

Local Area Agreements and Inter-Link Cornwall

A Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a three year agreement that sets out the priorities for a local area. It is outcome based and enables local authorities and their partners to deliver national outcomes in a way that reflects local priorities as identified in local strategies

Cornwall's LAA focuses on key strategic priorities and measurable achievements. Periodical briefings are provided to keep everyone informed about this evolving process.

<http://www.cornwallstrategicpartnership.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=12893>

The agreement is made up of outcomes, indicators and targets aimed at delivering a better quality of life for people through improving performance on a range of national and local priorities. These priorities are based around 4 blocks:

- Children and Young People,
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Economy and Enterprise

The LAA is about achieving more with existing discretionary funds – central government will commit and pool funding that is currently spread across a wide range of departmental initiatives, each of which require separate delivery and monitoring arrangements at present. There is no new money, apart from some pump-priming for the stretch outcomes, and the reward money payable at the end of the three years if the outcomes have met their targets. However, it does provide a real opportunity for:

- A sustained focus by a range of public, voluntary and private sector organisations working on what really matters to local people
- Innovation – as all sectors (public, private and voluntary) get together and pool experience, knowledge and skills
- Ensuring that the outcomes within local community strategies are delivered
- Reduced bureaucracy
- Stretch targets for key areas of activities with reward funding from government, enabling a greater improvement in performance than could otherwise have been achieved.

Source: <http://www.cornwallstrategicpartnership.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=12893>

Inter-Link Cornwall – Influencing change

Inter-Link Cornwall is part of one of the LAA blocks: Safer and Stronger Communities and is aiming to achieve the Stretch Outcome: To empower people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and the delivery of services.

To do this Inter-Link Cornwall has aimed to provide a mechanism through which members of the Voluntary and Community Sector have a role in the decision making process. Inter-Link Cornwall has also proved to be an effective method of building capacity within the Voluntary and Community Sector and ensuring that better working relationship with the statutory sector. Inter-Link Cornwall is an effective method to ensure that the sector is able to participate in local decision making and influence service delivery – and even become service deliverers themselves.

Quality of Life – Inter-Link Cornwall will be measured against the stretch indicator – ‘proportion of adults who feel able to influence decisions of public bodies locally’ in the County Council’s Place Survey (Quality of Life Survey) which will be sent to 4000 households in each district to complete during September 2008. The questions that Inter-Link Cornwall will be scored against are about the proportion of people who feel they are able **to influence** and proportion of people who feel a **sense of belonging** to their community. These will be judged on an increase of the previous three year figures.

What's happened to date:

To aim to achieve the stretch target Inter-Link Cornwall has been improving the products and services it offers to the Voluntary and Community Sector over the past few years. We have also put on various events and activities to encourage Voluntary and Community Organisations to be able to participate in and influence decision making processes. Inter-Link Cornwall has also offered a wide range of support to the Voluntary and Community Sector to enable organisations to operate effectively to the communities they serve. Inter-Link Cornwall believes that although we cannot always change decisions we can provide people with opportunities for their voice to be heard.

Inter-Link Locality meetings – these are held throughout Cornwall in localities as identified as requiring Voluntary and Community Sector focus. These meetings have been and will continue to be held three times a year and have encouraged small community groups, large voluntary organisations, statutory agencies and individuals to come together to network and share information. They have been an invaluable source for the Voluntary and Community Sector to come together in informal settings, find out about what is happening both on the ground and at a strategic level. They have also provided opportunities for strategic bodies to talk to groups providing services to their communities which enhance quality of life of individuals and in turn provide Voluntary and Community Groups with the opportunity to feed into and influence decisions.

Database - Inter-Link Cornwall has up to date information about the Voluntary and Community Sector operating throughout Cornwall, especially activity at a local level. All members' details are held on the Inter-Link Cornwall database which was re-developed in December 2007. There are approximately 2000 Inter-Link Cornwall members and soon this is set to increase to approximately 4000. This database provides members with the opportunity to find like minded peers, other groups and agencies that are able to support the work that they do. It also provides the opportunity to map the types of organisations which exist within Cornwall and which communities they serve, e.g. those who work with Children and Young People, Culture and Heritage Groups etc and those who work in specific geographical locations. The database can also inform what the training and funding needs are of the sector. The database enables Inter-Link Cornwall to tailor services and products to meet the need of Voluntary and Community Organisations as well as a gateway for strategic bodies to talk to and consult with the sector. The database has been used in this way and over the past year certain training, events and themed Inter-Link meetings have been facilitated for the membership.

Themed Meetings – Open membership – Inter-Link membership is open to everyone – individuals, community groups, voluntary organisations, statutory agencies and the private sector. One of the main priorities is to breakdown the barriers by specifically encouraging as wide representation as possible. One of the largest set of themed meetings that have been facilitated by Inter-Link Cornwall was about Cornwall Sustainable Community Strategy. A Sustainable Community Strategy sets out what is important for quality of life and what can be done to protect or improve it in a way that is sustainable. It articulates community needs and aspirations and provides a framework to co-ordinate the actions of public, private, voluntary and community organisations to respond. Cornwall County Council has a legal responsibility to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy in collaboration with the Cornwall Strategic Partnership. These meetings provided Inter-Link Members with the opportunity to influence decisions by feeding into the consultation process.

Magazine - Information is disseminated to members three times a year in the Inter-Link Cornwall Magazine. The magazine contains information about members as well as information about funding and training. The magazine has been used as a tool to keep Voluntary and Community informed of strategic developments over the years with the relevant contacts and links to find out more information.

Training – Inter-Link members have been and will continue to be provided with the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge to enable them to engage in the decision making process. Various training has been facilitated by Inter-Link Cornwall from 'First Aid' to 'How To Represent Your Community'

Representation and Accountability -

The diversity of communities and the Voluntary and Community Sector is reflected within the membership and additionally is represented at strategic levels. Larger Voluntary Organisations feed into and influence strategic decisions on behalf of the whole Voluntary and Community Sector to ensure that their voice is heard. Inter-Link Cornwall has links with several of the Local Strategic Partnerships in Cornwall through the VCS

representatives that sit either on the LSP Boards or on Partnership Delivery Groups. The aim is to expand this role within the forthcoming Community Networks being set up by the new Unitary Council –watch this space
Keep an eye out for further updates about this in the Inter-link Cornwall Magazine, Inter-Link Cornwall E-Bulletins and Inter-Link Cornwall Website.