

Local Area Coordination in Surrey:

Introducer (Partner) Perspectives

Nick Sinclair, March 2024

Table of Contents

Introduction and Summary	3
1. About the “Introducing” Partners (The Survey Responders)	4
2. How the Partners Heard about Local Area Coordination.....	5
3. Reasons for introduction	6
4. How did they introduce?	8
5. Partner Perspectives.....	9

Introduction and Summary

In the early 2024, a comprehensive online survey was conducted, capturing insights from 32 people who have been actively introducing people to Surrey County Council (Surrey) employed Local Area Coordinators (LACs). This report looks at those responses in depth and provides analysis and insights.

The Local Area Coordination approach has been in Surrey since their first LAC started in March 2022. At the time of writing, 4 Local Area Coordinators had been in post for around 18 months with the others still relatively new. Almost 300 people had been introduced to the team so far. Surrey's data (separate from this report) shows those introductions are coming from a wide range of sources including family and friends, NHS colleagues, other community-based professionals, the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, local community leaders, local councillors, Adult Social Care and other statutory service colleagues.

The survey, designed by partners Community Catalysts in collaboration with the Surrey County Council LAC team, aimed to explore the perspectives of those partners at the forefront of introducing people to their LAC. The respondents, representing a diverse range of professions and roles, provided valuable feedback that sheds light on the impact and effectiveness of LAC.

Overall, the findings were highly positive, affirming the significant role Local Area Coordination is playing in fostering individual, family and community wellbeing in Surrey.

The report is split into sections to reflect the way the survey was structured. At the end of each section are some short "insights and observations" to summarise the results/findings.

1. About the Introducing Partners (The Survey Responders)

Diagram 1 and 2 - Where the Introducers worked and how long they had been making introductions.



The mean average number of introductions each had made at the time of the survey was 8.

Insights and observations:

- A diverse mix of introducers responded to the survey.
- The majority of the introducers indicated they worked in District/Borough local government (with fewer than expected from County Council) and health services.

2. How the Partners Heard about Local Area Coordination

We have categorised their responses through an analysis of the answers to the question (this was a deliberately free text component of the survey):

1. **Team Meeting Introduction:** Some learned about Local Area Coordination through team meetings and introductions while working in the same building.
2. **Organisational Introduction:** A LAC was introduced during staff meetings, part of the induction process, or through already existing organisational relationships.
3. **Previous Employment:** Some respondents became aware of a LAC during their previous employment, for example working with the inclusion team in education.
4. **Community Interaction:** Interaction within the community, shared workspaces, and proactive engagement by LACs appeared to play a significant role in awareness.
5. **Council Channels:** Introductions came through the Borough Council, council development coordinators, and community development officers.
6. **Networking and Professional Connections:** Word of mouth, NHS professional networks, local connections, local partners forum, and community partnership meetings were influential in spreading awareness.
7. **Public Events:** Some individuals got to know about the LACs at conferences, or through presentations at public events.
8. **Individual Contacts:** People were introduced to a LAC through personal contacts, colleagues, and contacts from other organisations, for example CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau).
9. **Involvement in Selection Process:** Some were part of the selection process, shortlisting interview panels, or had direct involvement in the project from the beginning.

Insights and observations:

- Overall, the awareness of Local Area Coordination seems to be driven by a combination of formal organisational channels, community interactions, networking, and personal connections.
- This diversity is positive, as it reflects a depth of reach into both local organisations and services in the wider system.

3. Reasons for introduction:

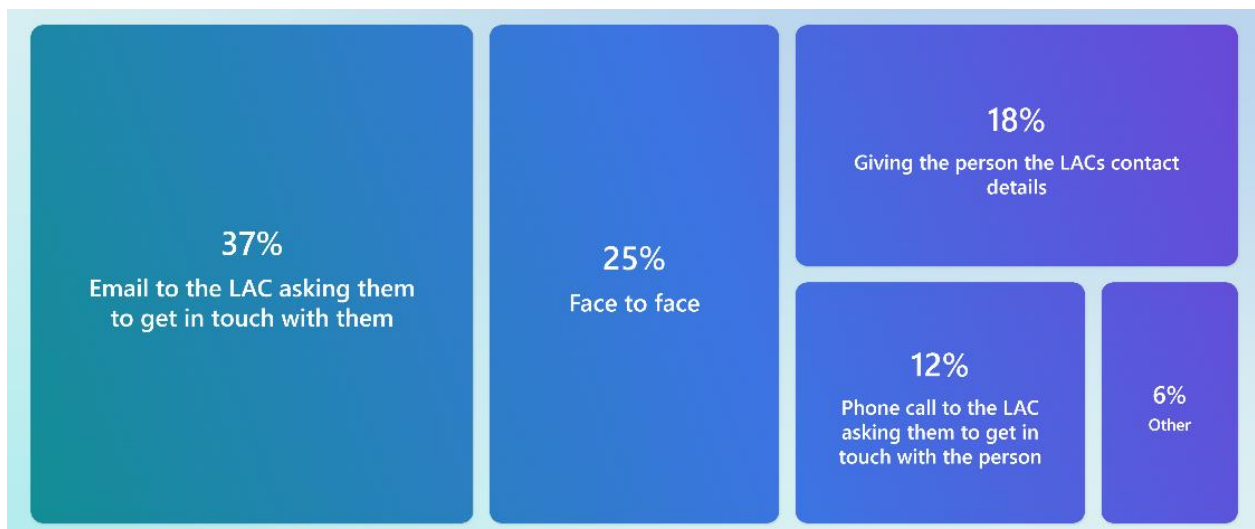
Reasons for introduction (according to the responder)	Number of times mentioned	% of all responses?
Improve mental and emotional health	23	72
Make new friends and form positive connections	21	66
To get more involved in groups of interest	20	63
To advocate for change in their own or someone else's life	20	63
Achieve and stabilise basic needs (housing, heating, eating, income, etc.)	20	63
Become more self-confident and build self-esteem	19	59
Recognise skills/strengths and utilise them more	18	56
To feel safer and more secure in their personal environment	11	34
Positively change benefits situation	10	31
Get involved in formal volunteering opportunities	10	31
Improve physical health	9	28
Sustain accommodation/tenancy	8	25
Improve/change relationships with family and existing friends	8	25
Overcome or reduce behaviours termed "hoarding"	6	19
Explore and access formal learning opportunities	5	16
Achieve more suitable accommodation	5	16
Deal with a pressing legal concern	3	9
Achieve a new job	2	6
Sustain job/increase house/pay	2	6
Other	2	6

Insights and observations:

- The breadth of reasons for introducing local people to LACs suggests introducers understand anyone can be introduced to a LAC which is positive.
- The distribution of reasons for introducing people to LACs provides insights into the prevalent needs within communities. Improving mental and emotional health stands out with the highest frequency.
- The substantial numbers in categories such as making new friends, getting involved in groups of interest, and advocating for change highlight a strong desire for social engagement and community connection.
- Basic needs, including housing stability, income, and access to essential resources, are also highly represented, indicating the substantial economic and practical challenges people face.

- The prominence of categories like self-confidence, skills recognition, and self-esteem suggests high levels of aspiration for personal development and empowerment.
- It would be interesting to understand to what extent the introducing 'reason' was relevant or not in the way the relationship between the person and their LAC developed.

4. How did they introduce?



Insights and observations:

- Email is high. It would be good to understand to what extent these came through as 'referrals' rather than introductions.
- A quarter of introductions were face to face. This is good, and suggests a real, personal and human approach which reflects the LAC principles and experience.

5. Introducer Perspectives

In this section we look at the respondent's perspectives on some statements. They were asked to score on a scale of Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly disagree.

96% of respondents **agreed** with the following 3 statements:

- Local Area Coordinators are clearly part of their local communities and are seen as a community resource. (90% strongly agreed)
- Local Area Coordination is a valuable resource in our communities. (90% strongly agreed)
- Local Area Coordinators build strong relationships and partnerships with services, voluntary/community organisations, people and their families. (84% strongly agreed)

100% of respondents agreed with the statement 'Local Area Coordinators are easily contactable and accessible'. (85% strongly agreed, 15% agreed)

87% of respondents agreed with the statement 'Local Area Coordinators will have a conversation with anyone of any age'. (75% strongly agreed, 12% agreed, 9% were neutral and 3% disagreed)

83% of people agreed with the statement 'People do not have to wait a long time to meet a Local Area Coordinator'. (65% strongly agreed, 18% agreed, 12% neutral and 3% disagreed)

Quotes and Analysis

In this section we present all quotes provided. However we have anonymised them to remove specific information relating to a particular LAC. We have organised them thematically and then offered some analysis after.

Theme 1: LACs seen as a community asset:

- "[The LAC] is an asset to our community."
- "Invaluable resource for our community."
- "[The LAC] is highly valued and a great benefit to the communities and local partners."
- "[The LAC] is the first port of call when I have somebody who needs some help coping or accessing information."
- "LACs are very much part of all our community conversations and valued partners."

Theme 2: LACs building positive relationships:

- "[The LAC] has a calm, kind, professional but friendly and non-judgmental approach."
- "[The LAC] has really set a fantastic precedent in terms of the person-centred support she provides."
- "I have been able to experience first-hand the extremely positive impact that [the LAC] has had on individuals and the wider community."

- "[The LAC] has been a great communicator, shows caring support to a wide range of people."
- "I found the whole process to [introduce] to [the LAC] straightforward."
- "It is great that she accesses some of the local buildings and consistent feedback from some of the people we work with has highlighted her friendly and calm manner."

Theme 3: Long-term support and wellbeing:

- "LACs are invaluable to the location I work in as a Social Prescriber and provide essential wellbeing support."
- "It has been a positive experience working with Local Area Coordinators and they have supported a family which has been invaluable to their wellbeing."
- "Enjoyed doing a joint visit together and liked the fact that [the LAC] can work long term."

Theme 4: LACs helping to build community and working collaboratively:

- "LACs have supported individuals to set up a number of community groups from scratch."
- "[The LAC] has also given our site very useful link information and leaflets."
- "[The LAC] has built positive relationships with the teams I oversee."
- "Please provide a duplicate (LAC) in [list of places] if at all possible."

Analysis:

The feedback gathered suggests introducers/partners see LACs as essential community assets, providing crucial support for people and families, and serving as central points of contact. The quotes suggest that LACs are perceived to be actively engaged in positive community conversations, building relationships with a calm and non-judgmental approach.

Respondents noted a contribution to health and wellbeing support, helping people take control of their mental health concerns, increase healthcare access, and various life aspects like housing and benefits. The introduction process to LACs is viewed as straightforward, appreciated by professionals like Social Prescribers and GPs, who value the assurance of their availability, time and one-to-one relationship with people.

LACs are valued for their ability to provide a long-term supportive relationship, helping people connect with others, offering moral encouragement and vital contextual support in helping people to achieve their vision of a good life. The responses suggest that LACs are also playing a key role in community building, helping people initiate and create groups that foster a sense of belonging among residents.

Positive aspects of LAC collaboration include effective communication, joint visits with professionals, and an ability to work alongside different services, contributing to the overall success of community support in those areas. The feedback also reveals ambition for LACs to expand into additional areas, driven by the positive precedents set.

Insights and observations:

- In essence, the feedback paints a comprehensive picture of LACs as indispensable community assets, positively impacting wellbeing, building relationships, and providing essential support across various sectors and community members.
- In general, this feedback is a really strong endorsement from the people that work closely with them in the public sector and community.
- It might be useful Surrey's LAC leadership group to further explore where introductions are coming from and consider more effective ways to connect with different aspects of local communities (including formal services) as part of next phase of development.