

# Delivering NI8

Analysis of intelligence gathering undertaken with 25 local authorities with NI8 in their local area agreement



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# Introduction

**As part of our statutory duty to co-operate, Sport England aims to help local authorities develop high quality sporting opportunities.**

In particular, we work with local authorities who have included NI8 – the national indicator for increasing adult participation in sport and active recreation – in their local area agreement (LAA).

In July 2009 we commissioned a piece of work to gather intelligence from a sample of 25 local authorities. This study will help us form an overview of how NI8 has been adopted and taken forward by local authorities, and help us give them more support.

A questionnaire formed the basis for discussion between Sport England and 25 selected local authorities across England with between one and four from each region taking part.

The sample comprised 18 single-tier authorities, (including unitary, London borough and metropolitan authorities) and seven county councils. For the purpose of this report the distinction will be between single-tier and county councils.

Four county council interviews included both the local authority and the county sports partnership (CSP) lead, two with just the CSP lead and one with just the local authority.

Details of the local authorities that took part together with their current performance against NI8 results can be found in Appendix A, available on [www.sportengland.org/laa](http://www.sportengland.org/laa)

The questionnaire captured information about how local authorities deliver NI8 with specific reference to resources, delivery and performance management.

A number of local authorities provided additional documentary evidence and where possible, this has been included as annexes to this report, available on [www.sportengland.org/laa](http://www.sportengland.org/laa).

This report presents the findings from the 25 interviews that took place in August and September 2009.

Findings are reported under the following headings:

- Executive summary
- Strategic overview
- Resources
- Delivery
- Performance management
- Interaction and support from Sport England
- Appendices (available separately on our website at [www.sportengland.org/laa2](http://www.sportengland.org/laa2))

**We would like to thank  
all those local authorities  
who took part and shared  
their information and  
experiences so generously**

# Executive summary

**This report assesses the progress local authorities who adopted NI8 have made in increasing participation, as well as identifying how they overcame any barriers.**

While we did not set out to examine the distinction between single-tier and two-tier ways of working, differences emerged and we have highlighted these.

Of the 25 local authorities, all of whom included NI8 in their LAA, 21, or 84%, cited health as the fundamental reason. This is partly because health connects to partners' wider priorities such as tackling health inequalities and obesity.

Factors such as a strong evidence base and measurement tool in the Active People Survey (APS), good advocacy supported by Sport England material, and a history of delivery under previous LAAs also encouraged local authorities to include NI8.

In most single-tier areas, the local authority was the named lead partner for NI8. In two-tier areas, the CSP was responsible.

Generally, single-tier areas had a greater range and number of partners working on NI8 than in two-tier areas. There was no evidence to suggest this affected the amount of funding brought in, but there was evidence to indicate that advocacy was more complex in two-tier areas.

Where an overarching delivery plan was used it seemed to result in stronger partnerships, particularly if the plan was backed up by effective monitoring systems.

That said, a lack of additional information on proxy or indirect measures to supplement APS data meant that often, performance monitoring was cursory and did not lead to direct improvement activity being defined. Furthermore, senior managers and members did not always understand what the data was telling them.

The report identified that 84% (21 out of 25) of local authorities were examining ways to improve partnership working and the co-ordination of funding, stressing the importance of continuous engagement.

Local authorities were keen to formalise this with new strategies and delivery plans. This should help to improve performance.

Twenty-two national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) were named as potential or actual deliverers by local authorities who were able to demonstrate partnership working with them. However, they wanted further help from Sport England in brokering relationships with NGBs. This process needs to be accelerated.

There was concern about the potential threat of efficiency savings to local services, and it was not known whether levels of investment into sport could be maintained, as it is a non-statutory service. Many expected that achieving NI8 with limited budgets would be a challenge.

Local authorities reported using APS and Sport England's Market Segmentation data widely both to analyse performance and aid delivery. However, lack of capacity and understanding of the data for some authorities meant that without further training and support, they will not be able to take full advantage of these evidence-based resources.

Local authorities identified the following three areas of support they need from Sport England:

- Active People Survey – assistance in being able to use the data and tools Sport England provides, for example, presenting data in a more meaningful way and using market segmentation
- More advocacy material and case studies demonstrating the benefits of sport across wider agenda such as health, cohesion, etc
- Accelerating the brokering of relationships between local authorities and NGBs.

# Strategic overview

**The questionnaire asked about the strategic fit of NI8 and how it related to local authorities' overarching strategies. There were five themes:**

- Sustainable community strategy
- Local area agreements
- LAA lead partner
- LAA delivery partners
- Local strategic partnerships.

## Sustainable community strategy

All 25 local authorities included sport in their sustainable community strategy (SCS). In the majority of cases, they referred to physical activity rather than sport.

It was significant that 18 local authorities included sport under the broader themes of health or health and wellbeing rather than culture (five), sport (one) or stronger communities (one).

Five authorities had sport as a cross-cutting theme in their SCS with reference to other thematic partnerships such as children and young people, older people, and safer communities. Economic and inclusive communities were also mentioned.

## Local area agreements

The arrival of LAAs placed an increased emphasis on delivery outcomes through partnerships in the SCS.

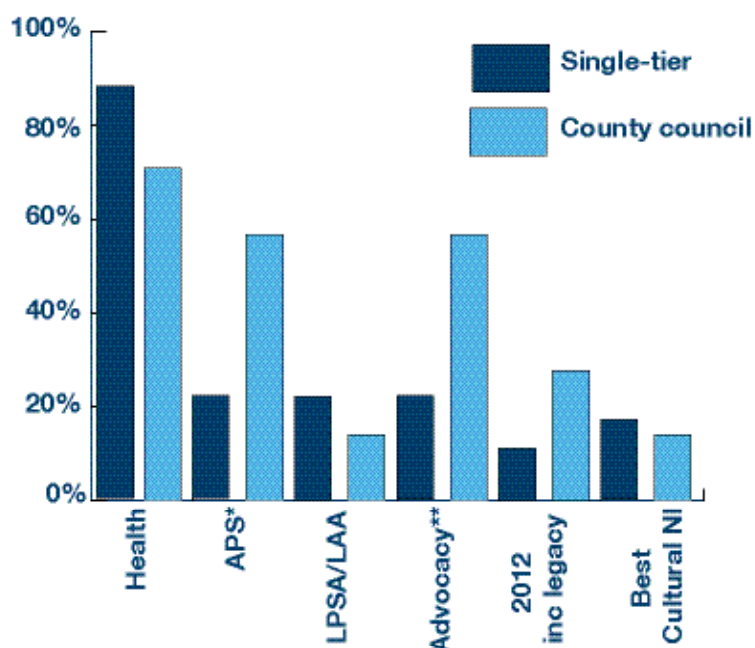
Local authorities gave a number of reasons for including NI8 in their LAA. However, the clear driver from 21 of 25 respondents (84%) was health. Health deprivation; rising obesity levels; low participation levels

including inactivity in the over 55s, and all associated causes of mortality contributed to the selection of NI8.

Figure 1 details all the reasons given by the respondents in percentage terms.

Analysis suggests that two-tier areas needed more advocacy and evidence to make the case for NI8's inclusion in the LAA than single-tier areas. This might be due to two-tier areas' more complex relationships that required greater engagement with partners.

**Figure 1**  
**Reasons for NI8 in LAA**



\* Includes reference to strong evidence base

\*\* Includes general advocacy, political support and championing role

LAA lead partner

Further questions were asked about which organisation took on lead partner responsibility for delivery of NI8.

Of the 25 respondents, the lead partner with overall responsibility for delivery sat wholly with the local authority for 16 of the 18 single-tier areas.

In two of these cases, the position was jointly held with the primary care trust (PCT).

In the remaining two single-tier authorities, responsibility was with the community sport network (CSN). One was previously a county council but is now a unitary authority.

All of the eight county councils named the CSP as lead, including one jointly with the local authority and PCT.

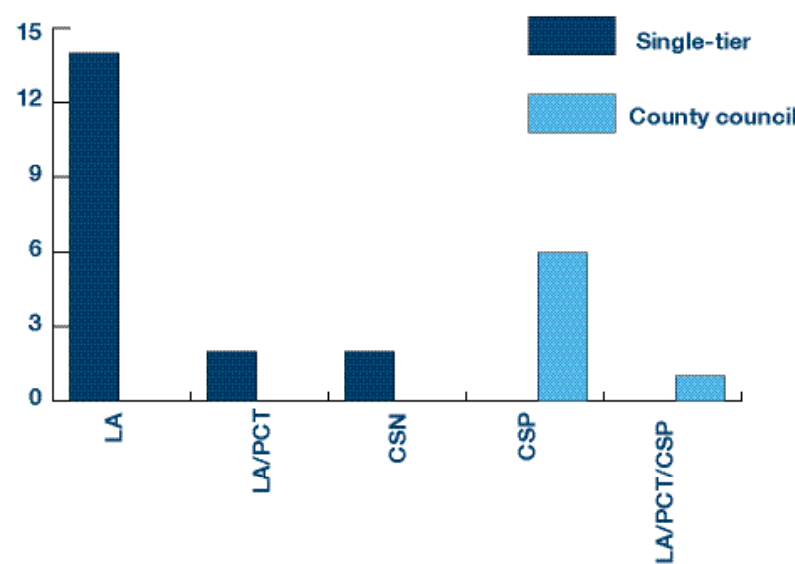
Figure 2 provides details.

There was a clear distinction in lead partners between single-tier and county councils, with single-tier authorities aligned to local authority leads (89%) and county councils aligned to CSP leads (100%).

We found that despite the variations between single-tier and county councils, all felt that responsibility was assigned to organisations best placed to have an impact on delivery and fulfil the LAA requirements.

Respondents expressed concerns that in two-tier areas, ceding responsibility for delivery to the CSP reinforced the view that the county council was removed from the process rather than being integral to it.

Figure 2  
NI8 LAA lead partner





## LAA delivery partners

The questionnaire also asked respondents about the involvement of partners in helping to deliver the LAA.

These were partners who were not the lead but whom nevertheless formally signed-up to contribute to achieving NI8 targets.

There were variations in the number of delivery partners in single-tier and two-tier areas.

On the whole, single-tier authorities appeared to have more partners (up to seven) than two-tier areas (up to four) and the partnership base was generally wider.

Figure 3 shows in percentage terms the number of partners involved in delivery of NI8 in the LAA.

In addition to the data in Figure 3, single-tier authorities also reported strong links with other organisations such as JobCentre Plus, the Probation Service and Community Safety Partnerships.

It appeared that single-tier authorities were more easily able to co-ordinate and agree shared objectives across agencies both internally and externally, than in two-tier areas. This could be because the single authority structure is perhaps easier to operate in and less complex than in two-tier areas that have districts to draw together as well as other partners.

While this was a positive outcome for single-tier authorities, there was insufficient evidence to conclude at this stage that it made a noticeable difference to increasing participation or the levels of funding the LAA attracted from partners. We report further on this under *Resources* on page eight.

The questionnaire also asked authorities about the willingness of partners to enter into the LAA process and formally commit to partnership working.

Sixteen out of 18 (89%) single-tier authorities said there were none or few difficulties in getting partners to sign-up, compared to three out of seven (43%) county councils.

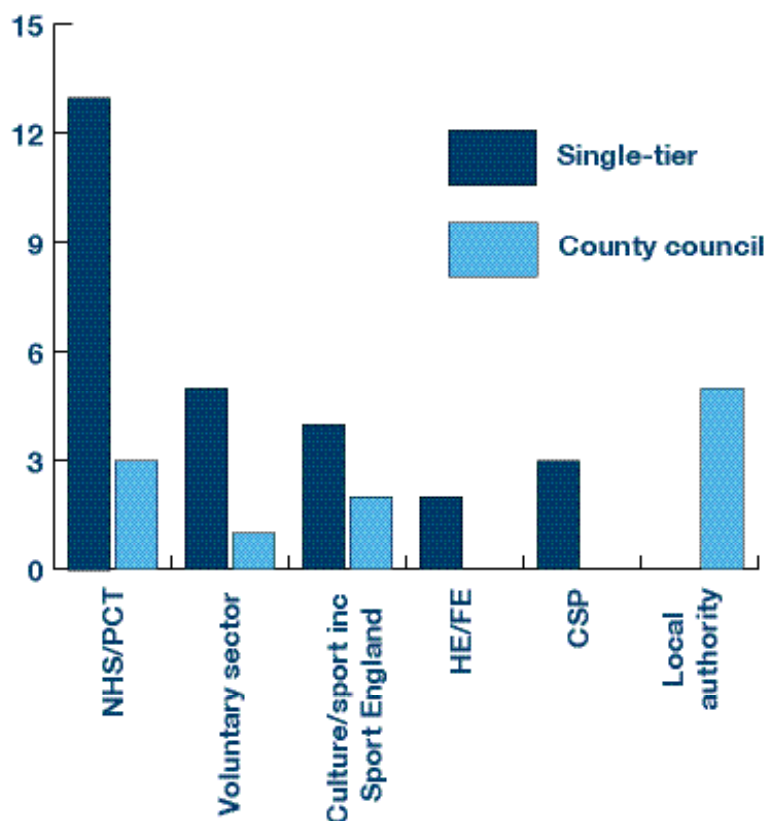
Two single-tier authorities said it was difficult getting external partners to see the contribution their organisation could make to NI8 and that furthermore, the target of 4% from baseline was particularly challenging and off-putting.

In the four county council cases, three found it difficult to engage the health sector. This tended to be a longstanding issue although one authority does receive funding for ad-hoc projects.

One other local authority reported that it struggled to get district councils to buy into its LAA, especially where they followed their own rather than the county's SCS or LAA. While this authorities' case was the only specific reported drawback of two-tier working, this issue was referred to in other answers by CSP leads in our sample of seven county councils.

Generally, two-tier working was considered a challenge where NI8 was in the county council's LAA. This was because the NI8 delivery lead sat with the CSP in all cases, which left the CSP with the task of brokering a two-tier relationship.

**Figure 3**  
**NI8 LAA partners**



Although the study found evidence of good relations based on negotiation and understanding, this was rarely formalised. When individuals moved on to new roles, informal agreements were at risk of breaking down.

When it comes to delivery, respondents pointed out that if partnerships were to work effectively, engagement had to involve more than partners simply signing up to the LAA.

Two local authorities reported that partners had signed-up to support their work but that this commitment had not transferred into financial or practical support.

For one local authority, this left it struggling to fund a joint working initiative single-handedly.

On the whole, many of the respondents said partnership working was important to achieve NI8 and that engagement was a continuous process - keeping partners engaged while pursuing new opportunities.

## Local strategic partnerships

The advent of the LAA has made the role of the local strategic partnership (LSP) key to its delivery. LSPs set strategy and priorities through the SCS and LAA and deliver through individual partners and themed partnerships. The questionnaire attempted to define which LSP themes the NI8 target was aligned to and whether NI8 leads felt able to influence them.

Figure 4 provides details of the relevant themes.

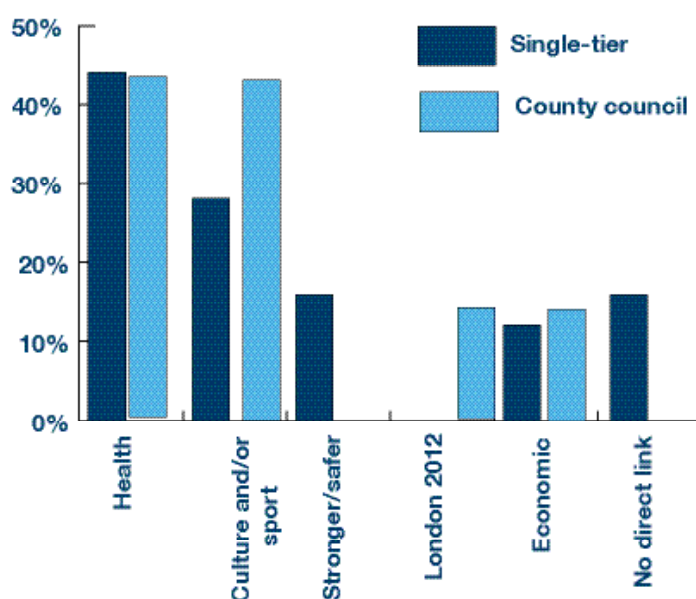
We found there were no significant differences between single-tier and county council alignment with LSP themes and in addition, some local authorities were connected to more than one theme.

The majority of respondents said they were satisfied with the influence they had within these themes and that in a few cases, the lead for their particular theme was also on the main LSP board. This was more by virtue of the role the person had within the local authority but nevertheless, it was welcomed as a positive step.

However, there were three examples of lack of connectivity and where this occurred, it resulted on reliance upon others to advocate on their behalf:

- One local authority reports through its Cultural Partnership to the Safer Communities LSP thematic group. Unfortunately, sport and physical activity is part of the Healthier Communities theme to which it has no representation despite its efforts to alter this
- A second local authority was reliant upon the manager of its outsourced sports service to raise issues at senior management level in the LSP thematic group where it had representation that the local authority did not
- A third local authority reported that its LSP was not considered strong enough to have either the connections or accountability to encourage and succeed at partnership working.

**Figure 4**  
**NI8 LSP theme**





# Resources

**This section of the questionnaire asked about the resources available to help deliver NI8.**

We collected generic information about resources that gave an overview as opposed to specific financial information. This made detailed analysis difficult and it was not possible to ascertain if funding amounted to more from one source than another or whether all partners contributed financially.

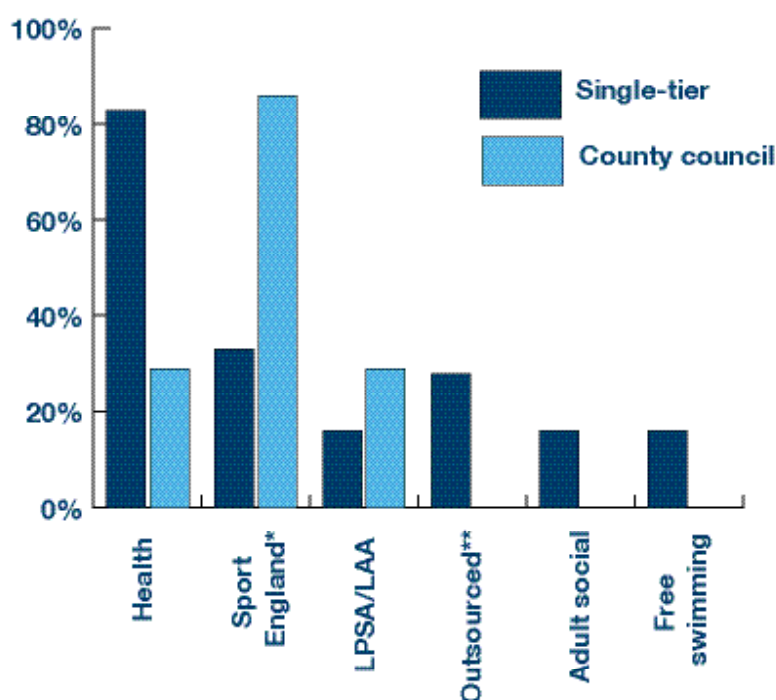
Of those local authorities that expressed a general opinion about funding, there was strong agreement that it was a continual search to access larger pots of money and that ad-hoc funding was necessary to fill gaps.

A few reported that the resources it secured were insufficient to deliver the full range of activities it had wanted to carry out and that further efficiency savings were expected. Four local authorities stated that funding was a long-term issue that they did not expect to improve.

Again, there was a contrast in that a few local authorities had secured a wide range of funding sources with only one local authority confirming that resources were sufficient.

While we were unable to examine the range of funding sources in any great depth we found that generally, the numbers of funding sources were equal for both single-tier and county councils. However, the spread of those sources was markedly different.

**Figure 5**  
**Sources of NI8 funding**



**\*Includes Sport England: CIF, CSN and Sport Unlimited funding**

**\*\* Refers to outsourced leisure service**

Figure 5 details the main (but not all) sources of funding.

We reported in the *Strategic Overview* section on page four on the difference in the number and types of partners signed up to deliver NI8.

The sources of funding further highlighted the clear variation and reflected the extent to which partners were involved in the LAA.

In all cases where the PCT/NHS had signed up to the LAA, funding and/or funding and support had been forthcoming. Indeed, there were three local authorities (including one county council) that reported receiving funding from the NHS/PCT in spite of not having them formally signed up to the LAA.

All three stated that joint funding and a good working relationship was the norm and they felt it unnecessary to formalise the arrangement.

## Pooled resources

While the pooling of resources was not a specific question in the survey, 13 of 25 respondents mentioned this. Three respondents were single-tier authorities that said pooled resources were widely used and this had a positive benefit on achieving greater outcomes.

In one case, (London Borough of Camden) delivery was funded by all the NI8 partners listed in the LAA. A joint five-year strategy and action plan followed lengthy research on needs analysis in the area. The results of the analysis can be found in Appendix B, available from the Sport England website at [www.sportengland.org/laa](http://www.sportengland.org/laa).

Camden's plan, which is nearly complete, is underpinned by strong commitment from partners to secure new funding and use existing resources.

However, of significant note is that 10 out of 13 respondents said funding was provided mainly on the basis of individual interventions and was only occasionally pooled.

This included six of the seven county councils. For one county council in particular, its LAA lead recommended that partners individually fund their own projects.

The sharing of resources and funding at a strategic level is perhaps worthy of further investigation in the future. That said, on the basis that six of seven county councils brought this matter to our attention during the course of the survey, it suggests that there is more to be achieved through collective working and pooled funding than currently exists.

In the questionnaire, we asked what help authorities needed from Sport England to deliver NI8, excluding funding. In spite of the final clause, funding was specifically raised as both a short and long-term answer by over half the 25 respondents with four expressing immediate concerns about cuts to its sports service.

Overall, the current issues facing respondents in terms of funding can be broken down equally into:

- Facing cuts to the service
- Trying to maintain current levels of fundings
- Actively seeking new sources of funding
- Short term funding secured but must seek other sources for the long term.

# Delivery

**The questionnaire asked about:**

- Delivery plans
- Partner engagement
- Working with national governing bodies
- Use of evidential resources
- Delivering in a different way
- Key initiatives
- Barriers to delivery.

## Delivery plans

In order to deliver NI8 in its entirety, often with many partners, we tested the approach the local authorities in our sample had taken to agreeing shared objectives and whether this formed part of one designated plan.

We found that 12 of 25 respondents reported performance solely against one NI8 plan.

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council was one such authority whose plans were co-ordinated by its CSN.

A further 11 respondents reported performance through wider plans namely sports strategies; culture and sport partnerships; corporate plans and 2012 plans and of these, performance was often reported through a series of separate plans, not just the one.

Two single-tier authorities reported that specific NI8 plans were being drawn up, though there were currently none in place.

Figure 6 examines the split of delivery plans between single-tier and county councils.

Of the 12 local authorities that reported working to a distinct NI8 plan, seven were single-tier and were part of either a local authority or an LSP delivery plan.

The remaining five local authorities were county councils for whom the CSP co-ordinated NI8 delivery.

Some of the county councils answering this question commented that delivery plans needed to include wider partner contributions beyond that of the district councils.

The seven single-tier authorities with one NI8 delivery plan also responded strongly in the same vein.

One authority commented positively that having only one plan:

**“...draws out NI8 contributions from all other plans.”**

A second authority stated:

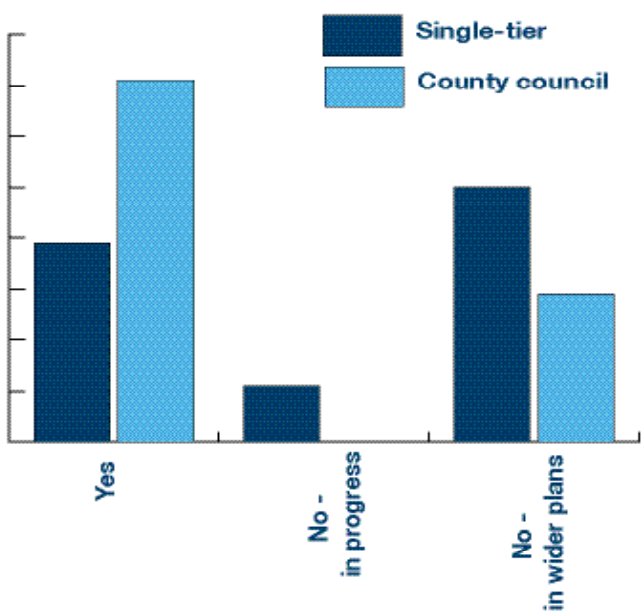
**“It is recognised that the plan needs to extend further to demonstrate the contribution of other partners to the target.”**

It was not possible to gauge the effectiveness of having one single NI8 delivery plan or several, but some clear factors did emerge.

Those that rated the use of a single delivery plan and its structures considered this a valuable way to capture and monitor the activities of all. However, it was acknowledged that its effectiveness was mainly due to the relationship between the NI8 lead and its partners.

Where weaknesses emerged (mostly among local authorities contributing to wider plans) the challenge came from working with partners that had their own action plans and understanding their specific delivery mechanisms.

**Figure 6**  
**Standalone NI8 delivery plan**



It was felt that LSPs needed to take the lead in creating more opportunities for partners who contribute to NI8, to work together rather than in isolation. This could reduce the risk of actions overlapping and ensure that limited funds are wisely spent.

Essex was the only authority in the sample interviewed to break down the 4% target increase for NI8 into numbers required per intervention and Sport Essex has kindly given us permission to reproduce its delivery plan. This has been added to this report as Appendix C and can be downloaded at [www.sportengland.org/laa](http://www.sportengland.org/laa).

## Partner engagement

Our questionnaire asked about both strategic partners and delivery partners.

Most respondents (12 of the 18 that commented) considered that at delivery level partner engagement was 'good'.

Four rated this as 'very good' or 'wide sources of engagement'.

Two thought engagement was only 'fair' with perhaps some gaps in getting partners on-board.

Although the questionnaire did not ask in depth about the reasons for engagement, five out of the 18 respondents stated that physical activity was the key hook that brought delivery partners to the table, not sport. This was borne out as 50% of authorities named health as its main partner. The next most frequently mentioned partner was sport clubs/private sector (four out of 18, 23%).

When asked about partner engagement, one respondent commented that:

**"Groups are engaged based upon the outcomes of what can be achieved, not around NI8 delivery specifically. Outcomes have to relate to their work area, health, youth services, renaissance etc."**

Where partners were named, there was a range of 15 individual organisations with some authorities working with up to six. The numbers of delivery partners were the same for both single-tier and county councils with no discernable difference.

What the questionnaire was unable to tease out was whether the function of the LAA brought in new partners or whether it focused solely on existing relationships.

## Working with national governing bodies

The questionnaire asked about engagement with NGBs and with the exception of three authorities

that stated they had no direct involvement; the remaining 22 had direct contact.

Figure 7 shows to what extent authorities are currently working with NGBs.

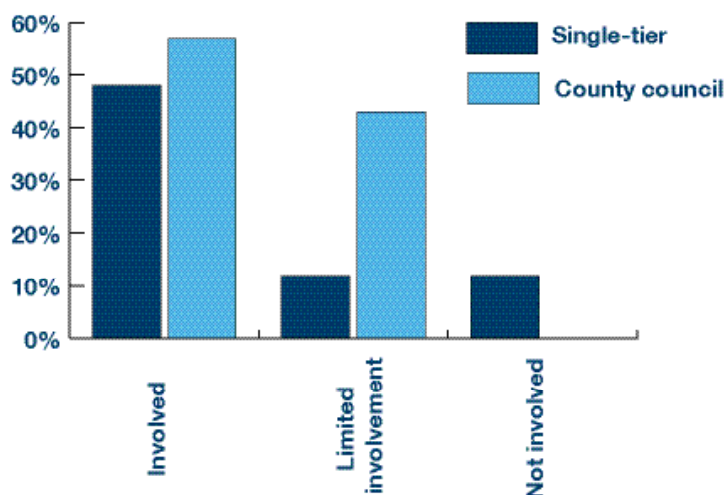
Most respondents (88%) felt they worked closely with NGBs either on existing areas or in response to Sport England's 2008-2011 strategy.

The relationship with an NGB was not as yet quantifiable in terms of the NGBs new role but local authorities commented that there was a shift in overall NGB relationships.

A few local authorities proactively targeted NGBs for help while others felt unable to influence governing bodies and did not know what impact they would have upon its sports service in future.

CSPs also actively sought to secure NGB funding and support. This was mainly as a result of the CSP's role as NI8 lead.

**Figure 7**  
**Working with NGBs**



It was positive that 22 NGBs were named as potential or actual deliverers with both single and two-tier areas able to demonstrate partnership working with them.

While findings were generally positive about working with NGBs, when asked how Sport England could help local authorities deliver their target, 11 of 25 (44%) asked for direct support to liaise or broker relationships with governing bodies.

The significance of NGBs could not be overstated though many local authorities felt unable to influence them either due to capacity or limited understanding of what they wanted. Concerns were raised about the speed at which relationships between local authorities and NGBs were materialising following the launch of Sport England's strategy. In order to ensure local authorities have the best chance to deliver NI8 targets, the pace of these developing relationships needs to increase.

## Use of evidential resources

This section of the questionnaire asked respondents about their use of Sport England's research and evidential tools with particular reference to the APS diagnostic and Market Segmentation.

Respondents replied positively to this question with 80% using APS and 88% using Market Segmentation.

Seven of the 25 surveyed said that they had either not used the tools or had only done so to a limited extent – four of these were county councils. In three of the seven cases, the local authorities expanded on the reasons why they did not use the tools. A combination of lack of capacity and training needs was stated.

Responses to the questionnaire have also provided information about the types of work the tools support.

Of the 18 authorities that responded positively to using APS and Market

Segmentation, 15 (83%) were single-tier and three (17%) were county councils.

Figure 8 shows a breakdown of responses in percentage terms. Some local authorities provided more than one reason.

The majority of local authorities saw clear reasons for using both APS and Market Segmentation. Below were two of the positive comments which were echoed in the responses of most local authorities:

**“The project...interventions were developed on the basis of thorough analysis of both Market Segmentation and Active People Survey. This helped to locate target age group...and marketing approaches.”**

And:

**“Market Segmentation is a godsend to a customer-focused way of working.”**

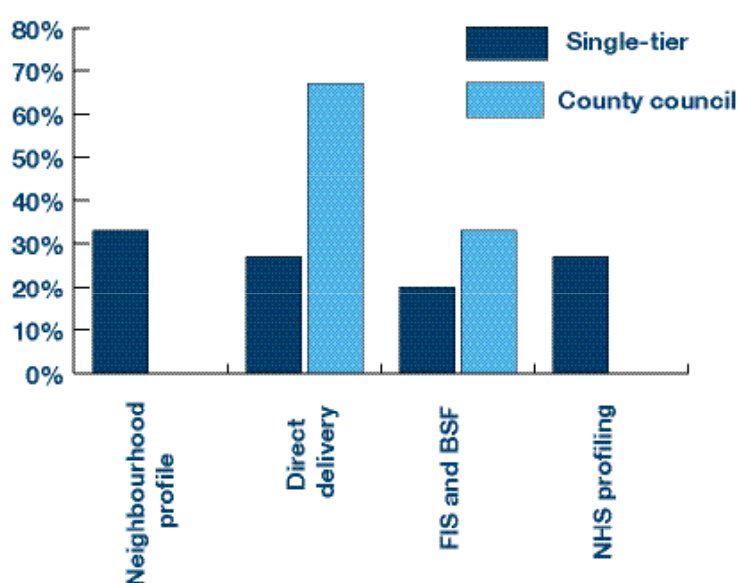
The overall value of APS and Market Segmentation cannot be exaggerated.

However, local authorities expressed concerns that there was a substantial amount of complexity surrounding the use of both the APS Diagnostic and Market Segmentation tools.

In order for local authorities to continue to provide accurate and timely data, they wanted a better understanding of how to use the tools.

Some felt that internal capacity was so stretched that it could not meet APS demands from within the local authority nor have the time to keep up their level of knowledge which quickly lapsed.

**Figure 8**  
**Reasons for using APS and Market Segmentation**



When asked what help local authorities needed from Sport England to deliver NI8, just over half of the 25 respondents stated the following would be a significant benefit:

- Ten wanted more training and for this to be on a regular basis
- Four wanted to be provided with supplementary data
- Two wanted better access to advice and information
- One wanted data to be released on a timely footage (see below).

In looking at the final bullet point about timely information; one local authority reported that the delay in having a diagnostic tool some months after the release of headline APS information had been detrimental to the reporting of NI8. This was because headline data was scrutinised by the council without the service unit being able to quantify either an increase or decrease in figures. This had resulted in decisions being made, particularly about the allocation of funding, when the extent of the APS change could not at that time be explained.

Local authorities also commented on the value of Sport England advocacy documents, including APS and Market Segmentation and that this was considered critical to supporting their work.

Comments about using promotional material in the future included:

**“At a local level, Sport England promotional material would be an advantage. Case studies, DVDs etc. There were some good ones that got activity messages out but this seems to have stopped.”**

Another stated:

**“We need... help in demonstrating the social value of investment in sport and physical activity in terms of savings from other budgets, eg value of preventing crime, health costs etc. This information creates powerful arguments to sustain investment.”**

And a third said:

**“Briefing material to use internally (corporate managers and other services...) and externally (LSP, Director of Public Health/PCT, chairs of relevant LSP thematic groups).”**

## Delivering in a different way

For local authorities to make the most of limited resources and to function effectively with partners, we asked whether organisations were ‘delivering differently’ in order to achieve their NI8 target.

The questionnaire looked for new ways of working but also whether authorities had evaluated and challenged their existing methods to try increase the capacity to deliver.

Twenty one of the 25 respondents said they were evaluating new ways that related to improved partnership working and joint funding through to the implementation of new schemes.

Where schemes were mentioned, the priorities seemed to be:

- Better connectivity with the voluntary sector
- More use of the outdoor environment
- More outreach work
- Adapting service delivery to reflect thematic approaches such as promoting independence, which then brings in other partners
- Workplace schemes
- Focus on 2012
- Coaching academies.

One authority encouraged free swimming for adults (10 visits in a two month period) geared towards housing estates with low participation rates with an offer including free swimming lessons.



## Key initiatives

We asked whether there was one initiative or project that was key to delivering NI8.

Eight of 25 local authorities replied with details of just one initiative, with another 15 saying it was a series of actions, not just one.

Two authorities replied 'no'; one without further explanation and a second authority (county council) stated initiatives weren't co-ordinated at partnership level.

Of the 23 authorities that responded positively to the question, the survey identified four main themes and these are listed in Figure 9.

As expected, county councils had little role to play in facility infrastructure. What would be of interest is whether, given that 25% of single-tier authorities consider facilities essential to delivery, county councils could make more use of their co-ordinating role within two-tier areas.

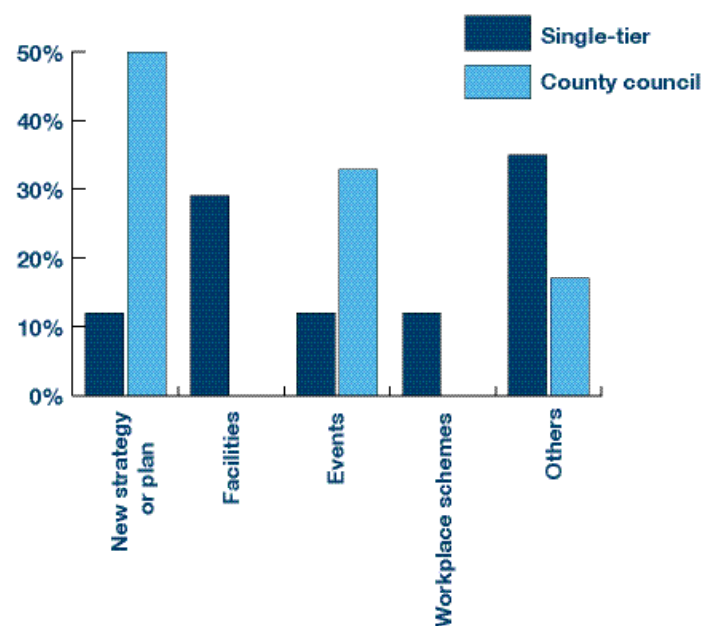
Of the local authorities that reported facilities as a major focus, four identified the benefits of new structures coming online. However, one authority was concerned about the closure of a facility and the impact this would have.

The main county council focus was about new strategies and events and these will be examined in turn.

From a strategy viewpoint, both single and two-tier authorities considered that a standalone strategy brought together all initiatives under one roof and that the actions to deliver it, made this the key document.

We mentioned earlier under *Delivery Plans* on page 10 that county councils were largely more positive than single-tier authorities about having one co-ordinated delivery plan and this view was reinforced here. Indeed, the response of one

**Figure 9**  
**Focus of major delivery project**



authority in the survey signified the importance of having one strategy.

This echoed the response of others:

**“The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy is the unified initiative that combines all work... to deliver on NI8.”**

In addition, there were a number of mass participation events that authorities acknowledged could provide the impetus for greater participation in sport.

Of these, the following were identified as high-profile activities:

- The Great Swim – Alton Water Suffolk. A one mile open water swim challenge as part of a national series led by Nova International
- Comic Relief Mile – events nationwide
- The Run 09 – 10k Run, Northampton (inaugural event)

- Race for Life – events nationwide. In Kirklees, West Yorkshire, this has led to the Kirklees 10k and the Jog Kirklees initiative.

Other individual initiatives include:

- Mud, Sweat and Gears – throughout Essex, Mountain Bike Enduro Series
- Go Active – Led by Oxfordshire Sports Partnership (CSP) to motivate and support inactive people to become more active
- Gateshead – European City of Sport, numerous initiatives throughout the period.

These events offer significant opportunities to increase participation. This in turn challenges local authorities to capitalise on their success.

At this time, it was not possible to ascertain any direct correlation between interventions and

increased participation.

Local scrutiny or challenge of event numbers and participant types has demonstrated increased participation. However this has not necessarily resulted in better APS figures as yet.

Three local authorities expressed the view that the low numbers of people surveyed was a weakness of the APS system. NI8 leads found it difficult to demonstrate the benefits of delivery intervention when local trends were not replicated in the nationally accepted survey and that differences could not be explained.

In part this also reflected the point made earlier under *Use of Evidential Resources* on page 12.

This concerned the release of headline APS figures without access to diagnostic analysis. Key council decisions were sometimes taken on headline APS figures which the NI8 lead was unable to articulate to members where gains or losses were made.

## Barriers to delivery

Local authority responses to identifying the barriers or challenges to delivery can be categorised under four overarching headings.

Figure 10 shows this.

Answers were grouped into four headings identified as follows:

- **Budget** – internal financial constraints; wider current economic climate; budgetary controls
- **Sustainability** – continuity of funding for both capital and revenue projects; changes to funding streams
- **Communication** – consistent message; 3 x 30 minutes; 5 x 30 minutes, sport vs physical activity message
- **Time-limited initiatives** – free swimming and its consequences; preparedness for new initiatives and subsequent effects.

The first two headings reflect the current economic climate and concerns about budget reductions.

Added to the general picture though were the repercussions of the Comprehensive Spending Review 07 and the fact that sport as a non-statutory service was often targeted first for efficiency savings. This was said to be the case in three authorities.

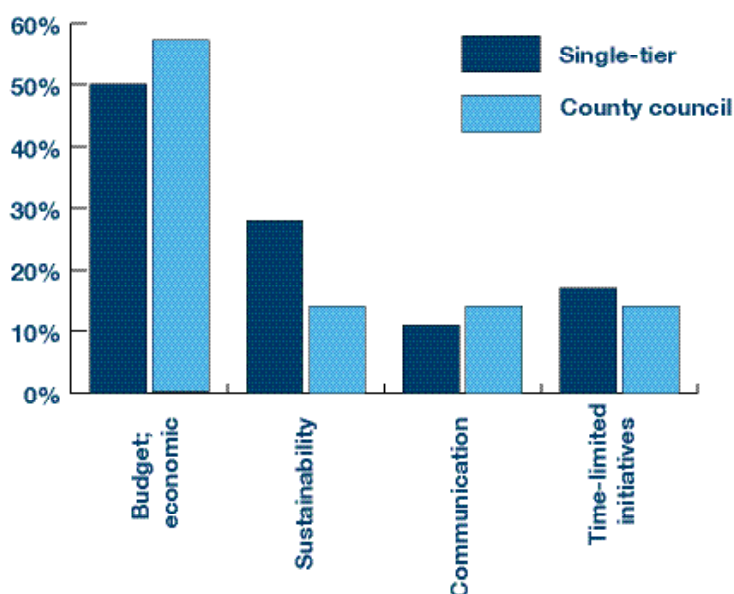
The change in Sport England's funding strategy and the consequences for the Community Investment Fund and Community Club Development Programme, coupled with partner organisations contributing less than in previous years, led some authorities to suggest they faced daily challenges in making reduced funds go further and achieve more.

Often, this was set against a service that was not well funded or that did not play a prominent role within the local authority generally.

Regarding communications, there were three local authorities in particular that had concerns about the mixed messages around 3 x 30 minutes and 5 x 30 minutes.

This led to a number of problems, not least public confusion believing gardening was within the NI8 measure. This varying definition could result in the incorrect reporting of activity levels.

**Figure 10**  
**Barriers to delivery**



An additional challenge was that the health campaign of 5 x 30 carried a much greater weight for the public. There were consequently challenges in communicating the 3 x 30 sport message as part of a wider health measure and focusing delivery partners on 3 x 30.

All the local authorities that raised this issue were keen to see a national campaign, similar to that used by the health sector, to raise awareness of the meaning of physical activity and the role that sport plays in it.

A further four local authorities brought up time-limited initiatives such as free-swimming. It was suggested that not only did this have financial implications but that such programmes conflicted with authorities' financial strategic planning which was built mainly around three year forecasts.

Local authorities considered that budgets did not align with quickly introduced initiatives as there was little flexibility to respond positively to each new scheme.

That did not mean that some schemes were not worthwhile, but that authorities budgetary spending was clearly allocated and taking on a new scheme was occasionally to the detriment of another.

Some responses were a priority for only a few authorities, including:

- Transient population
- Run-down facilities
- Conflicting activities of partners
- CSP effectiveness.

# Performance management

**This section of the questionnaire was concerned with reporting performance and the effective use of this information to drive performance improvements.**

## Performance management

Of those that commented on the strength of performance monitoring, four reported this was good; 13 reported it was reasonable and seven reported information gathered was basic or was simply not collected.

If the objective of good performance management is to use data assessment to drive improvement, it would appear that in at least seven (28%) local authorities, this lack of data would make the task near impossible or as a minimum, difficult to quantify what activities were working.

In examining the sources of information used to provide accurate data, 13 (including five county councils) were reliant upon APS data as their main measure.

Of these, a further six local authorities used additional proxy or indirect measures to build up a picture about participation.

They used data from:

- Funded projects
- Leisure centre attendance rates
- Citizens panel
- Council leisure passes
- Use of vouchers.

Five local authorities used either an in-house data collection system or bespoke IT package such as *Performance Plus* or *Performance Eye*. Those authorities doing so, (including three county councils) were positive about the levels of information and reporting capabilities they had.

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council reported using a dashboard of proxy indicators all of which reflected the delivery actions in its CSN Delivery Plan.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council also reported using one such package that provided daily on-screen updates and analysis for staff. This service was to be extended for use in leisure facilities for customers to see.

Two local authorities reported having a Risk Register and were subject to completing exception reports. These were the only examples provided in our survey.

That was not to say that other local authorities weren't challenged about meeting targets but that none referred specifically to this aspect.

## Performance management concerns

The above findings confirmed that in most local authorities a system exists for the collection of NI8 data. This information should allow senior managers and members to challenge and question what the data says about the services' performance.

However, it didn't appear that data was subject to much scrutiny or challenge and that the provision of APS updates was sufficient.

Local authorities commented they were not often asked to qualify data and that APS information was accepted at face-value.

Only one local authority in our sample reported that its LAA targets were closely monitored. Where progress faltered including NI8, scrutiny panels galvanized partners to work together to identify interventions to ensure the target remained on track. This had a positive outcome on the service.

NI8 data has to be subject to rigorous scrutiny to ensure that not only is the data understood but that delivery partners are called to account for the success – or otherwise – of their actions in achieving the target.

# Interaction and support from Sport England

## The report highlights a number of issues for Sport England to consider.

How can we meet authorities' requirements; ensure we work together well; and, where appropriate, make our own contribution more effective?

The more important aspects of concern and opportunities are shown in the main body of the report and summarised below.

## Active People Survey

Local authorities were particularly positive about APS and Market Segmentation – to provide information for direct delivery and as a robust measure for NI8 that all were judged by.

However, concerns were expressed about local authority ability to use the tools; understand the information and disseminate information to internal and external partners.

Local authorities requested:

- Supplementary data alongside the release of APS headline data
- Regular training on APS and Market Segmentation
- Access to advice or support to present data in a more meaningful way
- Examples of case studies and how to build local profiles using the tools.

## Advocacy

Promotional material for advocacy purposes was judged to be a strong aspect of Sport England's work that local authorities found invaluable.

Local authorities requested:

- More evidence via case studies, Market Segmentation, mapping etc to support internal delivery
- Promotional material to provide evidence of the value of sport to wider service areas and external partners
- Material to demonstrate savings to other budgets, crime prevention; ageing agenda; youth services etc to help lever in funds.

## NGBs

While local authorities were familiar with working with NGBs on ad-hoc projects they requested help to:

- Understand NGB requirements and plans
- Influence NGB plans by ensuring they consider offers from individual authorities
- Broker relationships with authorities and NGBs.

Sport England will review the findings from this report. We will consider how our current and future activities, tools, and resources can better support the needs of local authorities with NI8 in their LAA.

At the same time discussions with the remaining local authorities with NI8 in their LAA will take place.



This document can be provided in alternative languages or alternative formats such as large print, Braille, tape and on disk upon request.

Call the Sport England switchboard on 08458 508 508 for more details.

### **Further information**

To find out more about Sport England and to get the latest news and information about our various initiatives and programmes, please go to, [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)

Sport England  
3rd Floor  
Victoria House  
Bloomsbury Square  
London  
WC1B 4SE  
T: 08458 508 508

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