

Asset Transfer Unit Evaluation

Baseline Report for the Development
Trusts Association

Revised Version – October 2009

1: Introduction and purpose

- 1.1 SQW Consulting (SQW) was commissioned by the Development Trusts Association (DTA) in March 2009 to carry out an evaluation of the Asset Transfer Unit (ATU), and also within this, its work in supporting the Advancing Assets for Communities (AA) and the Cascading Asset Transfer (CAT) training programme. For brevity in this report, we will refer to this as ‘the evaluation of the ATU’, but it includes these three elements. This draft Baseline Report is presented to the client for discussion at the client meeting, which is scheduled for 23 September 2009.
- 1.2 The purpose of this draft Baseline Report is to set out the findings from two extensive national surveys of 360 local authorities in England that were carried out during the Summer 2009: one survey targeted Senior Officers involved in asset transfer activity and the other targeted Council Leaders.
- 1.3 The report has intentionally been drafted in a concise fashion to ensure that the headline messages from the two surveys are easily accessible to a broad range of audiences. The intention is to repeat the survey exercise in late 2010, using the same questionnaires and survey population. This will allow the evaluators to compare the results over time and to explore the extent to which the ATU is influencing behaviour across the country.

Structure of the Report

- 1.4 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:
 - **Section 2** offers a focused analysis of the results from the two surveys, following the main topics of both questionnaires
 - **Section 3** sets out the main concluding messages from the survey work.
- 1.5 In addition, there are four supporting annexes containing the two full questionnaires (Annexes A and B) used in this exercise, Annex C, which contains a copy of the introductory letter from Henry Tam at Communities and Local Government (CLG) and Annex D, which lists those local authorities that participated in the officer survey.

2: Baseline survey results

- 2.1 In order to establish a clear national baseline against which the progress of the ATU can be measured in terms of its influence on local authorities across England, there was a need to capture a ‘snapshot’ of asset transfer activity and attitudes towards it. This was done using two online short survey questionnaires, which were launched in July 2009: one for local authority officers; and one for political leaders. Both of these surveys will be repeated in late 2010 (i.e. after 14 months or so) to allow comparison of changes in activity and to explore the extent of the ATU’s influence over time. This section of the report describes the key findings from the recently conducted survey exercises.

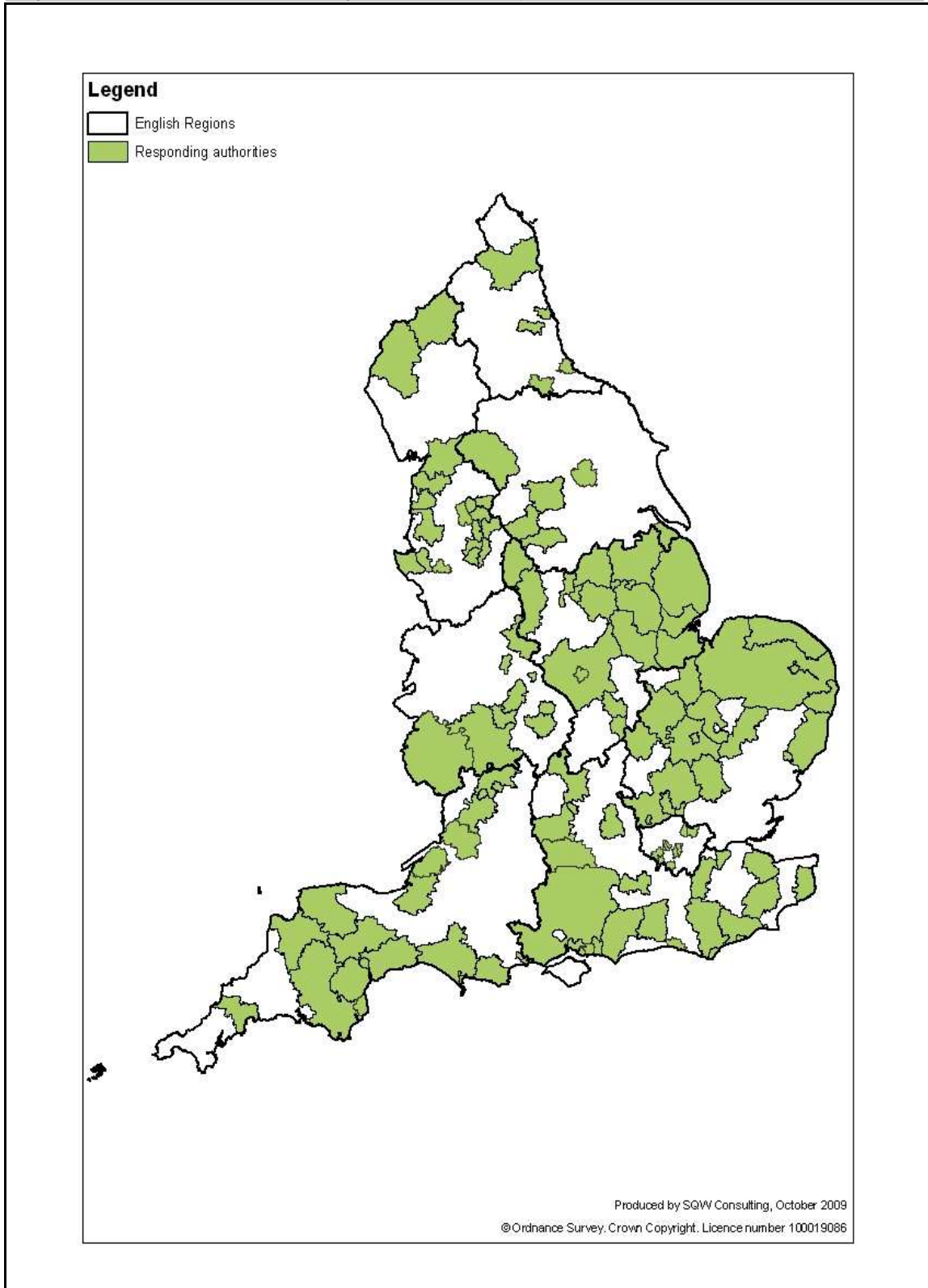
Baseline Survey administration, set-up and implementation

- 2.2 The two baseline surveys were administered online and invitations to participate were sent out by email to all local authorities in England (358 Local Authority officers and 359 Council Leaders). The samples of Officer and Council Leader contacts were generated using databases that had been purchased by SQW from Keystroke Knowledge Limited – a firm of specialists in the provision of such local authority contact data. When assembling the databases, we sought to identify the *most relevant senior officer in each authority with responsibility for asset management* (predominantly senior finance officers or asset managers), and we cross-checked this and validated it with helpful information provided by the ATU and its partners.
- 2.3 The initial invitations sent out to the respondents included an accompanying introductory letter, signed by Henry Tam, Deputy Director Community Empowerment Delivery, CLG, to capture the attention of the recipients and maximise the response rate.
- 2.4 Both surveys were intentionally designed to last approximately 10 minutes and to be easy to fill out. The questions focused on capturing the levels of awareness of the ATU and its main service areas, the barriers, risks and benefits considered to be associated with community asset transfer and also levels of interest, commitment and capacity amongst the local authorities. The officer and councillor questionnaires were both piloted with Wirral MBC prior to the formal launch of the surveys to ensure that they were fit for purpose and that the online software worked correctly.
- 2.5 Both surveys remained open for responses for a month to ensure that response rates were maximised over the summer months, when many people are out of the office on annual leave etc. In order to increase the number of responses, four polite email reminders were issued by SQW to the non-respondents. Additionally, some telephone calls to local authorities were made to find correct contact details and to encourage partial responses to be completed and submitted in full.
- 2.6 Altogether, the surveys were completed by 119 officers and 53 political leaders. This translated to response rates of 33% and 15%, respectively. The response rate for the officer

survey was good and although the figure for the councillors was less so, this was not completely unsurprising and this second survey was complementary only.

- 2.7 The officer survey captured a broad range of local authority officers and their titles varied greatly, including senior positions such as Head of Asset Strategy & Development or Head of Policy to Property Surveyors, Estates officers and Asset Managers. The respondents of the councillor survey were mainly council leaders, although some of them were Elected Mayors or Cabinet Members.
- 2.8 As illustrated by Figure 2-1, the officer survey achieved responses throughout the country and hence, the findings are, in geographical, fairly representative of all of the English authorities, suggesting that they are representative in a more general sense. The largest clusters of responses came from the East of England and East Midlands regions. The lowest level of responses was received from those local authorities based in the Yorkshire and the Humber and the West Midlands regions. As the list of respondents in Annex D shows, the survey has also captured responses from a wide range of local authorities in terms of their status (county, district, unitary, etc), level of deprivation and also authorities participating in asset transfer programmes and those not. Hence, we are confident that this survey is representative and that its findings are worth consideration.
- 2.9 In terms of different types of authorities, the survey received responses from: 74 District Councils; 9 London Borough Councils; 14 Metropolitan District Councils; and 14 Unitary Authorities. Additionally, we received responses from the following 8 County Councils: Cambridgeshire; Devon; Hampshire; Hertfordshire; Leicestershire; Lincolnshire; Norfolk and Wostershire.

Figure 2-1 Local authorities responding to the officer survey



Source: SQW Consulting based on ATU Evaluation Officer Survey

Structure of the Findings

- 2.10 The rest of this chapter sets out the findings of the survey exercise, under the following headings:

- Level of community asset transfer
- Awareness levels
- Sources of advice and support
- Policy and capacity
- Looking to the future.

Level of community asset transfer

Number of asset transfers completed in the last two years

- 2.11 The responses from the surveyed local authorities demonstrate that the majority of local authorities have transferred community assets in the last two years, mainly at a modest level, but with a small number of authorities engaged in much higher levels of transfer activity.
- 2.12 In the past two years, out of 119 responding authorities, 20% confirmed that they have not completed any transfers, a further 66% stated that they had completed fewer than 5 transfers, and 14% had completed more than 5 transfers. Of these, most had completed between 5-10 transfers, with only three local authorities (3% of the total) reporting that they had transferred more than 15 assets: Teignbridge District Council (South Devon); Watford Borough Council; and Devon County Council.

Asset transfers currently in process

- 2.13 There are currently more than 350 asset transfer projects in progress across the 119 surveyed authorities. Most of these projects are in the early/discussion stages (40%) and a quarter of these (25%) in feasibility. Another quarter (24%) of the projects have been agreed in principle but are still awaiting legal finalisation. Only 11% of the projects at the time of the survey were about to be completed.
- 2.14 In terms of the level of current asset transfer activity across the surveyed authorities, 94 out of the 119 authorities (79%) reported that they had some activity at present, whereas 21% stated that they had none in progress at that time. The majority of the authorities reported that they had fewer than five transfers (60%) but in Wirral on Merseyside, it was stated that more than 30 transfers were in progress. Almost 330 (93%) of the current asset transfer projects were reported as being based in urban areas and only 36 (10%) were described as being in a deprived setting, although this is as defined locally by the local authorities themselves - given the number of respondent local authorities in the bottom 20% of the Index of Deprivation (see Annex D), this may be an underestimate.

Recipients and types of assets already transferred or those that are planned to be transferred

- 2.15 In the last two years and including present transfers, the survey suggests that local authorities have tended to focus on transferring assets to charities (26%) as well as social enterprises (10%) and community interest companies (11%). A small number of transfers have also been

made to Development Trusts (4%) but transfers to industrial/provident society (1%), credit unions (less than 1%) and co-operatives (also less than 1%) are pretty rare. Examples of other recipients of assets (which make up the remaining 48% of transfers) highlighted by the responding authorities include Town and Parish Councils; amateur sports clubs; Churches; local associations, partnerships and community groups; schools and Residents Associations¹.

- 2.16 Community Centres have been the single most popular assets to transfer: they represent 34% of all past and present transfers and almost half (53, 45%) of the authorities engaged in asset transfer plan to or have transferred them in the last two years (see Table 2-1).

Table 2-1 Types of assets planned for transfer or transferred during the last two years (2007-2009)

	No. of LAs transferring	Percentage of all LAs (N=119)	No. of planned and past projects	Percentage of all transfer (N=371)
Shop	6	5%	5	1%
School	11	9%	11	3%
Library	5	4%	4	1%
Offices	26	22%	26	7%
Community Centre	53	45%	127	34%
Village hall	9	8%	8	2%
Warehouse	2	2%	2	1%
Factory	1	1%	3	1%
Pub	0	0%	0	0%
Church	3	3%	5	1%
Elderly peoples accommodation	2	2%	2	1%
Park or playing field	26	22%	59	16%
Other	54	45%	119	32%

Source: SQW Consulting based on ATU Evaluation Officer Survey (2009)

- 2.17 Parks or playing fields, offices and schools are also popular types of asset to transfer, whilst perhaps unsurprisingly, warehouses, elderly people's accommodation, pubs and factories are less common. Other types of assets transferred by the authorities include land and dwellings, nurseries, swimming pools, greenhouses and allotments, art centres and museums, youth clubs and community/civic halls.
- 2.18 The reasons why some types of assets seem to be more popular targets for transfer probably reflects a range of factors, including trends in local government (e.g. the Building Schools for the Future programme releasing some older school buildings for other uses), local demand and perhaps ease of transfer – e.g. parks/playing fields may be simpler to transfer, maintain and manage than buildings.

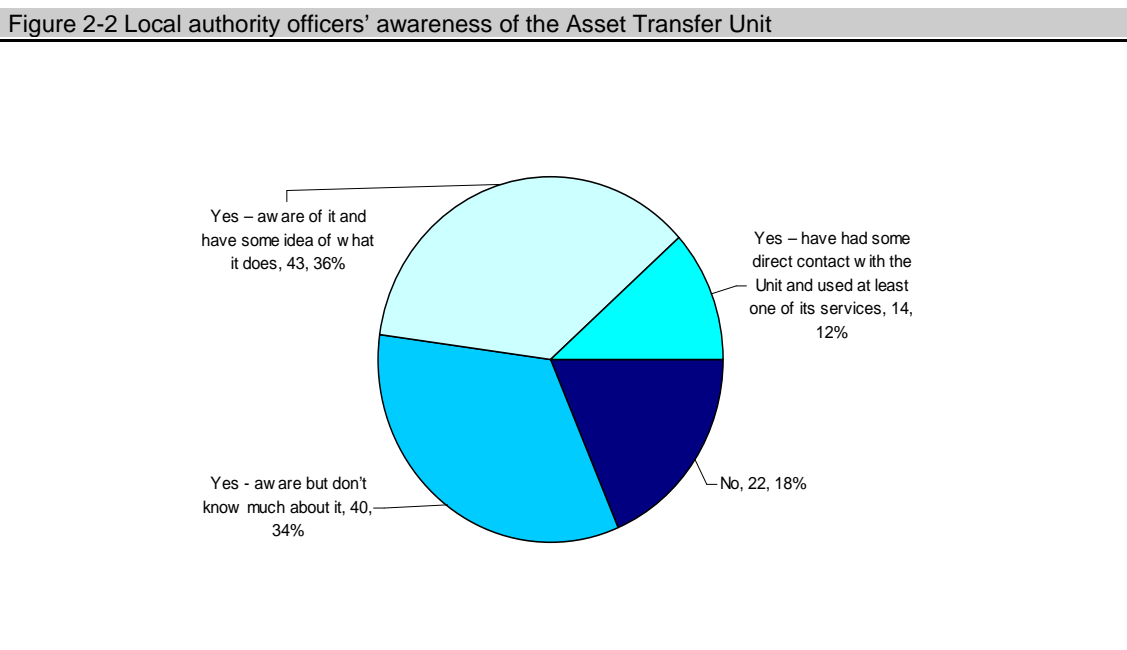
¹ Due to rounding, the percentages add up to more than 100%.

Failure of asset transfer projects

- 2.19 Respondents to the survey stated that the asset transfers they are aware of have largely been successful, although 19% or 23 of the 119 authorities indicated that they had experienced failed asset transfer projects during the last two years. The most common reason cited by local authorities for causing the failure of the project was the inability of the recipient organisation to raise the necessary funding (13 authorities). In some cases (five authorities) it was claimed that a lack of technical expertise (especially management skills) in the local authority itself or the community partnership, led to the termination of the transfer. In a handful of cases, respondents pointed out that the asset transfer had failed for other reasons - due to insufficient local public support, legal issues or a general lack of capacity.
- 2.20 It is worth noting that of the 23 authorities who reported they were aware of failed asset transfers within their local authority area, only five had contacted the DTA or ATU for advice and support, suggesting that a lot of authorities may be needing at least some further advice but may perhaps not be seeking it. However, it is clear that on the whole the lack of funding is the most common obstacle to transfers and ensuring their financial viability.

Awareness levels

- 2.21 Figure 2-2 illustrates the level of local authority officer awareness of the ATU.



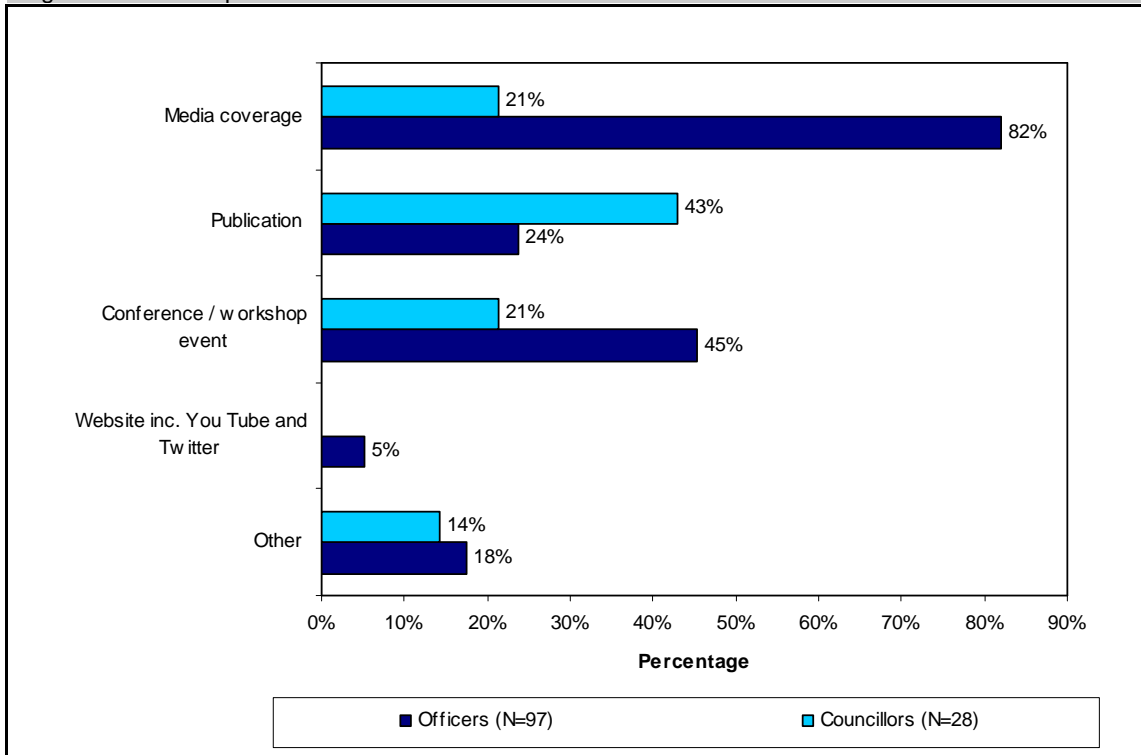
Source: SQW Consulting based on ATU Evaluation officer survey (2009)

- 2.22 A clear majority (82%) of the local authority officers who participated in the survey indicated that they had some awareness of the ATU. Whilst most respondents had a limited understanding of its activities and remit, only 12% had actually had any direct contact with the ATU. Compared to the officers, the political leaders were less aware of the ATU. Just under half (45%) of the councillors admitted to not being aware of the ATU and just over one third (34%) stated that they were aware of it but did not know much about it. The level of

direct contact with the ATU by political leaders was also minimal (only 6%) compared to the council officers (12%), although this is less surprising.

- 2.23 The most common communication channels informing the local authorities about the work of the ATU and its service offer are general media coverage, conferences and other events, and publications. Nonetheless, as illustrated by Figure 2-3, there are some notable differences in the ways in which the ATU communications have captured the attention of the council leaders and officers.

Figure 2-3 How respondents heard about Asset Transfer Unit



Source: SQW Consulting based on ATU Evaluation officer and council leader surveys (2009)

- 2.24 Most of the officers have heard about the ATU via general media coverage or via conferences or other workshops, whilst according to the survey findings, council leaders have become aware of the Unit via more passive communications methods such as publications.
- 2.25 The internet-based forms of communications (e.g. Twitter and You Tube) do not appear to have yet reached large audiences amongst local authorities, although this is not surprising. The ATU deploys a wide range of communication and dissemination techniques, which are designed to engage and reach out to a diverse set of audiences. Other ways in which local authorities have heard about the ATU include through direct email or face-to-face contact with ATU or DTA officers, word of mouth, launch events, Advancing Assets pilot programme activity and funding application processes.
- 2.26 Of the officers surveyed, those that have had contact with the ATU before stated that the most useful form of communication with the Unit was via face-to-face meetings and telephone conversations. Of those officers who had used the ATU services, 70% reported that they felt the face-to-face meetings had been very useful and 30% believed they had been somewhat useful. Similarly, 63% of respondents believed their telephone conversations with the ATU had been very useful and only 13% felt it had not been useful. General publications and good

practice guides have also been well received, as all of the 13 officers who had used them rated them at least somewhat useful. Although we did not ask in detail about these materials through the survey, we assume that the respondents are referring to the content available on the ATU website.

Sources of advice and support

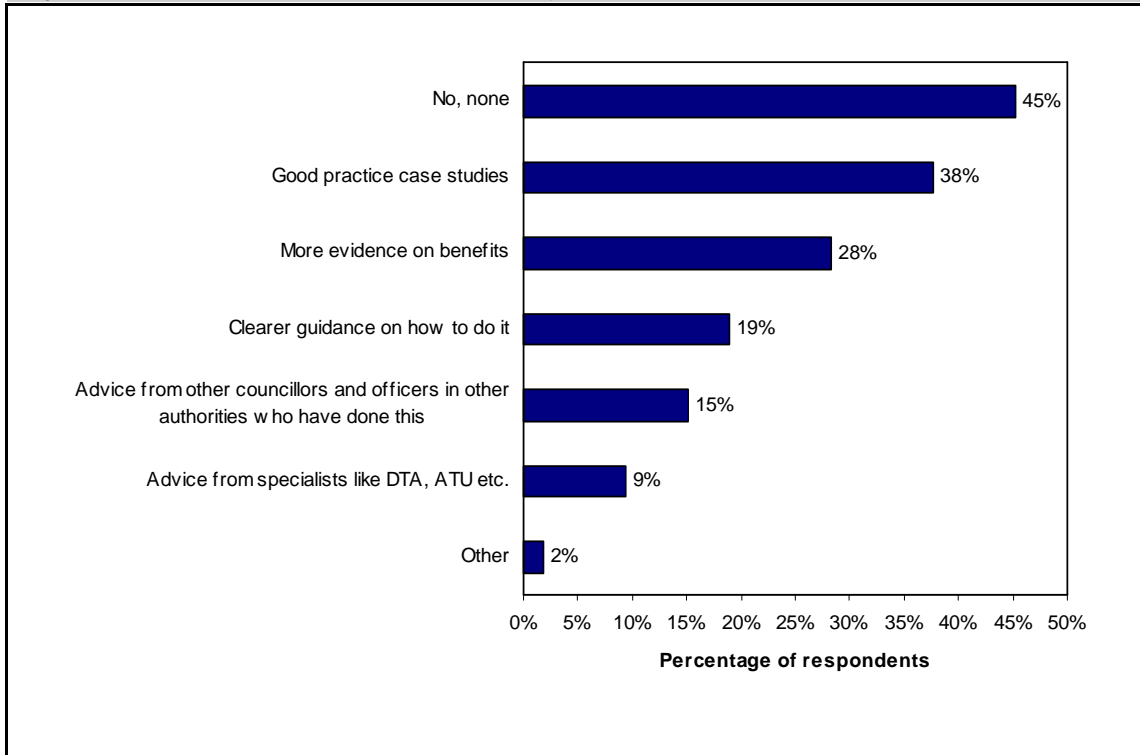
Advice sought and received

- 2.27 According to the survey results, just over half of the local authorities (55%) that have engaged in some asset transfers in the last two years have sought some form of help or support.
- 2.28 The most popular support providers cited were the DTA (14%) and professional legal or financial or property services (14%). Other sources of advice used by a smaller number of local authorities included local community or voluntary sector organisations (5%), CLG (3%) and Community Matters (3%). Approximately 6% of respondents had sought assistance from the ATU on at least one occasion. At this early stage in the ATU's life, it is also possible that there is some brand confusion between the ATU and the DTA, a longer standing organisation within which the ATU is hosted – i.e. some may not be distinguishing between the two, suggesting that the ATU figure could be a little higher than this suggests.
- 2.29 The authorities mainly received support in the form of community asset transfer briefings, seminars and conferences (44, 37%); expert information advice (41, 34%); and guidance or community asset transfer tools and best practice materials (30, 25%). All of these were perceived to be generally useful as more than three quarters of the users rated them very or somewhat useful. Nonetheless, the more bespoke forms of assistance seem to have been most appreciated by the officers as seven out of ten users (70%) rated the support they received as very useful. Positively, half of the users (20, 49%) of expert information, advice and guidance believed it had been very useful. In terms of the other interactive forms of assistance such as community asset transfer briefings, seminars and conferences provided very useful information for 49% of authorities and a further 49% considered this form of assistance to be somewhat useful.

Advice and support required

- 2.30 Most of the political leaders surveyed (45%) appear to have access to sufficient support services and products at present (See Figure 2-4) although in some cases this may represent a lower level of engagement in the process and therefore less demand for support.
- 2.31 Nevertheless, 38% highlighted the need to have more good practice case studies, 28% requested more evidence on benefits and 19% of respondents stated that they would benefit from more practical advice on how to transfer assets. Only 15% of the political leaders would appreciate advice and support from peers who have completed asset transfers and have important practical lessons to share. Further, 9% of political leaders stated they require specialist advice from organisations such as the DTA and ATU.

Figure 2-4 Additional support or advice required by Political leaders



Source: SQW Consulting based on ATU Evaluation council leader survey (2009)

Policy and capacity

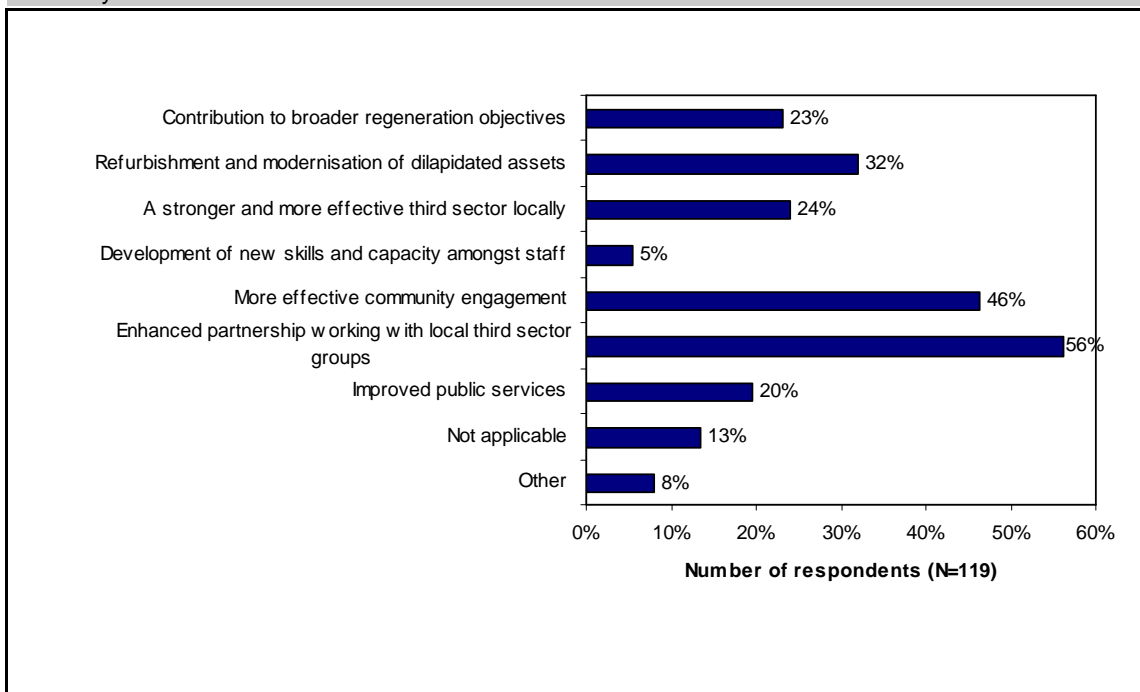
Importance of asset transfers

- 2.32 Findings from the survey of council leaders suggest that asset transfers are generally not high on the personal or political party priority list of the political leaders of the local authorities. Out of the 53 council leaders who responded, 37% stated that asset transfers to community-based organisations were a medium personal and political party grouping priority. Only 12% rated it as being high, either on a personal or political party level.
- 2.33 However, community asset transfer seems to be as important today as it was a year ago. In approximately 60% of the authorities, both the officers and political leaders stated that asset transfer was equally important today as compared to a year ago. Some qualitative comments from the respondents suggest that in these authorities the importance of community asset transfer has been high for some time and this has not changed during the past year. Nevertheless, in more than a third of the authorities (38% for officers and 35% for political leaders) the importance has actually increased in the last year, whilst in only 3% of authorities it has fallen.
- 2.34 The baseline survey reveals that 39% of authorities have an existing formal written policy promoting asset transfer, with a further 39% considering developing one. Just under a quarter (22%) of the local authorities have no policy or any plans to develop one. Given that over 60% of authorities thus currently have no written policy on asset transfer, this suggests that there is still some way to go in embedding such practices.

The drivers and benefits of asset transfer

- 2.35 Local authorities were asked in the survey to identify the three primary motivating factors for their involvement in asset transfer. In terms of the reasons cited as to why local authorities transfer assets to communities, the majority of respondents (52%) stated that they do it because they are seen to be part of the broader local authority response to national policy commitments around community empowerment. In some cases, the transfers are also driven by pressure and lobbying from proactive local community and voluntary groups (42%) or local politicians (39%). In contrast, the National Indicator 4² is not seen specifically as having that much influence on the decision to transfer assets to community organisations; only 11% of the authorities highlighted this as being amongst the three main motivating factors (although this is hard in practice to separate out from the more general policy push for community empowerment). Very few authorities (5%) stated that their transfers are just a direct response to the work of the ATU and its partners.
- 2.36 The three main benefits of asset transfers reported by respondents (see Figure 2-5) were as follows: enhanced partnership working with local third sector groups³ (56%); more effective community engagement (46%) and; refurbishment or modernisation of dilapidated assets (32%).

Figure 2-5 Main benefits of community asset transfer activity to a local authority as stated by local authority officers



Source: SQW Consulting based on ATU Evaluation officer survey (2009)

- 2.37 Approximately a quarter of the local authority officers believe that asset transfers contribute to a stronger third sector locally (24%) and to broader regeneration objectives (23%), whilst a fifth (20%) believe they improve public services. Other motivating factors identified by the

² National Indicator 4 is part of the national indicator set (NIS) for local authorities which was announced as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 in October 2007. It defines the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality.

³ National Indicator 7 is also part of the national indicator set (NIS) for local authorities and is about creating an environment for a thriving third sector.

officers through the survey were financial factors, the authority not having any use for the assets, or a desire to produce the most sustainable framework for the delivery of services and to maximise the use of valuable community assets.

- 2.38 The responses of the council leaders are broadly inline with the comments made by the local authority officers.

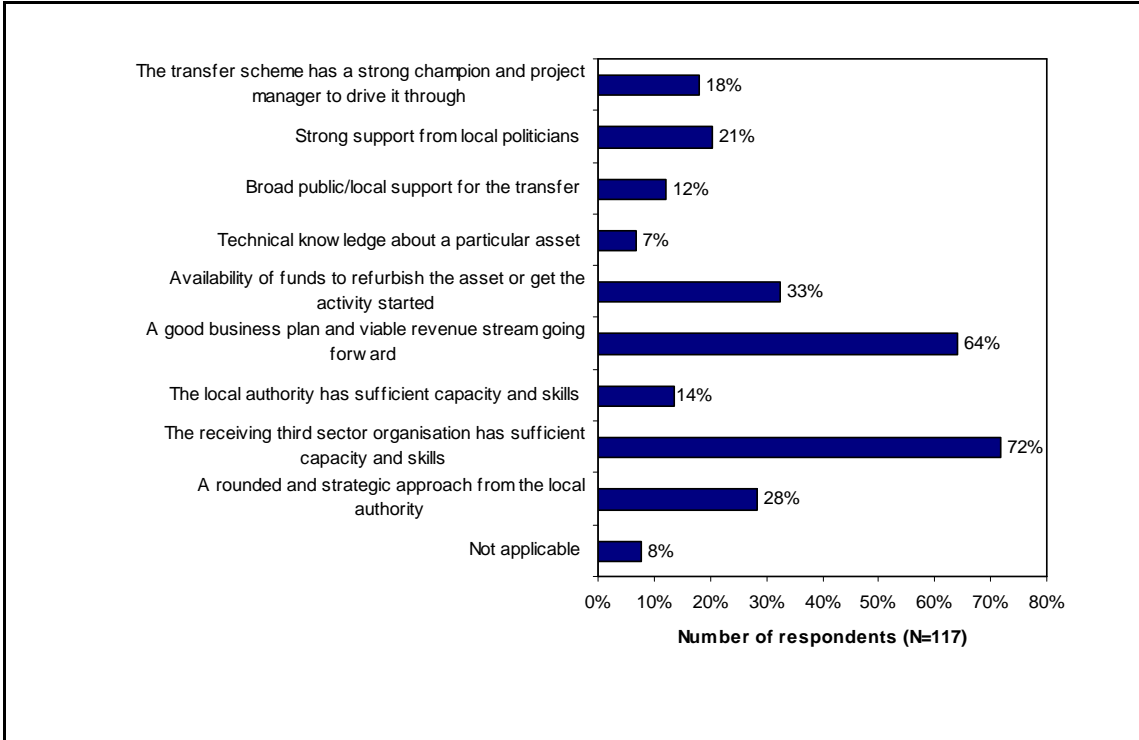
Capacity for asset transfers

- 2.39 Based on their self-assessment responses, the local authorities generally saw themselves as being strong in terms of their technical (financial and legal etc) skills. On a scale of one to five, where one is very strong and five very weak, 64% of the authorities graded themselves as a one or two. Other areas of strength and good capacity were reported around officer interest in facilitating community asset transfers and an internal ability to evaluate risks. Areas where there was moderate capacity (a score of three) included political interest towards asset transfer (40%) and knowledge of where to access further advice (37%). Local authorities identified their financial resources to enable asset transfers and effective performance management as being key areas for improvement, with 63% and 40% of authorities respectively scoring themselves with a five or a four. Consequently, whilst being confident of their technical abilities to successfully complete community asset transfers, local authorities appear to be less confident about their financial resources and performance management capabilities.
- 2.40 The survey results also suggest that local authorities see themselves as having good relationships with the local community or voluntary sector organisations. Over 60% believed that their capacity in this respect was strong or very strong. Despite this, further support and capacity building work is still needed amongst some local authorities, as 45% of respondents stated that their capacity was moderate or weak and 6% believed it to be very weak.
- 2.41 The survey suggests that capacity levels amongst council leaders was fairly similar to that of the council officers. However, in some specific areas, the leaders tended to be more positive about their capacity to facilitate and engage in asset transfer. For example, they were generally more confident about their knowledge of where to go to access advice and guidance; 62% of the political leaders felt their knowledge of where to go was very strong or strong compared to a figure of 52% of officers. Moreover, a larger proportion of the political leaders believed their authority's capacity in terms of understanding the support needs of relevant community organisations was good. Compared to 48% of officers, 60% of political leaders rated their understanding to be very strong or strong. Although nearly half of the authorities highlighted their capacity to accurately and effectively monitor their asset transfer performance and the impact of this over time, to be weak or very weak, whilst only 15% of the political leaders raised the same concern.

Critical success factors

- 2.42 In the view of the local authorities surveyed (see Figure 2-6), the key to successful asset transfer lies in third sector organisations having sufficient capacity and skills (72%), and in having a good business plan with robust revenue streams in place going forward (64%).

Figure 2-6 Primary critical success factors in undertaking sustainable and successful asset transfers



Source: SQW Consulting based on ATU Evaluation Officer Survey (2009)

- 2.43 Other important factors cited by respondents include the availability of funds to refurbish the asset or to kick-start activity (33%) and having a supportive and rounded approach by the local authority (28%).

Looking to the future

- 2.44 In terms of the level of asset transfer activity, based on the survey findings, the future looks positive, with the majority of those local authorities who participated in the surveys confident that levels of activity will not taper off. Whilst 40% of officers believe their level of transfer activity will remain stable, a similar proportion (40%) believe it will increase over the next few years. Only 6% of officers estimated that activity would decrease, and 12% stated that they were uncertain as to what would happen in the future.

3: Summary of key findings

3.1 Table 3-1 below summarises the key findings from this Baseline Report.

Table 3-1 Key findings of the Baseline surveys

Assets transferred in the last two years

- The majority of local authorities surveyed have transferred assets to communities during the last two years, although the level of activity in most cases is modest (fewer than 5 projects). The assets that most authorities have transferred are located in urban environments.
- Only 10% of assets transferred are described by officers as being in a 'deprived setting', locally defined. This may be an underestimate, but it raises the question as to who the primary beneficiaries of transfers will be and how well understood this is.

Current transfers

- The majority of local authorities are also presently engaged in transferring at least some assets to communities. In total, the survey identified some 350 asset transfer projects across 119 local authorities.
- The most common types of assets being transferred are community centres, parks or playing fields, accounting for 50% of all projects. There is a huge diversity of assets being transferred though.
- The majority of transfers are successful, but 1 in 5 local authorities have experienced failures in transferring assets - caused mainly by a lack of finance and also technical skills in the local authority itself or the recipient organisations.

Awareness of the ATU

- 82% of local authorities were aware of the ATU, which is a high level of awareness, but most have limited knowledge of its core activities, services and remit.
- Local authorities tend to find out about the ATU through general media coverage, various events and publications – not through online channels such as You Tube and Twitter.
- Authorities that have had contact with the ATU generally have high levels of satisfaction with the service they received and found the personal contact most useful (i.e. telephone or face-to-face meetings).
- Awareness of the ATU amongst council leaders was much lower than amongst officers.

Advice and support on asset transfer

- Just over half of the authorities that have been involved in asset transfer projects in the last two years have sought external help, with nearly half relying on their own resources and expertise.
- The most commonly used sources of support and advice have been briefings, seminars and conferences, followed by expert information and advice, then written guidance and materials. Levels of satisfaction by users were generally quite high, with the highest satisfaction from those receiving bespoke advice and assistance.
- Councillors identified a need in particular for greater access to good practice case studies and guidance.

Importance and benefits of asset transfer

- Levels of interest in asset transfer have either remained the same or increased in most local authorities, but few council leaders identified community asset transfer as a high political priority.
- Less than 40% of local authorities in our survey have an existing policy on asset transfer.
- The main reasons given by local authorities for transferring assets to community organisations are that it is seen as being an effective way of empowering local communities, and is also a response to pressure from local groups and politicians.
- The main perceived benefits of asset transfer identified are enhanced partnership working with the local third sector, improved community engagement and the refurbishment and modernisation of dilapidated assets.

Capacity for asset transfers

- Local authorities believe that they have – in the main - good technical skills but identified a need for more financial resources to support transfers, better performance management and clearer policies and strategies. The perceptions of councillors and officers differed quite significantly in respect of local authorities' strengths and weaknesses, with councillors tending to be much more positive in their assessments.
 - The most significant success factors identified by local authorities for successful asset transfers to take place were ensuring that the recipient organisation has sufficient capacity and skills to implement the project, a robust business plan and sustainable revenue streams.
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Looking to the future

- Officers were positive about the prospects for community asset transfer, with most expecting it to continue or increase in scale in the next few years.
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Annex A: Officer survey questionnaire

- A.1 SQW Consulting has been commissioned by the Development Trusts Association on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government to undertake an evaluation of the Asset Transfer Unit. As part of this research we are undertaking a comprehensive national baseline survey of all local authorities in England. Two separate questionnaires will be used during the survey – one for officers and a much shorter one for councillors. The evaluation programme will span two years and later in 2010 we will re-run the same survey process.
- A.2 The survey is for Council Officers and should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. We thank you in advance for your important contribution to this research process. All responses are confidential.

1) Contact information

Questions 1-3: Contact information

1. Name
2. Job title and Dept
3. Name of Local Authority
4. Email address

2) Level of community asset transfer activity

Note: Community asset transfer is defined as the transfer of the ownership or management of land or buildings from a local authority to a community-based organisation.

Question 4

How many physical assets has your local authority actually transferred to community-based organisations in the last 2 years (2007-2009)? (Please estimate if you do not know the precise number)

OR Estimate	<5	5-10	10-15	>15
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Question 5

How many community asset transfer projects are in process in your local authority at the present time – whether in their early stages or about to complete?

Question 6: At what stage are these projects? Please indicate how many fall into each of the following stages of development.

	Number of projects
In discussion/early stages	
Feasibility stage	

	Number of projects
Agreed in principle, currently drawing up detailed legal/financial arrangements	
About to complete	

Question 7: How many of these would you say are in the following settings?

Urban

Rural

Question 8

How many of these would you say are in a **deprived** setting?

Question 9: Which types of community-based organisations are you presently working with to transfer assets to, or have you transferred assets to in the last two years?

Type of organisation	Number of projects
Social enterprise	
Community interest companies	
Credit unions	
Co-operatives	
Development Trusts	
Charities	
Industrial/ provident society	
Other (Please specify)	

Question 10: What types of asset are included in the assets that you have transferred in the last 2 years or are presently looking to transfer?

	Please tick all that apply and state the number of each type
Shop	
School	
Library	
Offices	
Community centre	
Village Hall	
Leisure Centre	
Warehouse	
Factory	

Please tick all that apply and state the number of each type

Pub

Church

Elderly peoples accommodation

Park or playing field

Other (Please specify)

Question 11: Have any community asset transfer projects failed in the last two years (come to a halt altogether)?

Please tick and if yes, give a reason

Yes

No

Number of projects and reason why these failed

Lack of funding

Lack of technical expertise in LA/community partnership

Weak business plan

Lack of capacity in LA/community partnership

Economic downturn

Legal issue

Lack of local public support

Other (please specify)

3) Awareness

Question 12: Have you heard of the Asset Transfer Unit?

No

Yes - aware but don't know much about it

Yes – aware of it and have some idea of what it does

Yes – have had some direct contact with the Unit and used at least one of its services

Question 13: If yes, how did you hear about the Asset Transfer Unit?

Please tick

Website inc. You Tube and Twitter

Conference / workshop event

Publication

Please tick

Media coverage

Other (please specify)

Question 14: If you have had contact with the Asset Transfer Unit before, please tell us what service you used and what you thought of the service. (Where 1 is very useful and 5 is not useful at all)

1 2 3 4 5

Website inc. You Tube and Twitter

Used publication

Spoke to someone on the telephone for advice/information

Had a face-to-face meeting

Used good practice guidance / case study materials

Other (Please specify)

N/A

4) Sources of advice and support

Question 15a: If you have been engaged in any community asset transfer processes at all in the last two years, have you sought advice (at least a phone call or a meeting) from outside your organisation?

N/A

No, not sought advice from anywhere else

Yes, sought advice from the following organisations at least once:

- Professional legal or financial or property services
 - Local community or voluntary sector advice organisation
 - LGA
 - Regional Government Office
 - CLG
 - DTA
 - Community Matters
 - ACRE
 - Asset Transfer Unit
 - Other (please specify)
-

Question 15b: If yes, what types of support were they and how useful were they? (Where 1 is very useful and 5 is not useful at all)

	1	2	3	4	5	Not applicable/Not used this service
Community Asset Transfer briefings, seminars and conferences						
Expert information, advice and guidance						
Referral to stakeholder services						
Intensive support						
Training						
Community asset transfer tools and best practice materials						
Community asset transfer research, development and innovation						
Other (please specify)						

5) Policy and capacity

Question 16

	Yes	No	No, but we are considering developing such a policy
Does your organisation have a formal written corporate policy in place that promotes the transfer of the ownership or management of assets to community-based organisations as a key aim?			

Question 17

	Higher priority	Lower priority	About the same
Is community asset transfer a higher or lower priority for your authority today, compared with a year ago?			

Question 18: If you have been involved in community asset transfer activity, what do you think have been the main benefits of it to your local authority?

	Please tick the three most important benefits
Not applicable	
Improved public services	
Enhanced partnership working with local third sector groups	
More effective community engagement	
Development of new skills and capacity amongst staff	
A stronger and more effective third sector locally	
Refurbishment and modernisation of dilapidated assets	

Please tick the three most important benefits

Contribution to broader regeneration objectives

Other (please specify)

Question 19: What was your local authority's asset management rating in the latest CAA round?

Question 20: If you have been involved in community asset transfer activity, in your view, what have been the three main primary motivating factors behind it in your area?

Please tick the three most important drivers that apply

Not applicable

Part of a broader local authority response to national policy commitments around community empowerment

A direct response by the local authority to National Indicator 4 (% of local people who feel they can influence decision making)

A direct response by the local authority to the work of the ATU and its partners

Local authority decisions are being strongly influenced by local politicians and their priorities

Local authority decisions are being influenced by pressure and lobbying from proactive local community or voluntary groups

Other (please specify)

Question 21: How well equipped do you consider your authority to be in terms of its present capacity to engage in community asset transfer where that is deemed appropriate? (Where 1 is strong and 5 is weak)

1 2 3 4 5

Clear policy or strategy to enable transfers

Political interest in making community asset transfers

Officer interest in making community asset transfers

Internal technical skills – property, financial, legal

Internal ability to evaluate risks

Strong working relationships with relevant local community/voluntary sector organisations

Understanding of the capacity needs/aspirations and potential of relevant local community/voluntary sector organisations

Effective performance management methods in place to measure and assess the value of what the local third sector can offer through asset transfer activity

	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of appropriate assets to transfer					
Knowledge of where to access further external advice and support where necessary					
Financial resources to enable and support such transfers					

Question 22: What would you say are the three main critical success factors in undertaking sustainable and successful asset transfer activity in your area, where it has taken place?

Please tick the three most important success factors that apply

- Not applicable
- A rounded and strategic approach from the local authority
- The receiving third sector organisation has sufficient capacity and skills
- The local authority has sufficient capacity and skills
- A good business plan and viable revenue stream going forward
- Availability of funds to refurbish the asset or get the activity started
- Technical knowledge about a particular asset
- Broad public/local support for the transfer
- Strong support from local politicians
- The transfer scheme has a strong champion and project manager to drive it through
- Other (please specify)

6) Looking forwards

Question 23:

	Increase	Decrease	Stay the same	Don't know
Over the next few years, do you think that the rate of transfer of assets to community-based organisations in your area is likely to change much?				

Annex B: Council leader survey questionnaire

- B.1 SQW Consulting has been commissioned by the Development Trusts Association on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government to undertake an evaluation of the Asset Transfer Unit. As part of this research we are undertaking a comprehensive national baseline survey of all local authorities in England. Two separate questionnaires will be used during the survey – one for officers and one for councillors. The evaluation programme will span two years and later in 2010 we will re-run the same survey process.
- B.2 This questionnaire is for *council leaders or most relevant councillor or portfolio holder*. The survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. We thank you in advance for your important contribution to this research process. All responses are confidential.

1) Contact information

Questions 1-3: Contact information

1. Name
2. Councillor role & Ward
3. Political party

2) Policy & Capacity

Question 4

	Yes	No	No, but we are considering developing such a policy
Does your organisation have a formal written corporate policy in place that promotes the transfer of the ownership or management of assets to community-based organisations as a key aim?			

Question 5

	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent do you consider the transfer of appropriate local authority assets to community-based organisations to manage or own to be a personal political priority for you as a councillor? (Where 1 is high priority and 5 is low priority)					

Question 6

	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent do you consider the transfer of appropriate local authority assets to community-based organisations to manage or own to be a political priority for your party grouping in this authority? (Where 1 is high priority and 5 is low priority)					

Question 7

	Higher priority	Lower priority	About the same
Is community asset transfer a higher or lower priority for your authority today, compared with a year ago?			

Question 8: How well equipped do you consider your authority to be in terms of its present capacity to engage in community asset transfer where that is deemed appropriate? (Where 1 is strong and 5 is weak)

	1	2	3	4	5
Clear policy or strategy to enable transfers					
Political interest in making community asset transfers					
Officer interest in making community asset transfers					
Internal technical skills – property, financial, legal					
Internal ability to evaluate risks					
Strong working relationships with relevant local community/voluntary sector organisations					
Understanding of the capacity needs/aspirations and potential of relevant local community and voluntary sector organisations					
Effective performance management methods in place to measure and assess the value of what the local third sector can offer through asset transfer activity					
Availability of appropriate assets to transfer					
Knowledge of where to access further external advice and support where necessary					
Financial resources to enable and support such transfers					

Question 9: If you have been involved in community asset transfer activity, what do you think have been the main benefits of it to your local authority?

Please tick the three most important benefits

Not applicable
Improved public services
Enhanced partnership working with local third sector groups
More effective community engagement
Development of new skills and capacity amongst staff
A stronger and more effective third sector locally
Refurbishment and modernisation of dilapidated assets
Contribution to broader regeneration objectives
Other (please specify)

Question 10: If you have been involved in community asset transfer activity, in your view, what have been the three main primary motivating factors behind it in your area?

Please tick the three most important drivers that apply

Not applicable

Part of a broader local authority response to national policy commitments around community empowerment

A direct response by the local authority to National Indicator 4 (% of local people who feel they can influence decision making)

A direct response by the local authority to the work of the ATU and its partners

Local authority decisions are being strongly influenced by local politicians and their priorities

Local authority decisions are being influenced by pressure and lobbying from proactive local community or voluntary groups

Other (please specify)

3) Awareness

Question 10: Have you heard of the Asset Transfer Unit?

No

Yes – aware but don't know much about it

Yes – aware of it and have some idea of what it does

Yes – have had some direct contact with the Unit and used at least one of its services

Question 11: If yes, how did you hear about the Asset Transfer Unit?

Please tick

Website inc. You Tube and Twitter

Conference / workshop event

Publication

Media coverage

Other (please specify)

Question 12: If you have had contact with the Asset Transfer Unit before, please tell us what service you used and what you thought of the service. (Where 1 is very useful and 5 is not useful at all)

1 2 3 4 5

Website inc. You Tube and Twitter

Used publication

Spoke to someone on the telephone for advice/information

Had a face-to-face meeting

	1	2	3	4	5
Used good practice guidance / case study materials					
Other (Please specify)					
N/A					

Question 13: Is there any additional support or advice that you would like in respect of community asset transfer?

Please tick all that apply

No, none

Advice from other councillors and officers in other authorities who have done this

Advice from specialists like DTA, ATU, etc

Clearer guidance on how to do it

More evidence on benefits

Good practice case studies

Other

Annex C: Survey covering letter from CLG

Dear Sir/Madam,

CLG evaluation of the Asset Transfer Unit – baseline survey

Communities and Local Government (CLG) and partners including the LGA are evaluating the work of the new Asset Transfer Unit and progress on community asset transfer across England. As part of this national evaluation, **we would like your help in completing a very short online questionnaire** about your own authority's work on transferring assets. We are hoping to put together the most comprehensive national picture on community asset transfer yet achieved, to support the work of local government in this area.

SQW Consulting is undertaking the evaluation, which has been commissioned by the Development Trust Association on behalf of CLG. The Asset Transfer Unit is being delivered and led by the DTA in association with Community Matters and the LGA.

The baseline survey covers all local authorities in England. We would like this questionnaire to be completed by the most relevant officer in each authority – in most cases an officer with oversight of asset management and transfers. **The information you provide will be totally confidential. The survey should take no longer than ten minutes to complete.** Please feel free to forward this email onto a colleague if you believe that they are better placed to complete the questionnaire.

The evaluation will run for two years and the same survey process will be repeated in late 2010. It will be particularly valuable in allowing us to gain a clear national picture on asset transfer, and, in particular, how this is changing over time.

The online questionnaire can be accessed by clicking on the following link: (officer: <http://www.keysurvey.co.uk/survey/263919/1ece/> or councilor: <http://www.keysurvey.co.uk/survey/264290/124d/>) I would be extremely grateful if you could assist with this process and provide us with your responses by **Friday 17 July 2009**. If you have any queries regarding the survey please contact Aino Pietikainen at SQW on 020 7307 7174 or via APietikainen@sqw.co.uk

Yours sincerely,



Henry Tam
Deputy Director Community Empowerment Delivery
Communities and Local Government

Annex D: List of local authorities that participated in the officer survey

Table D-1: List of local authorities who completed the officer survey showing whether or not they participated in the AA pilot programme and how deprived their areas are according to the Indices of Deprivation 2007

Local authority	Participation in the Advancing Asset Programme	Quintile of LA deprivation - Not provided for County Councils
Allerdale Borough Council	Yes - Year 2	40% most deprived LAs
Alnwick District Council		60% most deprived LAs
Ashford Borough Council		40% least deprived LAs
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	Yes - Year 2	20% most deprived LAs
Bassetlaw District Council		40% most deprived LAs
Bedford Borough Council		60% most deprived LAs
Birmingham City Council	Yes - Year 1	20% most deprived LAs
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council		20% most deprived LAs
Bolsover District Council		20% most deprived LAs
Brighton & Hove City Council	Yes - Year 2	40% most deprived LAs
Bromsgrove District Council		20% least deprived LAs
Broxbourne Borough Council		60% most deprived LAs
Burnley Borough Council		20% most deprived LAs
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council		40% most deprived LAs
Cambridge City Council		40% least deprived LAs
Cambridgeshire County Council		-
Cannock Chase District Council		40% most deprived LAs
Carlisle City Council		40% most deprived LAs
Cheltenham Borough Council		60% most deprived LAs
Cherwell District Council		40% least deprived LAs
Chichester District Council		40% least deprived LAs
Christchurch Borough Council		40% least deprived LAs
City of York Council		40% least deprived LAs
Coventry City Council	Yes - Year 3	20% most deprived LAs
Craven District Council		40% least deprived LAs
Darlington Borough Council		40% most deprived LAs

Local authority	Participation in the Advancing Asset Programme	Quintile of LA deprivation - Not provided for County Councils
Derbyshire County Council		40% least deprived LAs
Devon County Council	Yes - Year 1	-
Dover District Council		60% most deprived LAs
East Cambridgeshire District Council		20% least deprived LAs
East Lindsey District Council		40% most deprived LAs
East Staffordshire Borough Council		60% most deprived LAs
Eastbourne Borough Council		40% most deprived LAs
Exeter City Council		60% most deprived LAs
Fareham Borough Council		20% least deprived LAs
Fylde Borough Council	Yes - Year 3	40% least deprived LAs
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council	Yes - Year 2	20% most deprived LAs
Gloucestershire County Council		40% most deprived LAs
Gravesham Borough Council		60% most deprived LAs
Guildford Borough Council		20% least deprived LAs
Halton Borough Council		20% most deprived LAs
Hampshire County Council		-
Hartlepool Borough Council		20% most deprived LAs
Hastings Borough Council	Yes - Year 1	20% most deprived LAs
Havant Borough Council		40% most deprived LAs
Herefordshire Council		60% most deprived LAs
Hertfordshire County Council	Yes - Year 2	-
High Peak Borough Council	Yes - Year 2	60% most deprived LAs
Horsham District Council		20% least deprived LAs
Huntingdonshire District Council		20% least deprived LAs
Hyndburn Borough Council		20% most deprived LAs
Ipswich Borough Council		40% most deprived LAs
Kettering Borough Council		40% least deprived LAs
Kingston upon Hull City Council		20% most deprived LAs
Kirklees MBC	Yes - Year 1	40% most deprived LAs
Lancaster City Council		40% most deprived LAs
Leeds City Council	Yes - Year 1	40% most deprived LAs

Local authority	Participation in the Advancing Asset Programme	Quintile of LA deprivation - Not provided for County Councils
Leicester City Council	Yes - Year 2	20% most deprived LAs
Leicestershire County Council		-
Lincolnshire County Council		-
Liverpool City Council		20% most deprived LAs
London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham		20% most deprived LAs
London Borough of Lambeth	Yes - Year 1 and Year 3	20% most deprived LAs
London Borough of Waltham Forest		20% most deprived LAs
London Borough of Redbridge		60% most deprived LAs
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames		20% least deprived LAs
London Borough of Southwark	Yes - Year 2	20% most deprived LAs
London Borough of Sutton		40% least deprived LAs
Manchester City Council		20% most deprived LAs
Mansfield District Council		20% most deprived LAs
Mid Devon District Council		60% most deprived LAs
Newark & Sherwood District Council	Yes - Year 2	60% most deprived LAs
Norfolk County Council		-
North East Lincolnshire Council		20% most deprived LAs
North Kesteven District Council		20% least deprived LAs
North Norfolk District Council	Yes - Year 3	60% most deprived LAs
North Somerset District Council		40% least deprived LAs
North Tyneside Council	Yes - Year 1	40% most deprived LAs
Norwich City Council		20% most deprived LAs
Oxford City Council	Yes - Year 2	60% most deprived LAs
Portsmouth City Council	Yes - Year 2	40% most deprived LAs
Purbeck District Council		40% least deprived LAs
Restormel BC	Yes - Year 1	40% most deprived LAs
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	Yes - Year 3	20% most deprived LAs
Rossendale Borough Council		40% most deprived LAs
Rother District Council		60% most deprived LAs
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea		-

Local authority	Participation in the Advancing Asset Programme	Quintile of LA deprivation - Not provided for County Councils
Salford City Council	Yes - Year 3	20% most deprived LAs
Sedgemoor District Council	Yes - Year 2	60% most deprived LAs
Sevenoaks District Council		20% least deprived LAs
South Gloucestershire Council	Yes - Year 2	20% least deprived LAs
South Holland District Council		60% most deprived LAs
St Edmundsbury Borough Council		40% least deprived LAs
Stroud District Council		40% least deprived LAs
Suffolk Coastal District Council		40% least deprived LAs
Swale Borough Council	Yes - Year 3	40% most deprived LAs
Tamworth Borough Council		60% most deprived LAs
Teignbridge District Council		60% most deprived LAs
Tewkesbury Borough Council		40% least deprived LAs
Torbay Council	Yes - Year 2	40% most deprived LAs
Torridge District Council	Yes - Year 3	40% most deprived LAs
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council		60% most deprived LAs
Uttlesford District Council		20% least deprived LAs
Vale of White Horse District Council		20% least deprived LAs
Warwick District Council	Yes - Year 1	40% least deprived LAs
Watford Borough Council		60% most deprived LAs
Waveney District Council		40% most deprived LAs
Wealden District Council		20% least deprived LAs
Wellingborough Borough Council		60% most deprived LAs
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council		40% least deprived LAs
West Berkshire Council		20% least deprived LAs
West Dorset District Council		60% most deprived LAs
West Lancashire District Council		40% most deprived LAs
West Lindsey District Council	Yes - Year 2	60% most deprived LAs
Weymouth & Portland Borough Council		40% most deprived LAs
Wirral Metropolitan Borough	Yes - Year 2	20% most deprived LAs
Worcestershire County Council		-
Wycombe District Council		20% least deprived LAs

Local authority	Participation in the Advancing Asset Programme	Quintile of LA deprivation - Not provided for County Councils
Wyre Borough Council		60% most deprived LAs