources, joint-evaluation, and personnel management which allows for partnership working).
- Good information systems which allow for sharing of knowledge throughout partnerships and networks and monitoring of progress
- Technical knowledge about sustainable development and integration solutions.

Greengage Consulting Ltd explored these skills¹ in a report which describes the need to work within a decreasing sphere of control, by broadening the sphere of influence. The research focuses on the skills required within a modern Local Authority and concludes that process, partnership and community workers and facilitators will need to work alongside professionals with detailed technical knowledge.

Tapping into existing skills.

The skills, knowledge and experience outlined above, which is necessary to manage sustainable development through all aspects of Local Authority work already exists within many Local Authorities and partner organisations.

¹ *Leadership for Sustainable Development: actions that local authorities are taking to mainstream sustainable development*, Greengage Consulting Ltd for DEFRA, November 2001.

Sustainable development practitioners: Sustainable development teams often include a mixture of technical workers (with, for example, knowledge about management for climate change, transport, waste management, food networks) and process / community level workers (who have strong links with LA21 Fora, Neighbourhood Management Groups, community organisations, the voluntary sector etc). Many of these workers already have a good understanding of partnership working.

Sustainable development practitioners have a key role to play within the community strategy process as advisors on technical issues, links to community and voluntary organisations and fora, and networks who can act as a conduit for process and technical knowledge.

Example from practice: [Croydon Borough Council](#). The LA21 team in Croydon are actively working with the Community strategy and LSP teams, to influence the agenda and ensure that sustainable development objectives issues are central to the LSP process.

Corporate commitments to sustainable development objectives: Most local authorities developed a Local Agenda 21 plan, through which many agreed sustainable development objectives. These have often been linked directly to corporate objectives.

The language of sustainable development is often seen to be exclusive and dominated in different authorities by specific interest groups. The most important thing is that the concept of wellbeing adopted by an authority and an LSP needs to incorporate sustainable development objectives, strong links with the community and management for integrated solutions. The language to describe this will therefore vary from place to place.

Drawing on the experience of partners: There is a wealth of experience within partner organisations, including the voluntary and community sectors, many of which have in-depth experience of managing particular issues. Agency and institutional partners can also bring key skills and experience which support sustainable development. The health sector has a long history of community development work, whilst regeneration and housing organisations often have long experience of neighbourhood level working and partnership working.

Case studies and support networks: There are several networks and databases of case studies, which focus specifically on managing for sustainable development. Some of the keys ones are listed below.

Links to resources

[The Local Sustainability team at IDeA](#)

For more information contact
localsustainability@idea.gov.uk

Established in 2002, the Local Sustainability team is based at the IDeA. Its aim is to support practitioners in local authorities and also by ensuring that the IDeA integrates sustainability into all its work with English and Welsh councils.

The team provides guidance and best practice materials and also organises seminars and conferences on key issues of concern to local authorities. News about the team's current work programme can be accessed through the IDeA website. The team also produce a bimonthly newsletter, if you wish to receive an electronic copy please e-mail the address opposite.

[The UK government's sustainable development site](#)

Contains a useful range of resources including:

- History of international and national sustainable development policy
- Indicators: international, national, regional, local and *Quality of Life Counts*
- *A Better Quality of Life*: the national sustainability strategy
- *Achieving A Better Quality of Life*: the government annual reports on progress towards sustainable development
- A fact sheet on the role of local government and on integrating sustainability into decision making
- Comprehensive list of links to other sites dealing with social, economic and environmental sustainability and global issues
- Information on the World Summit on Sustainable Development can be found at <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/wssd/wssd1.htm>
- *A Better Quality of Life* the UK Sustainable Development Strategy can be found on the government's sustainable development website at http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/uk_strategy/index.htm
- *Sustainable Local Communities for the 21st Century: How and why to prepare a LA21 Strategy* can be found by following sustainable development links on the [government sustainable development site](#):
- The Social Exclusion Unit website has details on a

range of specific policies on social exclusion, including the [action plan for neighbourhood renewal](#). However the plan itself is being developed by the [Neighbourhood Renewal Unit](#)

[The United Nations sustainable development website](#)

The site includes international website links on a range of issues including Forests, Drugs, Development Aid, Crime and Human Settlements

The Local Agenda 21 UK website

The site is jointly managed by the IDeA and LGA.

(Site currently under development)

It includes a series of Local Agenda 21 case studies. These describe a wide range of local projects initiated under the banner of LA21. It also has links to other useful documents and web sites.

[Forum for the Future Directory of Sustainability in Practice](#)

This is a searchable directory of projects, activities, processes and technologies across various sectors that have been shown to be indicative examples of the most successful, innovative or forward thinking practice in their particular field. To gain a place on the directory, initiatives have had to demonstrate that in one way or another, they contribute positively to a number of common 'sustainability features'.

Each case study on the directory has been analysed for its sustainability features using a series of questions, based on the themes of the Forum's twelve features of a sustainable society.

[Global Vision](#)

The Global Vision Project is an international educational campaign to promote sustainability as an international goal. The site contains access to a wide range of professional media resources on sustainability

[eg magazine and Environment Resources and Information Centre](#)

eg magazine is a key source of news, discussion and updates on key sustainability issues, specifically for local authorities. For more information contact: finaldraft@btopenworld.com

An electronic version of the editorial can also be found on the [IDeA knowledge website](#).

Sustainability Practitioners Network (SPN)

To join the e-mail group, contact:

Jamie.saunders@bradford.gov.uk

or

andy.Christelow@staffordshire.gov.uk

SPN is a resource for sustainable development practitioners, run by its members.

The email network provides free information through collective knowledge and experience of its members and opportunities to debate key issues.

[Sustainable Development Research Network](#)

An email newsletter with information about seminars, publications and conferences on sustainable development research issues.

Environment and Sustainable Development Management Systems

For more information on EMAS see:

<http://www.emas.org.uk>

ISO 14001: BSI, the UK national standards body:

<http://www.bsi-global.com>

The SIGMA project stands for Sustainability: Integrated Guidelines for Management. Following the conclusion of the pilot project, guidelines for the integration of sustainable development into organisations were launched in late 2003. More information, including case studies can be found on: <http://www.projectsigma.com>

Community involvement in LSPs

At the Starting Blocks: Community involvement in local strategic partnerships Peter Dale Community Development Foundation, December 2001

<http://www.cdf.org.uk>

Learning from LSPs: LGA advice note for working with the community and voluntary sector

<http://www.lga.gov.uk>

The LSP Guide: A handy guide to getting involved for voluntary and community groups, Alison West Community Development Foundation, September 2001,

<http://www.cdf.org.uk>

The new Community Strategies: How to involve local people, Community Development Foundation, 2000

<http://www.cdf.org.uk>

Sustainability indicators

A wide range of information on sustainability indicators

Sustainability appraisal and checklists

Sustainability appraisal

Planning for Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice, DETR, October 1998. Describes the use of sustainability appraisal for land use planning. The document can also be found on the ODPM website: <http://www.odpm.gov.uk> by following the links to *Planning*

Sustainability and Best Value and Sustainability Checklists Checklists are now frequently used in the context of Best Value. For more information on integrating sustainability and Best Value, visit the IDeA Knowledge site <http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/> The Solace Best Value and Sustainability Checklist is at the same location.

Leadership for Sustainable Development: Actions that local authorities are taking to mainstream sustainable development, Greengage Consulting Ltd for DEFRA, November 2001 dave@greengageconsulting.ltd.uk

Communities and sustainable development

One Small Step...A Guide to action on sustainable development in the UK and And Environment for Everyone: social exclusion, poverty and environmental action, Chris Church and Jan McHarry, Community Development Foundation for the Sustainable Communities Agency Network, December 1999

At the Starting Blocks: Community involvement in local strategic partnerships, Peter Dale, Community Development Foundation, December 2001

Effective Local Strategic Partnerships: LGA advise note for working with the community and voluntary sector <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/blg/compact/indexnew.htm>

The LSP Guide: A handy guide to getting involved for voluntary and community groups, Alison West, Community Development Foundation, September 2001

The new community strategies: how to involve local people, Community Development Foundation, 2000

Sustainable Development in the regions

- Yorkshire and the Humber: *Advancing Together* http://www.rayh.gov.uk/p_contentDocs/215_1.pdf
- The North East: <http://www.go-e.gov.uk/sustaine>
- The North West: *Action for Sustainability* <http://www.nwra.gov.uk/afs/>
- The West Midlands: *Quality of Life – The Future Starts Here*, <http://www.go-wm.gov.uk>
- The East Midlands: *Integrated Regional Strategy* http://www.emra.gov.uk/publications/sust_dev.asp
- The East of England: *A Sustainable Development Framework for the East of England* <http://www.go-east.gov.uk>
- The South West: *A Sustainable Future for the South West*, <http://www.oursouthwest.com/RegiSus/framework/framework.htm>
- The South East: *A Better Quality of Life in the South East*, http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/our_work/planning/sus_dev/irf.html