

Audit Commission

Presentation



Preparation for the full Implementation of the Children's Act

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and Walsall Teaching Primary Care Trust

25 April 2006

Steve Blundell ~ Audit Commission

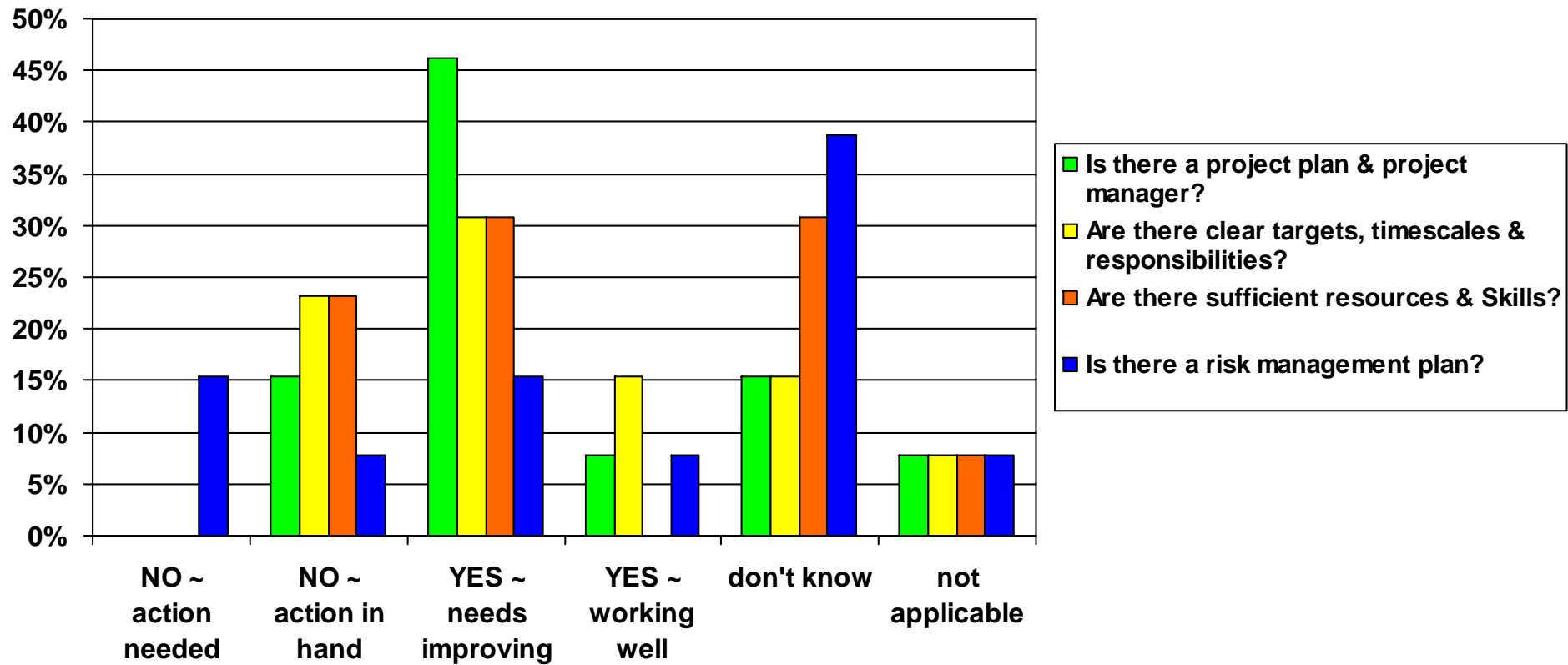
Background

- The Children Act 2004 and Every Child Matters have introduced an outcomes focused approach to planning and delivering services for children and young people based on effective local partnership working.
- Implementing the changes required by the Children Act will present Walsall with a number of potential risks
- We have therefore designed this project to work with Walsall MBC, Walsall tPCT and their partners to help them identify risk associated with implementing the Act

Process

- **Initial scoping**
 - we reviewed key documents, and;
 - undertook a Partnership Survey
- **A focus on Walsall’s specific developments**
 - we agreed with the Council and the tPCT to focus on;
 - managing change
 - developing ambitions
 - interagency working
- **Regular feedback meetings**
 - we agreed to operate a “no surprises” approach by providing regular feedback on our work

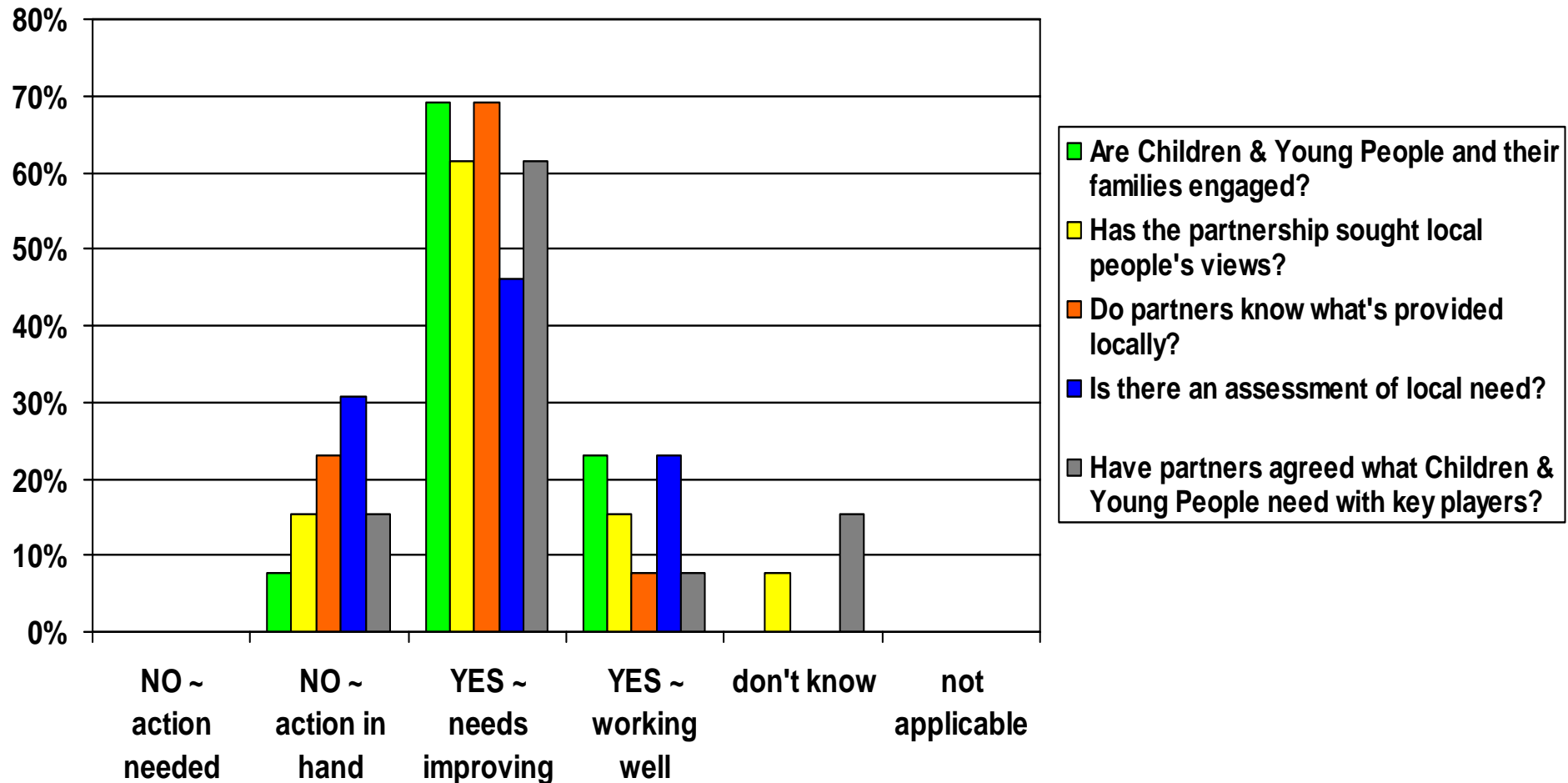
Partner survey ~ (managing change)



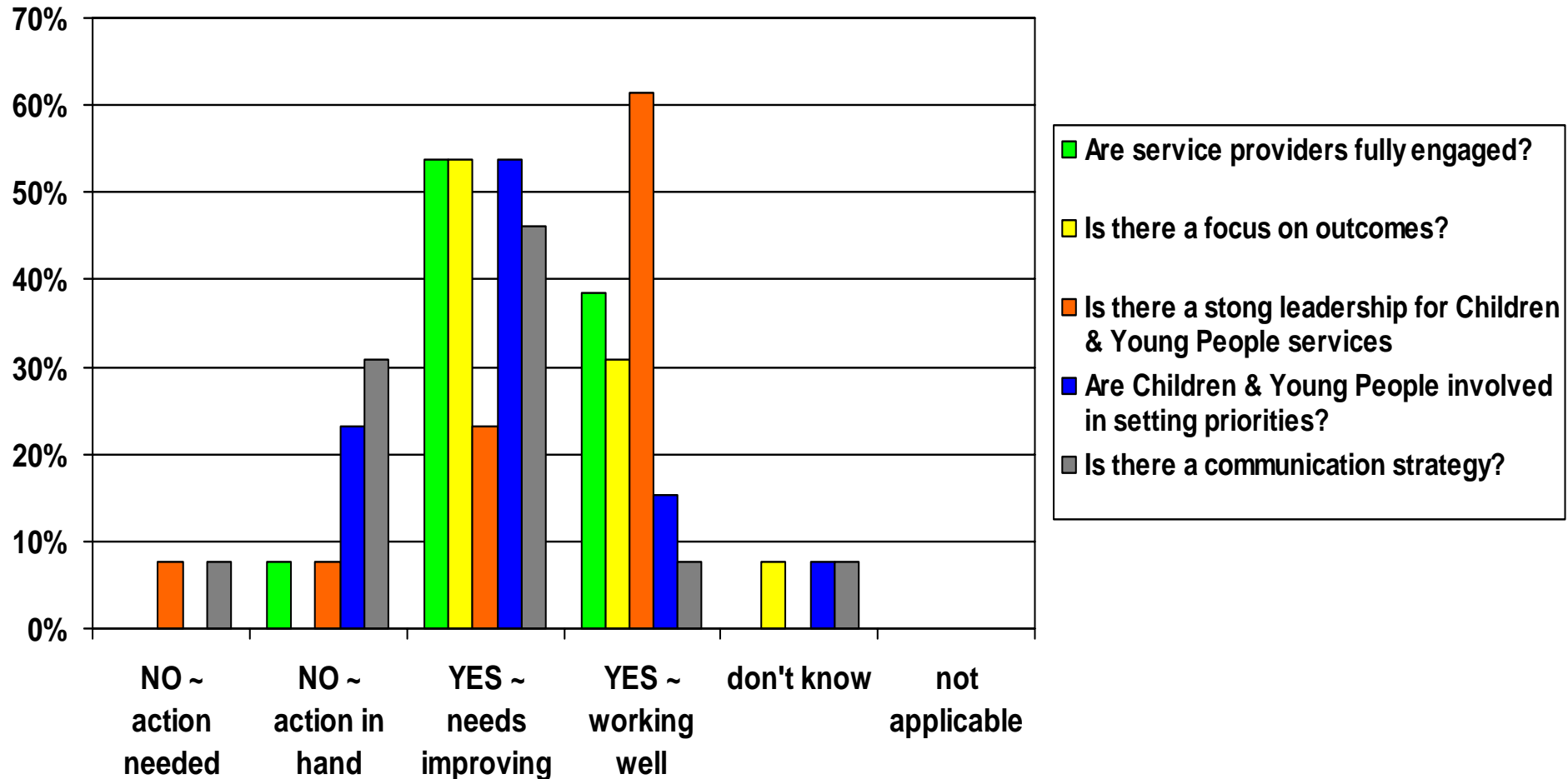
What we found ~ (*managing change*)

- **Risk Management**
 - The Partnership has identified basic risks, and risk is discussed at project management meetings, but there;
 - has been no formal risk assessment
 - there is no Risk Management Plan
- **Programme Management**
 - The Partnership has
 - appointed a Director of Children's Services
 - produced a Project Plan
 - *although the plan was not discussed with front line staff or service users*
 - established arrangements for regular progress report to the Partnership Board and to Members.

Partner survey ~ (developing ambitions ~ 1)



Partner survey ~ (developing ambitions ~ 2)



What we found ~ (*developing ambitions ~ 1*)

Shared Vision

- The Children’s Partnership has;**
 - an agreed vision for Children’s services in Walsall**
 - partners who will alter their priorities to improve outcomes for children and young people**
 - produced an Overarching Strategy for children’s services and a simplified version of the Plan (the Rainbow Plan) that was translated by children & young people**

However;

- systems to deliver core strategies could be improved, e.g.**
 - the Overarching Strategy has only a basic action plan**

What we found ~ (*developing ambitions ~ 2*)

- **Leadership**

- The Walsall tPCT and Walsall MBC have established a process for leading the C&YP Partnership. They have;

- allocated lead responsibility to senior officers
- a Lead Member
- established the C&YP integration agenda as a priority, and;
- invested in training members

However,

- although there is communication within the Partnership, there is not an agreed Communication Strategy
- the Partnership is not making best use of the learning that is already available to it (e.g. Youth Justice Service experience of partnership working)

- There is a heavy reliance in key individuals to drive the Partnership

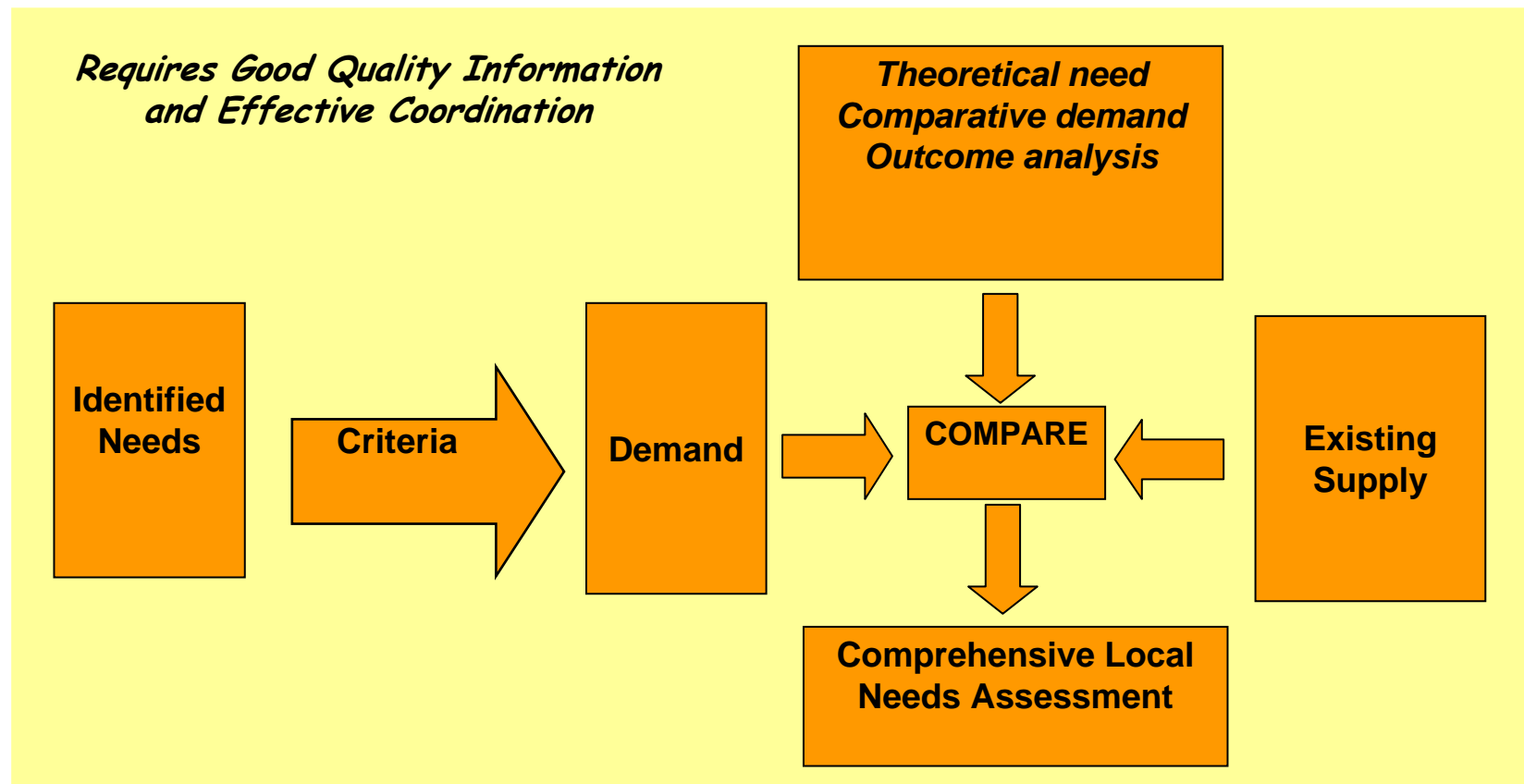
What we found ~ (*developing ambitions* ~ 3)

- **Local Needs**

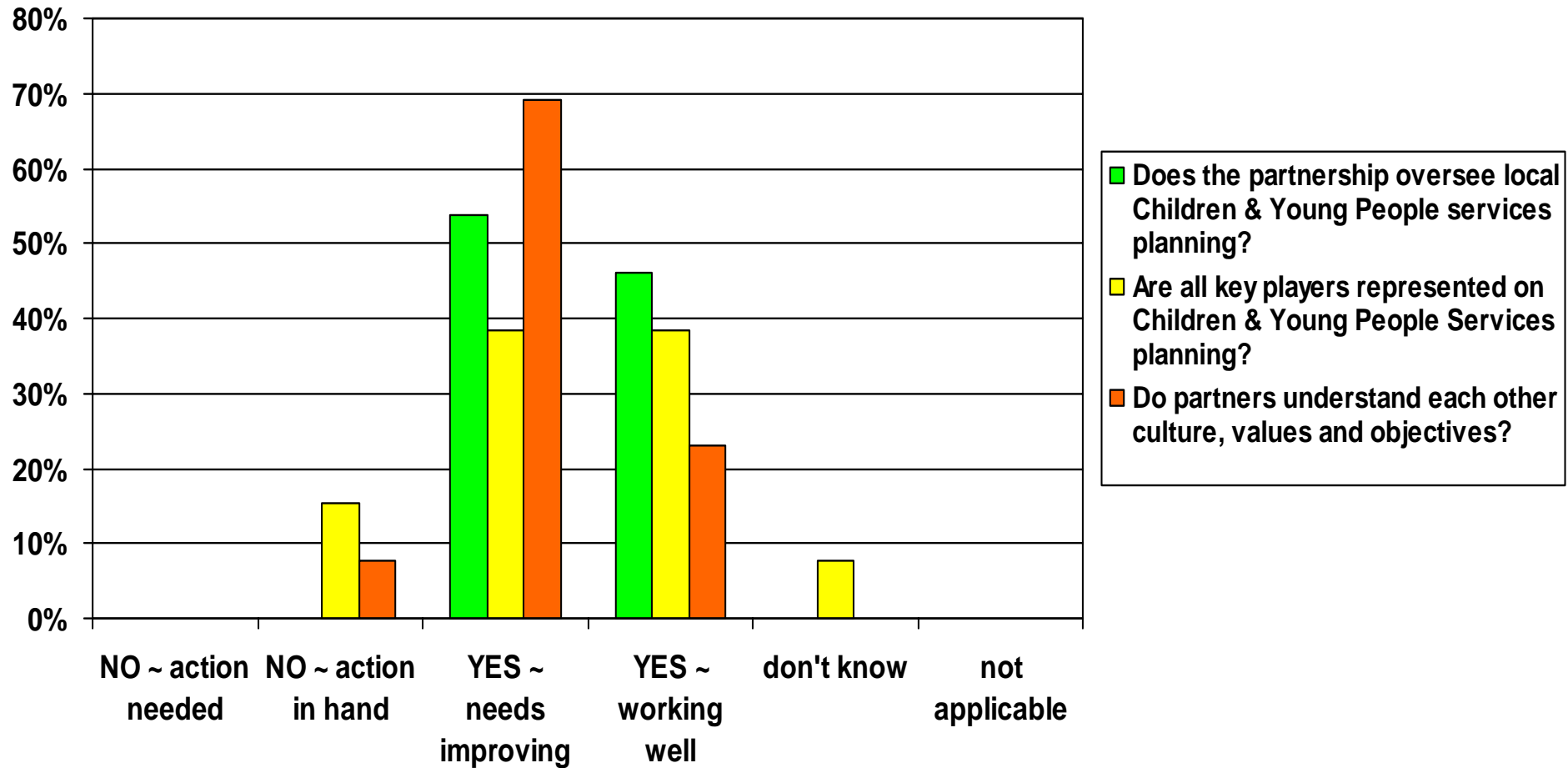
- **The Partnership has;**

- **taken account of particular factors that effect Walsall (its culture and its diverse population);**
 - **established systems to engage with key players**
 - **and needs to further ensure a wide range of interests, including children & young people, families and carers, are more deeply involved in setting of priorities**
 - **undertaken some evaluation of local need and have an understanding of local supply;**
 - **but a structured process to compare these elements would produce a more comprehensive local needs assessment**

Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment



Partner survey ~ (interagency working)



What we found ~ (*interagency working*)

- **Participation in the Partnership**
 - A wide range of organisations attend the Partnership Board from both the Statutory and the Voluntary sectors, but there is concern that the:
 - wrong people attend some groups, and;
 - the voluntary sector could be helped to take a more active role
- **Partnership Governance**
 - The Partnership has not agreed a number of important strategies. There is not;
 - a risk sharing protocol
 - a protocol for resolving conflicts, or;
 - an exit strategy

Partnership Governance

Other issues to consider (1)

- **Pooled Budgets** ~ will present a variety of risks, you'll need;
 - mechanisms for reporting financial performance across the Partnership
 - integrated financial controls
 - agreed budget management arrangements
 - a clear understanding of the total budget requirement
 - agreement about how financial risk is to be apportioned/managed

Partnership Governance

Other issues to consider (2)

- **Managing Performance** ~ the service will be measured against the outcomes it achieves, you'll need;
 - good quality information across the partnership
 - transparency of information
 - to demonstrate that your joint targets reflect your needs analysis
 - an integrated performance management system
- **Joint Commissioning**, you'll need
 - a common understanding about joint commissioning
 - to managing local markets
 - continually review your arrangements
 - monitor outcomes

The way forward (1)

- **Produce a comprehensive Risk Management Plan**
- **Link the evaluation of local need to a map of existing supply and produce a comprehensive local needs assessment**
- **Produce a comprehensive action plan, with milestones to deliver the Children's Strategy**
- **Devise a Communication Strategy (using a communication specialist)**
- **Ensure key tasks are delegated whenever possible**
- **Produce key strategies and protocols**
- **Use learning that's available in the partnership to enhance understanding of partnership working**
 - *e.g. Partnership working in the Youth Justice Service*