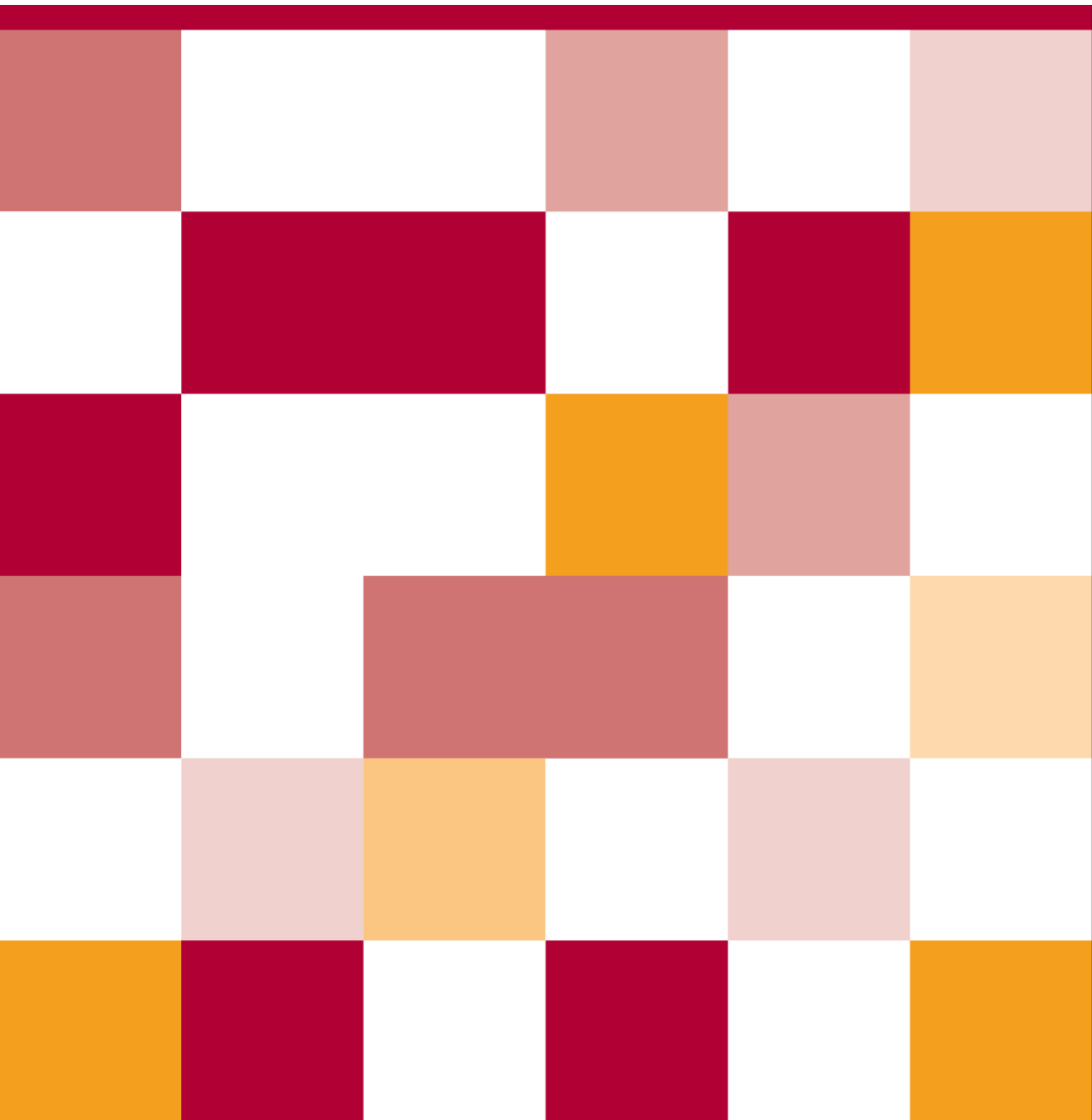




Briefing note for Local Strategic Partnerships: NI 6: 'PARTICIPATION IN REGULAR VOLUNTEERING'





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Briefing note for Local Strategic Partnerships on NI 6: 'PARTICIPATION IN REGULAR VOLUNTEERING'

The new local government performance framework

The new local government performance framework includes a single set of the 198 National Indicators. These indicators cover all the national priority outcomes which local authorities will be responsible for delivering, either on their own or in partnership with others. These indicators will be used to measure performance in all areas over the next three years.

New local area agreements (LAAs) form the heart of the performance framework. They are the agreement between central government, local authorities and their partners to improve services and the quality of life in a place. Although performance will be measured in an area against all 198 indicators, new LAAs will be the only vehicles for agreeing shared targets with central government. Each LAA will have up to 35 national priority targets with specific improvement targets set for each.

More information on the new local government performance framework can be found on the Communities and Local Government (CLG) website at: www.communities.gov.uk

National Indicator 6: Participation in regular volunteering.

This briefing note is to provide Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) with more information on one of the 198 National Indicators: NI 6 – '**Participation in regular volunteering.**' and complements information on these indicators provided by CLG.

The note is structured as follows:

1. Why NI 6 has been included in the National Indicator set
2. How performance against NI 6 will be measured
3. Guidance on agreeing NI 6 performance measures.

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**Office of the Third Sector
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A. WHY NI 6 HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL INDICATOR SET

What is the overall purpose of NI 6?

NI 6 will measure the levels of volunteering within a local authority area, specifically the proportion of individuals undertaking regular (once a month) formal¹ volunteering.

Why has this indicator been included in the National Indicator set?

This indicator has been included as a government priority in the National Indicator set in recognition of:

- **The importance of volunteering in empowering individuals.** Volunteering builds the confidence of individuals and is often a means of helping individuals build skills and experiences that may lead onto formal training or employment.
- **The importance of volunteering in contributing to strong communities.** Volunteering contributes to increased community cohesion, the Government's Citizenship survey shows a positive correlation between volunteering and the trust that individuals feel towards others in their community².
- **The importance of volunteering in adding value in the delivery of public services.** Volunteers can enhance public services and are active in a range of public service settings. These include schools, hospitals and the criminal justice system. Their involvement ranges from mentoring in schools, providing social care support to individuals and visiting those in custody.

Why should LSPs choose this indicator for inclusion in their LAAs?

A culture of volunteering will be an asset to each local authority area and the national level benefits demonstrated above are also applicable locally. LSPs might want to make NI 6 a specific priority where:

- **They need to address historical weaknesses in this area:** Annex A includes a regional breakdown of the level of formal volunteering per Government Office Region since 2001, providing an indication of the regions that perform 'better' in relation to levels of volunteering. Local authorities will also have information based on previous local indicators on volunteering.

¹ Formal volunteering is defined as giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations which support social, environmental, cultural or sporting objectives.

² Kichen, Michealson and Wood (June 2006) 2005 Citizenship Survey: cross-cutting themes

- **They have specific issues working with 'hard to reach groups':** in local areas volunteering may contribute to supporting hard to reach groups. The use of volunteer mentors for example can be particularly effective with those at risk of offending.
- **They wish to involve the local population in the delivery of public services:** Volunteers are often involved in supporting local services, adding value, by performing tasks alongside paid staff. The use of volunteers also ensures that individuals become more involved in the services they use.
- **Volunteering could contribute to a range of other policy priorities:** Volunteering has been shown to contribute to improved community cohesion and civic participation. Volunteering can also be used as a stepping stone to paid employment and training for individuals not in education, employment or training.

Performance against NI 6 will be measured and reported in every area, whether or not it has been included as an LAA priority. This means that every area should give careful consideration to the steps that it needs to take to improve performance.

What is the relationship between NI 6 and NI 7?

There is some overlap between NI 6 and NI 7 (the environment for a thriving third sector), but they are far from substitutes.

NI 7 includes the full range of third sector organisations, many of which do not involve or rely on volunteers, for example social enterprises or local infrastructure bodies.

NI 6 includes volunteering in its entirety, not just within in the third sector, but the substantial amounts of volunteering taking place in the public and private sector, as demonstrated in the 2007 national survey of volunteering and charitable giving³

The two indicators are markedly different and their merits should be considered separately rather than as substitutes.

³

Low, Ellis Paine, Butt and Smith (2007) Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving.

B. HOW PERFORMANCE AGAINST NI 6 WILL BE MEASURED

How will performance against this indicator be measured?

Performance against NI 6 will be measured in the new Place Survey. The survey is currently being developed by Communities and Local Government. The survey will be used to measure a number of the national indicators and will use a postal survey to gauge individuals' views of the local area.

The question that will measure NI 6 will be based on the questions used in the Government's Citizenship survey. The Citizenship survey measures the level of volunteering on a national basis. The Citizenship survey is a face to face survey and as such the question used in the Place Survey will be tailored to ensure that it is appropriate for a postal survey format. The question will also be different from the majority of questions in the Place Survey as it will measure activity undertaken rather than an individual's perception of their area.

Where this indicator is chosen for inclusion within an LAA, LSPs and Government Offices (GOs) will be responsible for negotiating an improvement target increase across that period.

Geographical coverage

Unlike many of the indicators being measured in the Place Survey, NI 6 will not be restricted to activities within the Local Authority boundary. Volunteering will in many cases take place in a location outside of an individual's local area. The measure for NI 6 will be based on the location of the volunteer and not on the location of the volunteering they are undertaking.

C. GUIDANCE ON AGREEING A PERFORMANCE TARGET

There is no baseline for this new indicator. How should LSPs determine if NI 6 should be a priority?

The definition for NI 6 is different to the previous Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) on volunteering. The BVPI indicator measured the proportion of individuals formally volunteering for 2 hours per week. The overwhelming feedback from Local Authorities was that the amount of time volunteering stipulated in this indicator was too high for most forms of volunteering. This led to under-reporting of volunteering.

The change to the indicator means that in common with other indicators in the National Indicator set, there is no baseline data for this indicator. In addition the Citizenship Survey cannot produce statistically sound data at a Local Authority level.

Areas will need to use other methods to determine whether NI 6 should be a priority for their area. This could be done in a number of ways, such as: -

- Analysis of existing data from the previous indicator;
- Using the Government Office Region figures for regular formal volunteering from the Citizenship survey;
- Consultation with local volunteering and third sector organisations, such as Volunteer Centres and/ or Council for Voluntary Services;
- An audit of volunteer involvement in the delivery of local authority services.

The baseline will be set by the first wave of the Place Survey, to be conducted in Autumn 2008.

How should improvement targets be set in the absence of a baseline?

We advise that the most suitable and robust improvement target should be a measurable increase in the indicator score between the first and second waves of the survey. By 'measurable' we mean a statistically significant increase – an increase that is unlikely to be the result of sampling variation.

Will there be any flexibility in the way that improvement targets are set?

We have recommended a measurable improvement as the most suitable and robust improvement target. However, precise improvement targets will be agreed in negotiations between areas and the relevant Government Office, the improvement that is needed should be agreed in advance and verifiable.

Annex A: Formal volunteering at least once in the last year by Government Office Region

Percentages

		2001	2005	April- September 2007
		%	%	%
Formal volunteering in the last				
12 months	North East	28	33	37
	North West	38	42	39
	Yorkshire and the Humber	34	41	42
	East Midlands	39	47	40
	West Midlands	41	44	45
	East of England	38	48	50
	London	39	42	40
	South East	42	48	50
	South West	44	47	47
	All England	39	44	44

Figures in bold indicate a significant difference between 2001 and April-September 2007

Between 2005 and April-September 2007 none of the changes are significant

Source: Citizenship Survey, Communities and Local Government