

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY - Select Committee on Poverty and Inclusion:**

**RESPONSE:**

**Q.1** Are the identified priorities of the region's Social Inclusion Statement relevant and correctly identified?

**A.1** **The SIS priorities are relevant however mention needs to be made of engaging local people in decision making; involving existing communities with regeneration objectives; making the link between skills and employment and the effect of drugs on disadvantaged communities leading to crime, and poor health.**

**Q.2** What has changed since the Social Inclusion Statement was agreed in 2002? Have there been significant adjustments in the institutional infrastructure: Are there any major economic, social or environmental developments that have emerged recently.

**A.2** **The emergence of the Sustainable Communities Plan has now identified huge growth areas which will impact more on existing infrastructure and public services.**

**Q.3** The Social Inclusion Statement commits partners to an agreed methodology to measure whether social inclusion in the region is improving. This mainly uses the Deprivation Index 2003 at SOA level. Is this a satisfactory measure? What other measures might be used?

**A.3** **Yes**

**Q.4** Has SIPSE been an effective organisation in helping to co-ordinate strategies, influence resource decisions or to get greater integration of services by encouraging agencies to work closely together? Are there structural changes that might enhance SIPSE's role in the region as a champion of social inclusion?

**A.4** **It is considered that SIPSE is not widely known, also as there are already several regional bodies existing, creating and promoting another maybe considered unwise. We would prefer to see Regional bodies integrate the Social Inclusion Agenda properly within the policies and budget setting and allow local partnerships to take forward the issues locally.**

**Q.5** Does the RES contain a robust commitment to social inclusion and do the operational priorities and investment decisions of the Agency support the RES intentions?

**A.5** It could be felt that Social Inclusion is marginalized within SEEDA. It seems that Economic Development and Physical Regeneration is by far their priority. It may be difficult for SEEDA to really understand the issues and perhaps do not see it as their role to take this agenda forward. This is demonstrated by the lack of an Executive Director in this role, low budget designated to this and the lack of integrating social enterprise with other business support that they control. Enterprise Hubs and Gateways are a good example of this where as in Medway the voluntary sector were excluded from being part of the Medway Enterprise Gateway and are not present on the Medway Enterprise Hub group

**Q.6** The Social Inclusion Statement sees community engagement, local leadership and joint working as the key drivers in achieving its aims at the local level. Are Local Strategic Partnerships effective vehicles for managing this?.

**A.6** Local Strategic Partnerships are not effective at present to lead on these issues. In many cases they are far removed from the community, from decision making processes and on determining where resources are spent.

**Whilst we would agree with the SIS that community engagement, local leadership and joint working are key drivers in achieving its aims, this can be better delivered with input from local neighbourhood partnerships engaging with ward councillors and senior local elected members.**

**Q.7** Is the complexity and number of partnership arrangements at local, sub-regional and regional level becoming an obstacle to providing clear delivery of social inclusion goals? Is there any simplification that might help?

**A.7** Complexity of the number of local partnerships, the plethora of funding streams and funding targets, the monitoring with different systems is becoming an obstacle. We would be interested to see how the new Local Area Agreements work out to try and simplify this process, or some thought towards a single pot . Also thought as to how local people influence policy makers at the start and not a token consultation on second or third draft policies. Often local people are accused of not

**participating but very often they feel their views have not been listed to in the past so will not participate in the future, especially in such a complex structure of partnerships.**

**Q.8** The Social Inclusion Statement commits partners to set standards about the way organisations should work together. Do you think the different agencies support and integrate each other's services? Are there good examples of this, particularly in local delivery?

**A.8 No Comment**

**Q.9** How can national agencies that are tasked with meeting government targets fine-tune their services to meet local needs and to work with partners? Are there good examples of this?

**A.9 No Comment**

**Q.10** The Social Inclusion Statement commits agencies to work with the voluntary and community sector at a local level. Is this being practically achieved.

**A.10 No Comment**

**Q.11** Is the planning and funding architecture sufficiently flexible for voluntary and community organisations to deliver social inclusion services, in partnership?

**A.11 Unfortunately most if not all funding streams are not flexible and vary enormously making it very difficult for voluntary and community groups to deliver social inclusion services. Main issues are:**

- 1. TIMESCALES are inflexible - funding must be deployed by 31<sup>st</sup> March otherwise the funding is lost.**
- 2. EU funding works JAN-DEC whereas UK funding works APRIL-MARCH. Projects require match funding and this is a problem.**
- 3. More funding available to voluntary and community groups are now capital where as revenue funding is required.**
- 4. Systems in place to access funding are becoming more complex and hierarchical decisions are made at a high level over what priorities should be and funding organisations are looking to contract with less groups therefore look to fund larger projects. Example, SRB would often have many small projects delivering at a local level, the new devolved delivery funding is looking to have fewer but larger projects.**

- 5. There is still a “one size fits all” mentality where a Regional body will decree for example there will be 25 Enterprise Hubs and HE will be accountable body. Whereas local delivery should be varied to suit local needs.**
- 6. Voluntary Sector still experience problems establishing social enterprise as requiring business support and are still poor relations in this field as business support organisation and funders do not recognise the value of social enterprise .**