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National Evaluation of the Capacity Building Programme for Local Government

Annex 1. Seven Case Studies: The Pilot Programme



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April 2008

Department for Communities and Local Government: London

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1 Introduction

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and Best Value reviews have raised the profile and prominence of improvement in local authorities and partnerships. In response to this the Local Government Association (LGA) and the then-Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (then-ODPM) Capacity Building Programme was created to provide support to local authorities and councils in building capacity and achieving improvement targets.

Building capacity is a complex and demanding undertaking given the disparate nature of capacity needs and the wide ranging circumstances within which each local authority operates. The pilot schemes of the Capacity Building Programme have achieved a number of important outcomes. They have:

- successfully provided support for capacity building that recognises the importance of local circumstances in determining what works best for different councils and partnerships;
- provided leverage enabling projects to occur that otherwise would not have taken place;
- provided a strong incentive for partnership working;
- begun to tackle organisational cultural issues that create obstacles to change;
- encouraged local and sub regional pilots to seek collaborations and partnerships with other authorities to roll out their experience at the regional level;
- facilitated potential efficiency savings through enabling joint working.

1.1 This report

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Capacity Building pilots. The evaluation of the pilots is part of the on-going evaluation of the Capacity Building Programme and has been undertaken in the early scoping phase of the main evaluation in order to capture key learning points and insights into the programme. It is intended that the ongoing evaluation of the Capacity Building Programme will be formative and assist in the development of the programme over time.

In what follows the background to the pilots programme is discussed, highlighting the kinds of capacity building activities the pilots are engaged with and the link between the Capacity Building Programme and the CPA. The report outlines the structure and purpose of the pilots programme and the nature and characteristics of the different pilots that were undertaken. The seven case studies are then discussed in more detail in the main body of

the report. These are drawn together in key themes and findings which can be used to strengthen future project development.

1.2 Capacity building and the pilots

“The Capacity Building Programme is about helping councils to improve it is ultimately about outcomes for local people” (Cumbria)

Capacity Building is a difficult concept to define and can be broken down into a number of areas. We can talk about:

- capacity to respond to changing circumstances;
- partnership capacity;
- delivery capacity;
- innovation capacity;
- evaluation capacity; and
- capacity to learn.

All of these aspects of capacity are present in the work of the pilots. Capacity entails much more than merely having enough people to deliver particular outcomes but encapsulates a variety of skills, ways of working, learning, supportive regulatory context and appropriately targeted resources.

There is no singular understanding of capacity building among the pilots – they see it as including one or more of the following elements:

- workforce planning, recruitment and retention;
- new skills, maximising ability of existing staff to do new tasks;
- effective use of resources;
- corporate capacity and increased knowledge about what is needed;
- a focus on competencies;
- organisational, individual and team capability;
- improving leadership of members;
- partnership working;
- community leadership;
- delivering services; and
- allowing innovation and improvement.

All the pilots we spoke to see a clear link between the Capacity Building Programme and achievement of modernisation and improvement. The Capacity Building Programme Pilots were understood to be:

- helping councils respond to the range of policies in the wider Local Government Modernisation Agenda (LGMA) programme, to address key challenges facing local government in achieving outcomes at the local level and to tackle any CPA issues they face; and
- helping councils achieve specific capacity goals.

“Without the Capacity Building Programme LGMA goals would not be realised” (Sussex Training Consortium)

1.3 The CBP pilot programme

The pilot programme of the Capacity Building Programme (CBP) was established to “trial innovative ways of working and ‘pave the way’ for other authorities” (ODPM response letters).

Pilots were expected to:

- complement, not duplicate activity planned for the national programmes;
- include direct support for poor and weak authorities;
- develop a series of transferable lessons;
- have a plan for sustainability beyond the funding period;
- undertake some impact evaluation; and
- work with the then-ODPM and the LGA to review impact, and implement any necessary changes.

Many of the pilots include a number of local authorities and are actively seeking to roll-out their work on a regional basis. In some cases this regionalisation process blurs the distinction between local and regional pilots. However, the following classification of pilot schemes has been used throughout this report:

- Local and sub regional pilots
- Regional pilots
- National pilot – locally delivered – implementation of a national policy theme, but piloted locally.

At the time of writing there have been 39 CBP pilots, most of which are still ongoing (see appendix 1). The pilots differ in size and scope: some are drawn up at the regional level and others come from individual councils. This led to an early distinction of regional pilots, local and sub-regional pilots.

However, one of the pilots originally described as a local pilot (because of its involvement with councils) has since been re-classified within the then-ODPM. The Older People project is now described as a *National Pilot – Locally Delivered*. This pilot was the result of work on the Shared Priorities between local and central government developed by the then-ODPM and the LGA. It is thus different to the other pilots which were more locally specific.

The 39 pilots cover a range of topics. This diversity makes it difficult to identify a “typical” pilot. Pilots are intended to test out new innovative approaches so that diversity among the pilots is a positive and useful aspect of the pilot scheme. We have grouped the pilots by scope and scale. It is also possible to group them in accordance with what the pilots do: the 39 pilots generally fall into one of the categories in Table 1.

Table 1: Typology of CBP pilots	
Type of Pilot	Numbers
Single issue pilots (e.g. older people, sport; BME issues);	3
Pilots focusing on partnership working and strategy planning;	8
Pilots focusing on performance management;	3
Pilots focusing on targeting weaker services;	3
Pilots focusing on staff development and recruitment;	13
Pilots focusing on finding new innovative ways of delivering services.	1

(Figures are indicative and for local and sub regional pilots only.)

1.4 Methodology

The report presents the results of a standalone evaluation of the Pilot Programme. A case study methodology was designed in order to collect examples of good practice and key lessons, as well as seeking to identify the pilot participants' own understanding of capacity building and the role and purpose of the CBP. The analysis presented in this report draws on a number of different sources of information:

- documentary analysis of data supplied by the pilots;
- analysis of the pilot's own evaluations where these were available;
- face to face and telephone interviews with key officials in each of the selected pilots;
- documentary analysis of data held centrally by the then-ODPM about the pilot programme as a whole and supplied by the individual pilots themselves; and
- informal conversations with then-ODPM staff about the CBP.

Some of the pilots have undertaken their own evaluations, largely focused around questions of impact and quantification of outputs. These provide a useful data source about achievements and enable a degree of analysis of outcomes for the individual pilots. Collectively these evaluation documents help support and augment conclusions drawn from other sources. However, evaluation outputs from the pilots varied as some are still at a fairly early point in their delivery. Only Portsmouth and Carlisle had undertaken detailed evaluation studies.

1.5 Case studies

Seven case studies were carried out; key learning points and good practice lessons from each are presented in the main body of this report. The case studies were selected to provide an overview of the varied approaches used. Maximum variation on the following criteria was thus used in case study selection:

- geographical coverage;
- large (Cumbria, Shropshire, Older People), medium (Worcester, Sussex Training Consortium) and smaller (Portsmouth, Race for Success) grants;
- regional (Cumbria, Shropshire) and sub regional pilots (Portsmouth, Sussex Training Consortium, Race for Success, Worcester).
- single issue pilots (Older People, Race for Success);
- pilots focusing on partnership working and strategy planning (Worcester and indirectly all the other cases);
- pilots focusing on performance management (Shropshire);
- pilots focusing on targeting weaker services (Cumbria);
- pilots focusing on staff development and recruitment (Sussex Training Consortium, Portsmouth); and
- pilots focusing on finding new innovative ways of delivering services (Older People).

Brief details of the case study pilots are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Case Studies

Case study	Theme	Expenditure	Type of pilot
Portsmouth City Council "Future Leaders"	Staff development and leadership training	£34,459	Local/ sub regional
Sussex Training Consortium	Staff & management development	£58,183	Local / sub regional
London Borough of Tower Hamlets – "Race for Success"	Single issue BME training and development	£32,000	Local / sub regional
Worcester Partnership "improving the effectiveness and efficiencies of community strategies and LSPs in a two-tier area"	Partnership operation and improved strategy planning	£75,000	Local / sub regional

Table 2: Summary of Case Studies			
Cumbria “ACE – Achieving Cumbrian Excellence”	Partnership based targeting weaker services	£175,000	Regional
Shropshire district councils “Improvement Programme”	Performance and leadership	£171,300	Regional
Shared Priorities “Improving the quality of life for older people”	Finding new innovative ways for delivering services	£156,055	National Pilot - Locally Delivered

These case studies were focused on identifying examples of good practice and learning points that could influence the wider CBP. The case study reviews that follow are based on documentary review; face-to-face and telephone interviews with key staff and officials responsible for design and delivery; and face-to-face and telephone interviews with some participants in the pilots. Consequently, the reviews represent a combination of the judgements of the research team and the views of respondents in the pilots themselves.

2 Key Issues

This study brings together learning from the pilots for the first time. Some of the case studies are still at a fairly early stage in delivery while others are already completed. This study found significant differences within and between the case study pilots. These include:

- No shared understanding of the purpose of the CBP and a variety of, locally determined, approaches to capacity building. This is a result of the locally focused nature of the pilot programme.
- Partnership working takes time and resources to establish, especially where there is no prior history of such working between the partners. Different pilots have different starting conditions (Sussex Shropshire, Worcester, Cumbria, Older People).
- Some local authorities do not have resources to enable them to join in Capacity Building pilots (e.g. Race for Success - a number of London boroughs could not participate because they had in-house programmes and no additional resources).
- Some projects within pilots seek immediate direct improvements while others are instead focused on longer-term change. Examples of those seeking immediate improvements are satisfying improvement indicators, improving leadership skills and staff retention (Shropshire, Sussex, Cumbria, Older People).

Although some of the case studies are still at an early point in delivery, looking across the case studies it is nevertheless possible to highlight evidence of achievement of a range of outcomes, learning points and good practice, detailed below.

2.1 The need for capacity building

The pilots confirmed, to an extent, the continued relevance of some of the findings from the initial scoping research behind the CBP (OPM 2003). For instance, several pilots (Portsmouth, Sussex, Cumbria) reported recruitment and retention problems as rationale for their engagement with the CBP pilot programme. Others also reported that implementing central government initiatives (Cumbria, Worcestershire, and Shropshire) generated capacity needs. Procurement was also raised as an area of weakness (Cumbria).

The CBP is seen by the respondents as a means to help implement modernisation and improvement. All cases noted that the Capacity Building Programme helped respond to the objectives of LGMA (taken as a whole) as well as procurement issues.

2.2 The role of CPA

Many of the pilots commented on the utility of CPA and Best Value as diagnostic and motivational tools for capacity issues and consequently a help in deciding where to focus the pilot activities (Portsmouth, Shropshire, Sussex, Worcester, Cumbria, Older People).

Cumbria, for example, initially used areas of weakness identified by CPA across the county as the focus for their pilot activity (greater community engagement; partnership working; the community leadership role of elected members; prioritisation; performance management; procurement, the strategic housing function). Shropshire also used CPA findings to frame the focus of their pilot as a diagnostic tool opting to focus on three areas (leadership and change management; performance management and improvement planning; developing and making use of scarce skills).

The scope for using CPA in this way is clearly different for those pilots where joint work between authorities is involved because of the likelihood of each having different areas of concern and high performance. However, this does open up the potential for joint working to share good practice. There was some evidence from the pilots that this was taking place. For instance, the Race for Success pilot originated from a successful project in one part of one council and was subsequently rolled-out in several authorities. Evidence from the Cumbrian case study, however, highlighted some of the potential problems in this approach. Sharing of good practice between Districts was part of the rationale for the Cumbrian pilot. However, respondents suggested that good practice in Districts in Cumbria did not always reach the same high standards attained in other parts of the country and, in some cases, it was not always clear what dynamics were driving good performance and as such there was limited scope for good practice sharing.

2.3 Locally determined priorities

There are considerable differences between the CBP pilots and the national programmes. The former are designed to address local priorities, and have clear and locally specific goals. By contrast, the national programmes are intended to deliver the reported capacity building needs of the sector as a whole. As such, they are less focused on organisationally specific goals and more on the development, provision and subsidised access to a range of nationally delivered programmes, that authorities can subsequently put together to meet their own specific requirements.

2.4 Understanding of the CBP

Discussions with the pilots suggested that there are ambiguities in common perceptions of the CBP and particularly about eligibility criteria. This issue may hamper programme take-up and as such constrain the potential scope and impact of the CBP. That said, recent changes to CBP publicity and

marketing materials (e.g. the then-ODPM website and the March 2005 Capacity Building Update (ODPM, 2005) go some way to addressing these.

One pilot (Race for Success) also mentioned that there was a lack of clarity about how to use national and pilot programmes at a local level. There was also less familiarity with the objectives of the CBP than the objectives of the pilots themselves, though this should be expected, since the staff interviewed were working directly on the pilot projects. However, a lack of general familiarity with the objectives of the national programme and how to use it in an organisational context may again limit the take-up and impact of the programme.

2.5 Local flexibility and central coordination

There was some appreciation of the flexibility offered by the pilot programme to address locally determined priorities (Race for Success, Shropshire, Sussex, and Worcester, Cumbria). However, internal re-organisation within councils and staff attrition can create uncertainties about continued involvement in the CBP. In addition, some central coordination was appreciated, especially where this helps to disseminate good practice (Cumbria), provides a focused resource to meet CPA requirements, or helps by-pass tensions between authorities (Shropshire, Sussex, Worcester, Cumbria). In particular, a number of organisations have been involved in supporting bids:

- IDeA - design and implementation - Race for Success, Cumbria, Older People
- LGA - Older People's pilot
- Regional Centre for Excellence -Cumbria

Some attention needs to be given, however, to avoiding potential conflicts of interest where a central body supports the bid design as well as the implementation.

A number of the case studies emphasised the importance of the support role that can be played by Government Offices - this has generally been appreciated by the pilots (Shropshire, Worcestershire, Cumbria).

"The GO contact has been incredibly helpful – a critical friend."

2.6 Implementing central government initiatives

Implementing a large number of different, fragmented or changing central government initiatives is a recognised capacity challenge for local government (OPM, 2003). The Audit Commission (2004) has referred to the process where a coherent national policy ideas is fragmented through departmental structures into separate initiatives which must then be re-

assembled at a local level as the 'Humpty-Dumpty' effect. It is also noted in the academic and management literature on organisational capacity that the overall regulatory environment can both constrain and facilitate capacity. Moreover, the amount and structure of local government financing also clearly impacts on the capacity of local authorities.

The case studies confirmed these constraints and challenges on capacity (Race for Success, Worcestershire and Cumbria). However, two pilots (Worcestershire and Cumbria) suggested that the CBP Pilot programme had helped them to deal with changing central government requirements. For instance, the Worcestershire Pilot was shaped by a need to deal with some of the Partnership challenges arising from the Efficiency Review. The Older People's Shared Priorities pilot has also made some progress in facilitating joined-up working.

2.7 Partnership and joint working

The CBP Pilot Programme has operated as a lever for partnership working. There is a strong orientation towards partnership working and networking, even in pilots not explicitly focused on this. All the case study pilots report learning about partnership and cross-organisational working. The case studies reported benefits associated with:

- Shared experiences;
- Expertise of other partners;
- Economies of scale;
- Ability to realise outcomes that a local authority might not be able to achieve on its own; and
- Shared learning and the dissemination of good practice (e.g. Portsmouth).

However, pilots also report that partnership working itself raises capacity issues and is time consuming, with benefits often only being realised over the longer-term, especially where there are pre-existing tensions in inter-organisational relations. This is most common between District and County Councils, although it can also occur within Unitary councils. Where partner councils have very different CPA scores, organisational cultures, and/or agreed performance management and improvement structures this can also make joint working and achievement of outcomes more difficult (Race for Success, Shropshire, Cumbria). Designing programmes that work is also affected by different needs and expectations of participants. This is most noticeable with members and officers. Developing an in-built mechanism to ensure clarity of expectations between organisations in joint bids for such pilot programmes might help to overcome this.

2.8 Efficiency savings and innovation

The CBP has provided leverage, enabling projects to occur that otherwise would not have taken place. In allowing projects and new ideas to be

piloted, the CBP has also operated as a lever for change at the strategic level (Shropshire, Sussex, Worcester, Cumbria, Older People).

The drive towards partnerships and joint working is creating a force for regionalisation, further encouraging the realisation of economies of scale through joint working. However, one officer expressed a concern that the focus on the region is a problem where the regional knowledge base is not sufficiently well developed.

The work of the Sussex Training Consortium is a good example of this, with CBP finance facilitating the joint development and provision of training to meet the specific needs of East and West Sussex County Councils. Shropshire, Worcester and Cumbria also report savings as the result of economies of scale realised through joint working, reinforcing linkages to Efficiency Review priorities.

2.9 Organisational culture

In some instances, the Capacity Building Programme pilots are addressing organisational culture and organisational development issues that create obstacles to change and capacity enhancement (e.g. Worcester) such as fear of change.

Addressing issues of organisational culture is not an explicit aim of the pilots but has potential to be further developed. It would be good to build on this experience with further initiatives focused on this area and to direct policy focus on to what is required to make cultural change part of the Capacity Building initiative. Working with other local authorities and partners exposes a council to different ways of working, but the experience so far does not yet tell us whether activities have to be able to operate at a particular level of depth in order for cultural change to be really meaningful.

2.10 Factors in successful implementation

A positive aspect of the Capacity Building Programme is that it allows project flexibility, so pilots can change goals and objectives as they develop (Shropshire, Cumbria, Older People), though previous experience in designing and delivering similar programmes is a benefit (Portsmouth, Race for Success, Cumbria).

All the pilots stress the value of having a strong lead or the commitment of a high-level steering committee; corporate management; and the involvement of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). This is fundamental for pushing things forward and ensuring commitment. The CEO plays a useful role both raising the profile of, and acting as a champion of, the pilot. Identifying project leads or a leadership champion at the local level is a priority and works well where this has been implemented (Portsmouth, Race for Success, Shropshire, Cumbria).

Targeting course attendees needs more careful attention for some pilots (Race for Success, Shropshire, Cumbria, Older People). Involving participants as much as possible in project design should also help to ensure relevance and reduce the risk of quota filling for staff development pilots.

Box 1: Requirements for Successful Delivery

Successful delivery of the pilots require:

- more time spent on scoping phases and involvement of participants as much as possible in agreeing project rationales
- investment of time to ensure management consultants and external providers understand what is required
- adequate delivery time
- a strong local lead to help overcome dispersal of effort and strains of multiple demands on time,
- concentration of effort, focusing on a few key things
- careful targeting of training initiatives
- high level commitment from the CEO

Getting the focus on to practitioner rather than theoretical issues is fundamental. Pilots focusing on staff development need a good quality product (Race for Success, Shropshire, Sussex). External providers for training rather than in-house providers are generally favoured as they can create a more favourable learning environment, provide more credibility and are more cost effective (Portsmouth, Race for Success, Sussex, Cumbria). However, there are some issues surrounding procurement and management of consultants, such as securing buy-in and clarity over expectations and outcomes.

2.11 Roll-out

A number of the pilots are still at an early point in their delivery. Even where the pilots have finished it is perhaps still rather early to make any clear judgements relating to sustainability. Some will require on-going funding to continue, although where economies of scale can be realised, sustainability is more likely (the Sussex Training Consortium is a good example of this). Potential for roll out is clearer in these examples and pilots were generally very positive about this.

The Capacity Building pilot programme has prompted participating authorities to think about running additional pilot programmes. This reflects their positive experience (Race for Success, Shropshire, Cumbria) and also suggests that questions of capacity building have risen in priority among some local authorities.

There is a tension between the potential for roll-out and the local specificity of the pilot programmes. One of the pilots raised this issue in expressing reservations about the potential for roll-out (Sussex). Where there is

identified potential for wider localised roll-out (for instance on a regional basis), it was suggested that additional financial support would be needed to provide sufficient leverage (Portsmouth, Race for Success, Shropshire).

2.12 Monitoring and evaluation

Currently, monitoring and evaluation tends to be rather *ad hoc* across the pilots. This is sometimes carried out at the level of programme participants (e.g. training evaluation questionnaires) or is simply left to the observations of the steering group. Some pilots have received CBP funding to carry out evaluations.

The formalisation of evaluation and monitoring procedures is needed to ensure better sharing of good practice and information about outcomes. However, the very nature of the CBP poses some technical evaluation challenges. Of particular note are the time-lag in the emergence of some elements of change and the number of potential counterfactuals which pose challenges for short term evaluation exercises (Race for Success, Shropshire, Cumbria).

2.13 Central coordination

A number of pilots raised issues that are more relevant to the administration of pilot programmes more generally, rather than the CBP pilots specifically. These were largely around the importance of clear rules (e.g. of eligibility), clarity about financial awards and appropriate timescales. A number of Pilots (Worcestershire, Cumbria) reported that a lack of clarity on these issues and delays in releasing finance led to a decline in commitment, especially where the Pilot involved several organisations.

“the timescales and the uncertainty – it was quiet for about four months after we put in the bid. We went for it in a less inclusive way than we would otherwise have done because of the deadline for the bid and we lost impetus over those four months.”

3 Case Studies:

3.1 Local and Sub-Regional Pilots

3.1.1 Portsmouth City Council: The Future Leaders Programme

Title	Future Leaders Programme
Duration	Launched September 2005
Funding	£34,459
Theme	Staff development and leadership training

3.1.1.1 Background

The Future Leaders Programme had already been established prior to receiving financial support from the Capacity Building Programme. It received financial support from the CBP to help subsidise the attendance of 16 of the participants. This support enabled the participant base to be widened to include local authority delegates from the South East. The CBP also covered the full cost of dissemination of information on programme activities.

The Future Leaders programme was originally set up in order to help build the capacity for leadership amongst officers and managers in Portsmouth. It provided training in leadership analysis, action learning, a nine month programme of leadership skills and corporate project experience.

Cross-sector externally delivered training was held and involved participants from six different organisations: Portsmouth City Council; Isle of Wight National Health Service; Portsmouth National Health Service; Havant Borough Council; West Sussex County Council; and Isle of Wight County Council.

Participants for the Future Leaders programme were selected on the basis of having recognised leadership potential in order to target resources for the maximum benefit. Competence and actual achievements were assessed before admitting participants onto the programme.

3.1.1.2 Issues faced by Local Authorities

The programme sought to address the following issues affecting local authorities and other public organisations in Portsmouth and the wider region.

- loss of key staff to the private sector;
- loss of key staff to other local authorities and public sector organisations;
- the need to foster and develop leadership potential.

3.1.1.3 Outcomes

The programme was successful in addressing issues of staff retention, promotion and in encouraging innovative practices. The pilot's own impact assessment shows that:

- Participants undertook a number of innovative projects (funding bids, revamping local neighbourhood forums, etc).
- Staff retention was successful and attributable to the programme;
- 24 participants passed through the programme (16 funded by the Capacity Building Programme), approximately 50% of whom were promoted soon after completion of the course.
- The programme gave confidence to participants to do things differently and be innovative.
- There was positive feedback from participants and line managers:
 - the programme was said to be challenging;
 - it equipped participants with tools to achieve better outcomes in their work activities; and
 - it increased their aspirations for promotion and leadership roles.

3.1.1.4 Good practice and lessons learned

A number of good practices and lessons have been identified by programme participants and co-ordinators. These stress the importance of high level strategic support from the Chief Executive and from the then-ODPM as well as the need to build on existing successes. Our research has found that:

- The locally based aspect of the training was a success.
- Support from the Chief Executive was very important as this raised the profile of the pilot and encouraged participation.
- Use of external trainers and participants from the broader public sector produces a better learning environment.
- There were some difficulties in rolling out the programme across the region due to organisational issues within the then-ODPM at the time. Greater coherence from the centre would be useful.
- The mix of public sector organisations was positive as it facilitated the sharing of learning across sectors and encouraged more innovative thinking for leadership challenges.
- There is a continued need for on-going financial support.
- Organisations in the South East would welcome the continuation and expansion of the programme.

3.1.2 Sussex Training Consortium

Title	Sussex Training Consortium
Duration	January 2004 – December 2004
Funding	£58,183
Theme	Staff and management development

“By coming together Sussex authorities can assess common issues and address them in a cost efficient way”

3.1.2.1 Background

The Sussex Training Consortium (STC) brought together ten Sussex authorities to develop an effective training programme tailored to district and council needs. It introduces a strategic and collaborative approach to training in West and East Sussex aimed at maximising economies of scale and cost savings. In addition, the programme also seeks to source the best training providers. The programme is expected to be sustainable.

The Sussex Training Consortium provides overall management of the project. The programme benefits from the input of dedicated human resources experts within each local authority who are aware of the needs of local government staff within the context of local government re-organisation, scarce resources, pressures of time and new responsibilities. This commitment of HR across the authorities has been instrumental in ensuring successful outcomes.

Financial support from the CBP provided the leverage necessary to enable the programme to start up. Prior to this there had been no structured partnership between the two counties. The CBP supported actual training delivery and training administration to ensure quality, value and efficiency. The programme offers a number of modules. Each module can attract 20-25 delegate.

Modules offered so far have included:

- navigator course;
- springboard programme;
- project management course; and
- leading and managing change course.

Respondents have noted that the programme:

- allowed small authorities to develop a training programme adapted to their needs;
- developed a support group between all the members of the consortium;
- shared a training coordinator; and
- yet authorities could still follow up STC training with further in-house training.

The modules offered all target middle management, but other target groups (front line workers) have been identified for further developments.

3.1.2.2 Issues faced by local authorities

According to comments and observations from respondents the programme responded to a number of challenges faced by local authorities in Sussex. First, local authorities were facing problems with retention and recruitment

(as elsewhere), this reflected the low pay across the sector and limited training or at best *ad hoc* training. Local Further Education colleges could not provide suitable training that responded to the needs of local government and bespoke training was invariably beyond the budgets of small local authorities. In addition, training offered by central bodies was too distant and not tailored to local needs or to smaller district and borough councils. There was agreement that management training was needed in order to sustain leadership and management calibre across the districts and boroughs. The programme is regarded as sustainable as there are plans for it to be accredited as a “Diploma in Local Government Management Practice”. An application for a further year’s funding has been submitted to the Capacity Building Programme (at time of writing (April 05).

3.1.2.3 Outcomes

A number of outcomes were highlighted by respondents:

The programme answers immediate training needs but also helps build morale among public sector staff and assists with staff retention. Chichester District Council recently asked to join the consortium. There has also been an increased commitment to training initiatives at the local level. Requests have been made for modules to be repeated and this is an indication of their success.

An unexpected outcome has been the increased partnership working and collaboration that has developed between the 10 participating authorities.

The STC programme is generally regarded in Sussex as an example of good practice in Capacity Building.

Our research has found that the programme itself has also encouraged partnership working in the area of capacity building and helped staff in neighbouring authorities to meet and share views beyond their training needs. This has created a virtuous circle with increased commitment to achieving a successful training programme.

3.1.2.4 Good practice and lessons learned

The Capacity Building Programme was instrumental in working toward achieving the broader LGMA programme and providing a mechanism to address capacity gaps highlighted by CPA and Best Value.

It is important to set the tone with a strong first module. It was also important to have the commitment of the ten participating authorities and their HR departments has also been critical in ensuring the success of the programme.

3.1.3 London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Greenwich, and Brent – “Race for Success”

Title	London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Greenwich, and Brent – “Race for Success”
Duration	November 2004 – June 2005
Funding	£32,000
Theme	Single issue BME training and development

“There is a ceiling of achievement for BME staff. There are not the same issues in terms of gender. The issue is about trying to achieve higher levels of public sector jobs for BME staff”

3.1.3.1 Background

‘Race for Success’ is an inter-London Borough pilot aiming to identify organisational, individual and group development issues that need addressing in order to support BME managers in becoming future senior managers. Tower Hamlets is the lead borough with Brent and Greenwich also involved in the pilot. The original bid for CBP funds was drawn up by the IDeA on behalf of Tower Hamlets.

The programme has the objective of increasing the numbers of BME managers that are able to progress to senior management level, as well as increasing recruitment and retention of BME staff. The programme encourages London boroughs to work together and share learning and knowledge on how to improve performance on recruitment, promotion and retention of BME managers. It also takes the innovative approach of seeking to identify organisational barriers and cultural obstacles for BME managers’ career progression within local government.

The programme provides:

- a modular residential programme (4 sessions each lasting 2 days), spread over 6 months, focused on personal development/ leadership strategies for BME managers;
- 360 ° performance assessment;
- a network of BME managers to provide peer support;
- personal development (coaching sessions) with external mentors; and
- a work based programme.

It also seeks to identify the organisational climate needed to support the development and progression of BME managers.

The Capacity Building Programme supported three elements of the pilot: the review of the current position of the boroughs and identification of issues to be included in the programme; subsidies for places on the programme; and evaluation and dissemination activity.

3.1.3.2 Issues faced by Local Authorities

The pilot came about in response to a number of issues. First, recruitment and retention of senior managerial staff across London boroughs was proving increasingly difficult, this meant local authorities needed to invest more in developing their own senior managers from their existing workforce. Second, there was a need for greater diversity in the workforce and better BME representation at senior management level. This reflects the on-going need to progress the equalities and diversities agenda across all London boroughs to conform to Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) standards. Finally, senior managers needed to be more representative of the communities they serve (interviews with key officials).

3.1.3.3 Interim Outcomes

This programme is still on-going. Some interim outcomes are summarised below:

- participants were positive about the programme, its structure, and its ability to deliver the stated outcomes
- some boroughs had to withdraw because of staffing difficulties and existing programmes of in-house training meant further resources were not available;
- the programme currently has 16 participants;
- there were difficulties in arranging cross-borough secondments due to time scale and organisational/partnership working difficulties.
- (interviews with a number of officials involved in different aspects of the programme).

3.1.3.4 Good practice & lessons learned

Our research shows that the experience of this pilot underlines the importance of careful scoping and targeting of the pilot interventions and the need for a longer period of operation. The pilot undoubtedly has potential for roll out and is highly innovative in its attempts to address issues of organisational culture that impede capacity in this area. Our research has found that:

- more careful targeting or tailoring for different levels of experience is needed, especially for managers at the higher end of the scale;
- scoping was essential;
- a longer period of operation for the programme is required – six months is not long enough;
- good publicity is needed to avoid the perception that this is a remedial programme, though this was a comment specifically about the potential for the roll-out of this Pilot;
- better publicity of the Capacity Building Programme is also required;
- participants need evidence that career advancement opportunities will result;

- that there is potential for roll out was identified to other areas;
- the programme manager's previous experience in this area was a benefit;
- secondment (e.g. to the CEO office) was a useful practical element;
- the implicit focus on organisational culture has been helpful.
- (comments received from interviews with a number of officials involved in different aspects of the programme).

3.1.4 Worcestershire Partnership – “Improving the effectiveness and efficiencies of community strategies and LSPs in a two-tier area”

Title	Worcestershire Partnership “improving the effectiveness and efficiencies of community strategies and LSPs in a two-tier area”
Duration	July 2004 – March 2005
Funding	£75,000
Theme	Partnership operation and improved strategy planning

“It’s given us funding to draw in expertise and also a focus to take time to explore the issues that you wouldn’t ordinarily have”

3.1.4.1 Background

The Worcestershire Partnership project was aimed at developing potential synergies and managing potential conflicts produced in the process of establishing community strategies and associated plans in a two-tier local authority context. The partnership was led by the county-wide Worcestershire Partnership including the seven LSPs in the County and other key partners. The initial bid for support from the CBP arose from an independently facilitated workshop in March 2004 where participants from across the County (at County and District level) attended.

The funding for the project was used to engage consultants to:

- Review Community Strategies and associated plans at County and District level.
- Audit current activity at County and District level.
- Identify gaps in present Community Strategies.
- Challenge the appropriate ‘location’ for activities identified above.
- Using action research to develop more effective ways of working together in one area where there is potential for synergy.

However, problems in the first stage of the project led the overall plan to be redesigned. The problems encountered focused on the commitment of consultants and their ability to win cooperation from partners. As such, the second stage of the project has moved from being an audit of activity to running exemplar projects in health and ‘safer-stronger’ communities to focus on better partnership working. At the time of conducting the evaluation research, Stage 1 was complete and Stage 2 was just starting.

The project also explicitly aims to disseminate its results throughout the County and outside via a wide variety of mechanisms including workshops, providing written outputs for dissemination through external organizations (like the regional LGA and IDeA) and local authority networks (such as the CECS-NET virtual network).

3.1.4.2 Issues Faced by Local Authority

A number of issues were raised as presenting capacity challenges for the local authorities concerned. These were:

- Challenges related to two-tier (and three tier) working. These were specifically related to efficiency requirements and the drive to greater partnership working as a result of this. This was linked to issues of duplication, with HR mentioned as an example area. However, it was also felt that there were barriers to tackling these issues within the County, especially as a result of a lack of resources to undertake activities not part of the day to day work load, perceptions of County-level dominance and issues around the retention of appropriate mechanisms for democratic accountability. As such, the focused resource provided by Capacity Building funding and the sense that external factors were driving the project were felt to be helpful.
- Challenges related to the multitude of central government initiatives and the lack of capacity of lower-tier authorities, in particular, to implement them were also identified as a key challenge. It was hoped that the project would both raise these issues with central government and facilitate joint working to share the workload created by these.
- Staff recruitment and retention and skills shortages were also identified as a capacity issue.

3.1.4.3 Interim Outcomes

It is early in the project to see outcomes as the project has been delayed by a number of factors:

- Delay in the administration of the funding from the then-ODPM.
- Delays caused by problems in the relationship with consultants.

As such, the project is at the end of the first stage of a five stage project. However, there was some tentative and anecdotal reporting of enhanced joint working arising from the project.

3.1.4.4 Good Practice and Lessons Learnt

Because the project is at an early stage in implementation there was only a small number of lessons learnt, related to the development and early implementation of the project. Our research has found that:

- Timescales and uncertainty in relation to the application for funding hampered the development, inclusivity and momentum of the project.
- The need to formalize agreements at an early stage to ensure that confusion does not arise between central and local government and between the different tiers at local level.

- The project team reported ‘feeling pressured’ to contract certain types of provision from specific providers.
- There are issues presented by working with consultants that need careful management, particularly in terms of the clarity of requirements and their commitment to the project.
- That inclusiveness is important for all partners to take ownership of the project and that this is important from an early stage of the project. At this point it is important for all parties to retain flexibility to secure wide buy-in.

3.2 Regional Pilots

3.2.1 Cumbria: Achieving Cumbrian Excellence

Title	Cumbria “ACE – Achieving Cumbrian Excellence”
Duration	June 2004 – March 2005
Funding	£25,000 for evaluation, (£150,000 spent on programme)
Theme	Partnership based, Targeted focus of weaker services,

“The added value of the Capacity Building Programme has been its cross district work and networks – otherwise we are in danger of being insular”

3.2.1.1 Background

Achieving Cumbrian Excellence operated across Cumbria, although the lead authority was Carlisle. The pilot operated as a partnership and had a Programme Board and Programme co-ordinator.

The Pilot began in response to issues highlighted in the CPA. IDeA met with the CEOs from each of the District Councils to discuss setting up the pilot as a county-wide improvement programme. It is a partnership between the 6 District Councils, the National Parks Authority, and Cumbria County Council. The pilot is managed by a project board with a representative from HR managers in each authority, members representatives and a programme coordinator. There is also a managers’ reference group which deals with operational matters. A bid for a second year of funding is being prepared.

The pilot seeks to supplement existing capacity building work in the councils and draw on existing experience. It aims to provide a programme of county-wide activities for the local authorities, respond to CPA issues and build individual and collective capacity. It also sets out to support joint working between members, officers and councils in response to the key challenges faced in Cumbria (e.g. housing, service delivery) and to strengthen partnership working across the region.

Four sub programmes were set up including:

- Member Development;
- Action Learning Sets for Accelerated Improvement;
- Learning from Best Practice – sharing experience with councils outside Cumbria;
- Local Delivery of National Capacity Building Programmes.

Member Development provides opportunities for members to work with their colleagues from other Cumbrian authorities and beyond to develop political, organisational and leadership skills. It involves residential events for executive members, workshops for non-executive members and a subsidy for 14 places at the IDeA Leadership Academy. The *Action Learning Sets for Accelerated Improvement* bring together senior managers from different authorities to meet for 8 days over a 9 month period to discuss priorities, identify knowledge gaps, good practice and to source external expertise and/or peer support. *Learning from Best Practice* seeks to share expertise and experience with councils outside Cumbria. It involves workshops, master classes, visits to good practice authorities and online learning. *Local Delivery of National Capacity Building Programmes* is focused on procurement, e-government and housing.

3.2.1.2 Issues faced by Local Authorities

Respondents report that it is not always easy for good practice in the region to be shared - communication difficulties and some tensions have existed between the District Councils and County Council.

The programme focuses on a number of areas 'of weakness' identified through the CPA process. These include:

- greater community engagement;
- partnership working;
- the community leadership role of elected members;
- prioritisation;
- performance management;
- procurement; and
- the strategic housing function.

In addition, additional priorities were also identified by the authorities including: developing a shared vision, increased equality and diversity, improving social and economic regeneration member/officer relations and agreeing common service delivery standards.

There is an explicit linking of CPA findings and the application of the Capacity Building Programme in the pilot.

3.2.1.3 Interim Outcomes

It is too soon for the pilot to report on final outcomes as it has only just come to the end of its first year. The programme's emphasis has shifted from training *per se* to policy development in specialist areas.

It was felt that the success of the *Learning from Good Practice* events depended on the different participants at the events and so reported outcomes have shown significant variation. However, the events have galvanised good practice and the most successful led to a new 'waste minimisation strategy' as the result of a successful meeting for members and officers across District Councils. The *Members Development* days were also felt to be very successful, demonstrating improved networking between local authorities and setting aside some barriers to collaboration and joint working. However, the *Action Learning Sets* experienced some difficulties with the first provider and a new provider was found. For each of these the local authorities decided on themes and priorities – this ensured that the pilot was better tailored to local needs.

The Capacity Building Programme has given the region a greater profile and more visibility. However, support for the Pilot was not universal and where there was criticism this was linked to the lack of focus on outcomes as opposed to workshops and networking. It was also felt that there were important constraints on the potential for sharing good practice arising out of the generally poor performance of many of the Districts in the County.

3.2.1.4 Good practice & lessons learned

The Programme was the first time all the Districts had come together for an initiative of this kind. Time was invested in achieving consensus at the outset of the pilot and this was invaluable to achieving success. There was also initial support from IDEA, GONW and the Audit Commission.

Respondents noted that the Pilot has raised unexpected issues and new opportunities for human resources and opened up new areas of collaboration. Having a post with a specific responsibility for delivering the programme was essential. Greater involvement of Chief Executives in the programme and Corporate Management was felt to be desirable. One respondent also suggested a need for greater integration with the Local Strategic Partnerships.

Variation in achievement for the *Learning from Good Practice* event suggested a need to target areas and participants and to have a stronger action plan which is more detailed in future. In addition, for the pilot as a whole, respondents noted that good practice needs to be obtained from outside the region as well as within it.

The experience of the pilot suggests that the question of engaging external providers needs careful attention with regard to the specification of what is required. However, external facilitation was also successful and valued. The experience of the pilot has raised issues surrounding a possible role for the Chief Executive group to act as a commissioning body.

Respondents agreed that there was need to focus the pilot's priorities and not have too many as this makes outcomes easier to realise. They are now considering changing its priorities: new priorities include: Gershon,

Organisational development, workforce planning and more focus on outcomes.

It is difficult to assess all outcomes in the short term as some of the activity will result in changes to inter-organisational practice and this needs assessing over a much longer period. More measurable goals need to be identified.

“A strong initial lead from the Chief Executives – this is essential – we need this high level commitment because we are driving the pilot programme across Cumbria”

3.2.2 Shropshire District Councils “Improvement Programme”

Title	Shropshire District Councils “Improvement Programme”
Duration	March 2004 – July 2004
Funding	£171,300
Theme	Performance and leadership

“The advantage of the Capacity Building Programme is that it allows us to respond to local needs and is not overly focused on process”

3.2.2.1 Background

The pilot brought together all the small District Councils and the Borough Council in Shropshire to develop their capacity to address the LGMA agenda through an improvement programme. The CPA peer assessment helped them identify the needs they had in common and start building a bid that addressed these needs. They also aligned themselves with the West Midlands Regional Capacity Building Strategy. A steering group was formed with either the Chief Executive or a senior representative from each District Council to identify shared issues.

District Councils identified four shared priorities for improvement:

- weaknesses in procurement;
- equality;
- management development; and
- performance management.

The steering group agreed to concentrate the pilot activities in the three key areas of the Capacity Building Programme. The pilot activities were grouped within three areas (see Box 2).

The improvement programme was delivered through tailored work with individual councils as well as generic county-wide activities. These facilitated information sharing and partnership working. The programme was delivered in two phases. Phase I included scoping, action planning, team building and

delivery. Phase II included monitoring and evaluation, outcome assessment and capturing good practice and learning.

Box 2: Shropshire Pilot, Areas of Focus

1. leadership and change management;

- top team – to help executive members and officers work as a team
- senior management – concentrates on visioning, modernising council services and providing skills needed for management

2. performance management and improvement planning;

- performance support including advice on performance management, improvement planning and training sessions

3. developing and making use of scarce skills

- developing procurement capacity and skills – through the procurement fitness check and procurement skills training
- equalities and social inclusion

The pilot is focused on achieving its goals rather than simply receiving funding. The Capacity Building Programme is therefore a means to address the capacity issues raised by the CPA.

3.2.2.2 Issues faced by Local Authorities

Respondents reported that self assessments and peer reviews raised a number of issues. Councils faced difficulties with prioritisation, managing whole council change and shifting from service provision to a community leadership role. Scrutiny, performance management, communication, corporate planning, procurement and equality and diversity issues were also identified. Furthermore:

- the small size of local authorities mitigated against cost efficiencies;
- coordination of local improvement by central government was a challenge even where this was regionalised through Government Offices. This reflects tensions between central priorities and local issues;
- local authorities involved in the pilot were all very different - there was a range of different CPA results (from poor to excellent) and this resulted in different individual needs and achievements;
- some authorities had a performance management structure in place, others did not.

3.2.2.3 Outcomes

The pilot has delivered the intended outcomes. Respondents have reported the greatest benefits with the training and networking at officers and members levels. However, the outcomes envisaged have changed during the course of the project as District Councils have had time to think about what they wanted to achieve. Respondents have also noted that:

- the pilot has helped achieve the wider LGMA programme and deal with procurement problems and realise efficiency savings;
- the pilot has also brought about co-ordination of HR strategies across the region - this was an unexpected (unplanned) outcome;
- District councils have realised the benefits of joint working and provided them with the opportunity for this, joint working is also considered as a possible solution to recruitment and retention difficulties;
- cross organisational working and individual sessions worked well in the Senior manager and development programme;
- the pilot has achieved positive results and has transformed work practices in some areas, including procurement, equality and performance management.

Our research has found that the Capacity Building Programme has operated as a lever for partnership working. It has enhanced the councils' ability to address issues in common and share good practice. It has also brought members and senior officers together.

As the result of the Capacity Building Programme, the Shropshire equality forum was set up with the help of the Local Strategic Partnership. The Capacity Building Programme has also helped Shropshire's District Councils meet equality standards.

3.2.2.4 Good practice & lessons learnt

From documentary review and interviews with a number of officials involved in the programme we have identified the following lessons and examples of good practice:

Lessons:

- scoping was insufficient in the design stage;
- different CPA results for the participating councils created issues for easy implementation of the pilot;
- lack of common definition for senior managers created some difficulties – a local lead for each project priority would help;
- a budget for project management would have been useful;
- conflicting demands on time sometimes created difficulties for participation in all steering group meetings;
- there was greater need for targeting staff (e.g. better adaptation to the practitioner audience to avoid quota filling);
- 6 months was too short a timescale for the project;
- evaluation is difficult as some projects bring about direct improvement while others have longer term goals that are difficult to identify in the short term (e.g. improving leadership skills);
- Assessment of an authority's progress has to be made against distance travelled rather than simply against goal achievement.

Good practices:

- Strong support and involvement from the Chief Executives was felt to be very important both as a champion and in raising the profile of the pilot;
- Flexibility within the pilot allowed District Councils to tailor their participation to meet their needs;
- All authorities shared goals from the beginning but joint scoping was hampered by the different CPA ratings and needs of the participating authorities;
- bringing small authorities together was successful;
- CPA peer assessment was useful as a diagnostic tool to identify needs;
- the strong steering group structure – this has since become a partnership with good providers; and
- commitment of the Chief Executives and their participation in the steering group that helped design the pilot was very important.

3.3 National Pilot – Locally Delivered

3.3.1 Shared Priorities - Older People

Title	Shared Priorities “Improving the quality of life for older people”
Duration	October 2004 – April 2006
Funding	£156,055
Theme	Finding new innovative ways for delivering services

“What we want is for the learning sets to come up with some good practice and some innovative ideas which they will then test out among themselves and then come up with some tool kits for other authorities to try out similar ideas”

3.3.1.1 Background

This pilot is very different to the other pilots discussed in the previous pages. The then-ODPM reclassified it as a *National Pilot – Locally Delivered*. Unlike the other pilots, the *Shared Priorities – Older People’s* programme was a pre-existing national Shared Priority co-ordinated by the LGA: because of this, it is difficult to describe this as a “pilot”. However, it does offer an alternative delivery model so perhaps may be seen as a pilot for the Capacity Building Programme in terms of helping identify which delivery strategies work best for capacity building.

Unlike the other pilots which generally link the Capacity Building Programme with achieving specific capacity building goals, improving CPA performance, and achieving the goals of the wider LGMA programme, the *Shared Priorities – Older People’s* programme regards the Capacity Building Programme as oriented more to a source of funding to add leverage to existing commitments. This approach has more in common with the

elements of the national programme where Capacity Building money works as a subsidy for pre-existing programmes provided by the Performance Partnership (central bodies).

The Shared Priorities were agreed between local and central government and the programme focuses on this. The central aim is to improve the quality of life of older people. The programme aims to support the participating authorities by providing opportunities for them to learn from each other, identify and implement good practice and be able to disseminate this to other authorities. Part of this process involves recognition of the need to achieve change in organisational cultures within the local system. Rather than being innovative, the programme aims to support a process whereby the participants are better able to become innovative themselves.

Funding from the Capacity Building Programme is being used to support the running of Action Learning Sets. These take place quarterly over an 18 month period. The programme involves the use of an external consultant to facilitate discussions and outside speakers to encourage participants to examine alternative approaches being used to engage with older people. Each Action Learning Set has a nominated 'buddy' whose role is to offer advice and highlight good practice. The Shared Priorities programme also supports consultations with older people themselves.

At the start, an open invitation was made to all local authorities and partners, such as the Department for Work and Pensions and primary care trusts. The Chief Executives were asked to nominate officers to be involved: Chief Executive commitment to the Action Learning Sets was a requirement for participation. Participating authorities also had to demonstrate support from local people and partner organisations. The Action Learning Sets had to follow these core values and objectives:

- refocus policy away from a view of frail older people towards achieving the well-being of all older citizens – i.e. a focus on independence and well being;
- facilitate a joined up approach that goes beyond social care and health services to allow older people to have a say in what would make a difference to their lives;
- build services and support for older people as citizens rather than merely consumers of health and social care services;
- engage older people at all stages in design and delivery of services.

Five learning sets were supported by Capacity Building funds:

- Engagement/prevention/outcomes;
- Prevention;
- Partnership working/inclusion/prevention;
- Whole systems approach;
- Link-Age.

The programme is still at a fairly early point in terms of delivery – the learning sets will be completed by March 2006.

3.3.1.2 Issues faced by Local Authorities

Officials involved in the pilot (centrally and locally) have identified a number of key challenges. These relate to joining up agendas effectively and breaking down silos, cultural barriers and regulatory obstacles. They feel that working in the field of older people is difficult because it spans the remit of a number of different central government departments with different rules and audit requirements applying for each. Accordingly local authorities face organisational barriers when working in this arena. However, over the past 12-18 months key organisations (DWP, LGA, ADSS, Audit Commission etc) are beginning to achieve some synergy in approach at the level of policies and strategies for older people.

Respondents also felt that there was still a difficulty with central government regarding older people's concerns as a matter for social services rather than something that needs mainstreaming across policy agendas. However, the new CPA assessment will have a requirement for local authorities to promote the well-being of older people and this will significantly alter this perception at the local level.

Local authorities also face the challenge of engineering cultural change in the workforce. Here was a feeling that currently the objective of improving the quality of life for older people tends to be missed where the target-culture takes over (e.g. A&E targets versus patient care).

The issue of recruitment and retention is also a difficulty for local authorities in this field. This relates particularly to the social care workforce. The lack of value attributed to these professions by society currently aggravates recruitment and retention difficulties (interviews with key officials). Furthermore the growing size of the older people population means that resources are increasingly being put under some strain and private sector provision is also insufficient (e.g. care homes, domiciliary care etc).

3.3.1.3 Current and Anticipated Outcomes

The programme is at a very early point in its delivery so it is difficult to talk about outcomes realised at this point. Only three meetings have been held so far. Each of the five sets aims to meet quarterly over an 18 month period.

- Respondents felt that the initial open meeting was critical for the success so far. All local authorities, the DWP and the "better government for older people" network were invited. More than 80 people from 60 authorities attended and 50 of these agreed to participate.
- Our research also found that the involvement of the Capacity Building Programme is not well known about among the participants.
- The participating authorities are each doing different things and this makes comparison of outputs problematic. However, all the participating authorities are ultimately aiming to achieve the outcome of improving the quality of life of individual older people at the local level.

- Discussions are currently being held about holding a dissemination event for good practice in Spring 2006. Roll out of the programme would have to be undertaken by the LGA or IDeA rather than at the level of individual council or regions. This creates a centralising focus which differs from the other pilots.

3.3.1.4 Good practice & lessons learned

The Action Learning set approach was borrowed from the NHS where it had worked quite well (collaborative learning sets). The alternative approach of using trail blazing authorities has been more common in the local government sector, however, the action learning set approach enables more than one authority to get involved from the outset.

Some early issues have been identified suggesting a need for better targeting of attendees. Respondents felt that this should prevent the current difficulties of people not coming to the Action Learning Sets or sending substitutes. A fundamental premise of Action learning sets is the need to work with the same people throughout and so this has particular importance for ensuring and achieving desired outcomes.

In addition, respondents also hoped for greater clarity of roles, especially for the IDeA consultants, the facilitators and the buddies. Better communication about the expectations of the steering group at the outset would also have been useful. The IDeA consultants performed a variety of roles facilitating discussion, reporting on progress and disseminating any good practice. Any relevant issues were reported back to the steering committee for addressing at the national level.

Respondents felt that expectations of the steering group were quite high at the outset and perhaps a little unrealistic. The steering group needed to accept that decisions about the kind of work the learning sets undertake must be taken at the level of the local authority and not centrally. This particularly relates to the involvement of DWP.

"It sometimes feels that the ODPM are doing things with older people's service, the Department of Health are doing things and the DWP are doing things, and they have the lead for now, and they don't always marry up or even talk to each other really"

4 Implications for Policy

Many of the Pilot Programmes had not been fully completed. Moreover, there are significant differences between the Pilot and the National Programmes in terms of their roles and structure. As such the potential applicability of any policy implications is naturally constrained and should therefore be treated with a degree of care. However, the CBP Pilots evaluation does raise a number of issues which might help to inform wider thinking about the development of both the Pilots and the National Programmes. It also raises some issues in relation to the coordination and administration of Pilot programmes more generally.

4.1 Pilot Issues

A number of the Pilots mentioned the need for clarity in the eligibility for subsidy and /or participation in Pilot programmes and the timescales involved in the acceptance of proposals and disbursement of funding.

4.2 Implications for National Programmes

A number of issues were raised by the Pilots evaluation that might have significance for the ongoing development and implementation of the National Programmes:

- The Pilots placed a strong emphasis on locally determined priorities in shaping their approach to capacity building. The logic of the national programmes is clearly different: to develop and subsidise access to a suite of off-the-shelf and more tailored programmes that could be drawn on to support local capacity building activities. However, it may be valuable to consider drawing attention to how this might be achieved, for instance by publicising examples of how authorities have done this in practice, to ensure that the maximum benefit is derived at local level from the national programmes. There is clearly scope for the fieldwork in the main phase of the evaluation to gather this evidence and to develop case study examples for use in publicity.
- The Pilots also placed a strong emphasis on organisational dynamics rather than merely individual staff development. While this focus is clearly present in the national programmes, both in programmes for organisational development and within staff development programmes (for instance in the inclusion of modules and tasks designed to 'spill-over' into organisational development), it might be worth reinforcing the importance of this, both to providers and authorities/participants.

- A key determinant of success in many of the Pilots was felt to be a commitment to the project at senior, even Chief Executive, level. Thought might be given as to how the national programmes might include mechanisms to secure senior level commitment and support from participating authorities to ensure that maximum organisational spill-over is gained.
- A number of the Pilots made comments regarding the central administration of the Pilot programme. Whilst these were not overly critical, it does raise the issue that the success of the CBP national programme will be to an extent dependent on central government capacity to deliver it.
- While there was no evidence of an actual problem, one of the Pilots raised the potential conflict of interest that arises from central bodies both advising local authorities on their capacity building needs and providing capacity building support. While there appeared to be no immediate cause for concern, there may be scope to give this issue further consideration.
- Where partnership working is to be encouraged, there needs to be recognition that this involves costs that are borne prior to the realisation of benefits. These costs are not just financial but also include the investment of time and inter-organisational trust. Thought might be given in the development of the national programmes to providing incentives to encourage this investment, especially given the potential efficiency benefits identified.
- Some of the Pilots reported confusion over eligibility criteria for access to the Pilot programme. Whilst these issues were reported in relation to the Pilots, and recent publicity material has helped to clarify this issue in relation to the national programme, there may still be scope to address this issue further as materials are updated and renewed. This would help to ensure that knowledge problems are not a barrier to the take-up and impact of CBP.

4.3 Implications for the development of the Pilot Programme

The case studies also highlighted several important implications for the development of the CBP Pilot programme:

- Roll-out needs to be carefully considered because the Pilots were always conceived of as responding to local issues. As such, the scope for roll-out and wider relevance is naturally constrained and should only be supported where there is identified and proven potential and demand.
- Where there is potential for wider applicability, especially at local, sub-regional or regional level, this may require additional financial or other support.

5 Summary Findings

Box 3: Summary of Key Findings

- The capacity issues cited by the Pilot programmes to an extent confirm the findings of the background research for the overall CBP about the capacity needs for local government.
- The Pilot programmes have sought to locate their work in relation to CPA findings and within the wider modernisation and improvement agendas.
- In this context, the Pilot projects have been focused on achieving locally defined goals and objectives.
- There was some evidence of uncertainties about eligibility for CBP support and how to use national programmes in a coordinated way at local level.
- The pilot programme recognises the importance of local circumstances in determining what works best locally. However, there is scope for some further central support in the dissemination of good practice.
- The implementation of central government initiatives presents major capacity challenges for local government.
- The Capacity Building Programme encourages pilots to seek collaborations and partnerships with other authorities and to roll out their experience at sub-regional/regional level.
- Some of the Pilots reported potential for efficiency and Value for Money savings, especially arising from joint working and the achievement of economies of scale.
- Some of the pilots have begun to tackle organisational cultural issues that create obstacles to change.
- Successful delivery relies on scoping, delivery time, local design and leadership, commitment of the CEO and careful targeting of resources and training programmes.
- There are uncertainties over sustainability of pilot initiatives but pilots have certain potential for roll out.
- Monitoring and evaluation procedures need formalising.

6 Appendix 1 – List of Capacity Building Pilot Programmes

Table 3: CBP Pilot Programmes

	Organisation	Activity	Level
1	Worcestershire Partnership	“improving the effectiveness and efficiencies of community strategies and LSPs in a two-tier area”	Local/ sub regional
2	Welland Partnership	“Shared services initiative”	Local/ sub regional
3	“Towards an Excellent Service Group”, Sport England, Nottingham	“management Improvement model for sports arts and leisure”	Local/ sub regional
4	Blackpool Borough Council	“Increasing Capacity and delivering Improvements” “Improving the corporate management team”	Local/ sub regional
5	Association of Greater Manchester Authorities and partnership working	“post CPA – support for AGMA authorities” supporting AGMA authorities	Local/ sub regional
6	Allerdale Borough Council, Barrow in Furness Borough Council Carlisle City Council, Eden District Council, South Lakeland Council	“Collaborative District Working”. Capacity building programme for Cumbria Peer support, action learning sets, sharing of best practice, staff development	Local/ sub regional
7	Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council	“destination Doncaster” web based portal for job seekers and employers	Local/ sub regional

Table 3: CBP Pilot Programmes			
8	Burnley Borough Council East Lancashire	“Support for East Lancashire” Single development programme	Local/ sub regional
9	Sussex training consortium	Management development project Staff development	Local/ sub regional
10	Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	“Performance Breakthrough”, development of a “performance management culture”	Local/ sub regional
11	Hampshire and the Isle of Wight	LSP, Training and development in strategic partnership working and community strategies	Local/ sub regional
12	Tower Hamlets, Brent and Greenwich	“Pathways Programme” renamed as Race for success”	Local/ sub regional
13	South Tyneside Council	NE Innovative Regional Pilot project	Local/ sub regional
14	London Borough of Newham (with Newham LSP)	“Virtual Network Analysis Pilot”	Local/ sub regional
15	Nottinghamshire, City of Nottingham and Cheshire Fire Services	“A model Performance Management Framework for the fire and Rescue Service”	Local/ sub regional
16	Peak District national Park Authority	“performance improvement partnership”	Local/ sub regional
17	Portsmouth City Council	“Future Leaders”	Local/ sub regional
18	North Kesteven District Council	“Understanding And Addressing Diversity And Equality Issues Facing District Councils In Lincolnshire”	Local/ sub regional
19	South Kesteven District Council/East Lindsey District Council, North Kesteven District Council	“improving managerial and political leadership” Leadership assessment, cultural change and personal development competency assessment and training and development	Local/ sub regional

Table 3: CBP Pilot Programmes

20	London Borough of Southwark	“support for Southwark council”	Local/ sub regional
22	TAES		Local/ sub regional
23	NE (5 councils led by South Tyneside)	IMPACT Project	Local/ sub regional
24	Shropshire district councils	Leadership Performance Management and Skills	Regional
25	Cumbria,	“Evaluation of the ACE programme” achieving Cumbrian Excellence peer support, staff development through action learning sets	Regional
26	Kent and Swindon	Kent and Swindon Franchising	Regional
27	East Midlands EMRLGA	Member Development	Regional
28	CIPFA, East Midlands	Professional training programmes	Regional
29	YHALA	Local Government improvement	Regional
30	East of England Regional Assembly	Building Capacity Bridges Project	Regional
31	North East Council Improvement Network	Council Improvement	Regional
32	WMLGA		Regional
33	Devon Improvement Group	Council Improvement	Regional
34	North West Learning network	network	Regional
35	Essex personnel Officers forum	HR network	Regional
36	ALG		Regional
37	Suffolk		Regional

Table 3: CBP Pilot Programmes			
38	South West Improvement Partnership	Council Improvement	Regional
39	Shared Priority – Older People (LGA)	“Improving the quality of life for older people”	National Pilot - Locally Delivered