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# **Evaluating City Strategy: Key messages from the First National Evaluation Update**

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# Structure of presentation

- Evaluating City Strategy
- The first National Evaluation Update (April 2007 to March/April 2008)
  - *aim of the update*
  - *sources of evidence*
- Key findings
  - *overall conclusions*
  - *selected implementation and delivery issues*
  - *issues for the national evaluation*
- Going forward
  - *quantitative data analysis*
  - *next steps*

# Evaluating the City Strategy

- “...effective *policy making* must be a learning process which involves finding out from experience what works and what does not and making sure that others can learn from it too. This means that new policies must have evaluation of their effectiveness built into them from the start ...” ([Professional Policy Making in the 21st Century](#), Cabinet Office, 2000)
- The evaluation should be capable of:
  - capturing evidence about processes of change
  - capturing evidence of local differences in governance, delivery and performance
  - providing evidence about (sustainable) outcomes
  - providing transferable lessons/good practice

# Sources of evidence

- City Strategy Business Plans
- AEA updates (from Warwick IER, CRESR, IES and Shared Intelligence) for each of the 15 CSPs covering:
  - CS activity and implementation
  - Local evaluation plans and progress
  - Emerging issues
- The City Strategy Learning Network
- Department for Work and Pensions City Strategy Implementation Team (London)
- Department for Work and Pensions City Strategy Evaluation Team (Sheffield)
- DWP Tabulation Tool and data from Nomis

# Overall conclusions

- All 15 CSPs have made progress (some more considerable than others) in setting up working partnerships and implementing their Business Plans
- In a number of CSPs there is emerging evidence relating to partnership working, although it is too early to draw definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of different partnership arrangements
- There is no basis at present for the national meta-evaluation to draw conclusions about the impact or overall effectiveness of City Strategy *BUT* there is learning that is relevant to policy
- Tensions are apparent between localisation and centralisation

# Implementation and delivery issues (1): Making partnerships work

- Variations in history / experience of partnership working and in resources / staffing
- The importance of:
  - clarity of roles and remit of partners
  - key individuals
- Partnerships worked well where there was a *clear will* for stakeholders to work together
- Composition of partnerships (too many / too few / absence / levels of commitment) can hinder implementation and make it difficult to persuade other partners to get involved
- Some difficulties where there were *multiple partnerships* – particularly where CSP overlapped, but was not congruent with, existing partnerships *BUT* where aims and priorities of partnerships match such difficulties can be overcome

# Implementation and delivery issues (2): Leadership of CSPs and Staffing

- Location of the lead organisation in CSPs appears to have an influence on working arrangements and communications within partnerships and 'buy in' from other organisations
- Variations in leadership arrangements – including:
  - Community Planning Partnership
  - Local authorities
  - LSC
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Enterprise / Development Agency
  - Community Interest Company
- Advantages and disadvantages associated with each
- The origins of leadership vary and can affect partners' commitment
- Staffing: different models; numbers and capacity; issue of staff changes, short-term contracts and secondments – implications for local evaluation

# Implementation and delivery issues (3): Targeting: beneficiary and spatial

- Beneficiary targeting – some variations across CSPs reflecting local circumstances and priorities
- Spatial targeting - variations across CSPs:
  - explicit
  - implicit
  - nonein Business Plan and/or in practice
- Spatial targeting can focus CSP activities on areas where worklessness is greatest *BUT* not all of the most disadvantaged live in areas with high levels of worklessness
- A key question: *Does spatial targeting lead to greater impacts in the most disadvantaged areas?*
- Lack of some indicators disaggregated by beneficiary sub-groups / at micro area level

# Implementation and delivery issues (4): Different programmatic approaches

## *Different dominant approaches across CSPs:*

- Programme approach – associated with inter-agency working, bringing together funding streams, joint commissioning and changing the way resources are used
- Area-based commissioning
- A suite of projects
- Building on an existing project

## *Commonalities – organisation of activities around:*

- Customer engagement
- Employer engagement

## *Branding – variations in approach:*

- Providing an overall identity for the CSP – role in raising awareness:
  - for partners
  - for partners and customers
- “No need for the customer to see the plumbing”

# The wider policy context and measuring success

## *The wider policy context:*

- Range of other (new) policies / initiatives / funding arrangements impacting on CS
- Tensions between localisation and centralisation
- Are CSPs developing in response to local needs or are they vehicles to try out national policy initiatives?
- Where does City Strategy begin and end?

## *Measuring success:*

- Quantitative outcomes
- Distance travelled and soft outcomes
- Process issues (qualitative)
- Cultural change takes time

# The importance of Local Evaluation

- Local Evaluation findings are a key part of the evidence base for the National Evaluation
- To date the focus of AEA support has been on advice and guidance in support of local evaluation plans
- The next 12 months will see a shift of focus to an assessment of processes involved in CS and its impacts
- There is variation across CSPs in:
  - commitment to evaluation
  - resources (monetary and otherwise) available for evaluation
  - speed at which evaluation plans have been implementedthis raises concerns about the comprehensiveness of the evidence base available to the national meta-evaluation

# Quantitative data analysis

Data access issues have curtailed quantitative analysis elements of the National Evaluation of CS to data - *BUT*

- The National Evaluation Update includes some analysis of progress towards nationally determined **targets** – recently updated to November 2007 – highlighting different trends and trajectories across CSPs
- IER is working collaboratively with DWP on developing analyses of the DWP **Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS)**. This ‘in-house’ analysis will provide contextual longitudinal analysis of benefit claimants in CSP areas vis-à-vis other areas and to investigate issues such as:
  - sustainability of moves off benefits
  - transience of populations

# Next steps (1)

- *The recently announced extension of CS places a premium on demonstrating the effectiveness of the initiative during its first two years*
- AEAAs will continue their dual role of:
  - feeding information into the National Evaluation
  - supporting Local Evaluation activity
- Support for CSPs:
  - encouragement, advice and guidance
  - adding value to existing monitoring and evaluation
- Support for national meta-evaluation:
  - cross CSP working on *key themes* to support the National Evaluation
  - *case studies* of good practice and policy learning

## Next steps (2)

- National meta-evaluation will:
  - collate and synthesise evidence from CSPs
  - collate and synthesise evidence from cross-cutting themes and case studies
  - conduct quantitative analysis relating to CS outcomes and impacts
- Second Update report scheduled for November 2008:
  - likely to cover delivery, engagement, implementation of evaluation plans, early evaluation evidence (process, engagement, outputs, etc)