



# **Implementing the Birmingham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Framework**

## **Executive Summary April 2008**

*Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is a process that will identify the current and future health and well being needs of a local population informing the priorities and targets set by Local Area Agreements and leading to agreed commissioning priorities that will improve outcomes and reduce health inequalities (Guidance on JSNA: December 2007)*

## Implementing the Birmingham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Executive Summary

The creation of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) forms part of a wider body of legislation that looks to develop a new approach to providing health and care to the UK population. It sits within a number of driving themes and is expected to act as a supporting tool for these changes. These themes include:

- A greater focus on prevention and early intervention for improved health, independence and wellbeing
- Tackling inequalities and improving access to services
- An emphasis upon the potential benefits to be gained from effective commissioning
- Work to develop integrated and effective performance management
- A recognition that partnership working is at the core of successful planning and provision
- A recognition that such partnership will gain from input from all stakeholders, including service providers and receivers of services

The Birmingham Strategic Partnership (*Be Birmingham*) approached the creation of a JSNA in a spirit of recognition of the substantial amount of local needs assessment work already in place for the population. In effect, it recognised that the framework of a JSNA had been pursued for some years, with cross cutting partnerships, shared use of information and widespread engagement of interested stakeholders underpinning the existing strategies. This work dictated the shape and approach to the JSNA development in line with Department of Health guidance. The key factors were:

- The JSNA initiative would build upon current work, looking to integrate existing information, support current work, integrate existing processes, and empower all stakeholders to access all information and to create a voice for all parties
- Work would begin by pulling together all the existing needs assessment work and would look to identify ways in which this work could be better utilised to improve the health & well being of the population.

This approach was informed by the initial engagement work in establishing a JSNA. Stakeholders felt that much of this work was already in place, and was based on extensive consultation and engagement. The issue that interested stakeholders most was, why existing information were currently not better utilised.

On this basis, initial JSNA work undertook an evaluative approach, to identify:

- What sources were currently used to underpin needs assessment and any issues this might raise
- Issues concerning the process of using current joint strategic assessment work. Stakeholders identified that there were ways in which the processes of partnership working interfered with the potential gains from joint working

This approach aimed to recognise that without improvements to the current processes of data collection, knowledge management and partnership working, there would be minimal gains from extending the existing joint strategic needs assessment work.

This work was supported by a Project Steering Group and dedicated Project Manager and Information Support. It included significant work sourcing current databases, reviewing strategic processes and undertaking additional work to engage stakeholders from the public and third sectors to identify what are the underlining process issues.

In advance of 1 April 2008, the aim of the Be Birmingham partnership has been:

- To articulate its existing joint strategic work
- To take this work forward to establish a shared data access site that provides linkages into all the work underpinning its needs assessment work
- To evaluate this work and the processes underpinning it, to ensure that any issues of process and systems are addressed
- To begin filling any gaps in current information and assessment tools

The Partnership has appointed a City Director of Public Health who will have ongoing responsibility for this work. The aim will be to take the policy drivers for the creation of a JSNA and use them to shape existing knowledge management to better support the improvement of health and well being for the population.

### **Summary of Findings**

Evaluation of existing work on needs assessment amongst the Birmingham partners had two strands; an assessment of the evidence used to establish local strategies, and an assessment of the process by which this information is applied. The summary findings are outlined below.

#### **Evaluating the Assessment of Current Need**

Individual work streams have made significant efforts to engage stakeholders and to use existing data sources to shape local needs analyses. In no area was there any indication that needs assessment had not been addressed. The JSNA process should provide an opportunity to expand these sources to provide a more comprehensive assessment. Areas where benefit might be of particular gain are in accessing existing modelling tools and in undertaking a structured collection and assessment of local intelligence.

#### **Evaluating the Process**

Developing a JSNA for Birmingham has highlighted that considerable effort has been invested in partnership working to date. However, it has also highlighted the need to invest time and attention into improving the process of joined up working. Six recommendations have been identified. Three of the recommendations are to the Be Birmingham Executive and concern the process of managing joint strategic work with the JSNA data as support. The final three recommendations concern the internal management of the JSNA process by the Health & Well Being Partnership.

#### **Recommendations To The Be Birmingham Executive**

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Recommendation 1 | The JSNA process should be iterative, rather than systematic, built upon a cycle of review, reflection and amendment. The JSNA should be underpinned by a few agreed questions in each planning cycle to focus its work. |
| Recommendation 2 | Work into establishing a Be Birmingham Engagement Strategy should include work into agreeing a common framework for partnership working, addressing issues of language, common aims and communications issues            |
| Recommendation 3 | The JSNA process should be accountable to the Health & Well Being Partnership.   |

## **Recommendations to the Health & Well Being Partnership**

- Recommendation 4 Existing data sharing arrangements should be summarised and reviewed so that the Partnership can identify what protocols could be put in place to improve joint working.
- Recommendation 5 The JSNA requires a strategy concerning how it updates its information, ensuring that this has an acceptable evidence base
- Recommendation 6 The partners need to make a decision about where the JSNA fits in the planning cycle and how the resource will be shaped and used

## **The Way Forward**

The JSNA Evaluation is a starting point for future work. Tasks that have yet to be addressed are:

- i) Developing an agreed approach to needs assessment.
- ii) Taking forward work into linking the JSNA into current public & patient engagement
- iii) Widening engagement & communication
- iv) Undertaking a strategic review of the existing needs assessment to support a joined up process fulfilling the vision of a JSNA