

Neighbourhood Renewal

1. The Governments Agenda on Neighbourhood Renewal

1.1 The Government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, launched in 2001, has the aim that within 10 to 20 years, no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live. The overarching objectives of the strategy are to help create sustainable communities where people want to live not leave, and, to help groups within the community who may also be disadvantaged, because of their ethnicity for example.

1.2 In 2001 the Government funded the establishment of 35 pathfinder Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRA's) in areas of high deprivation. Since then, Local Authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships have set up over 200 NRA's across England.

1.3 The rationale for the pathfinder projects, based on work by the Government's Social Exclusion Unit, was that lack of joint working at local level was one of the key reasons for lack of progress in delivering sustainable, economic, social and physical regeneration and improved public services that meets the need of local people. They set down a principle for neighbourhood renewal, that local people know best what the priorities and needs of their own neighbourhood are and that they must have the tools to participate in regeneration.

1.4 An evaluation of the effectiveness of the pathfinder NRA's was carried out in 2004 (a summary of these findings is attached at appendix 1) and, from this, the 2004 Spending Review spelled out the new measures being introduced by Government to help deliver neighbourhood renewal more effectively. From this, they have introduced a new Public Service Agreement on neighbourhood renewal and tackling social exclusion, which began in April 2005. Secondly, a new list of floor targets have been launched, aimed at reducing inequalities and ensuring that, at local level, those delivering local services focus more strongly on the key challenges of neighbourhood renewal. The floor targets have a broad range including:

- ◆ Reducing early deaths from cancer, heart disease and strokes
- ◆ Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training
- ◆ A focus on achieving better results in high crime areas
- ◆ Jobs targets
- ◆ A new floor target on liveability

1.5 Government evidence shows that neighbourhood governance helps secure improvements in public services and re-engages citizens with the institutions of government. As a consequence they want to see neighbourhood arrangements being adopted far more widely but have recognised that there can be 'no one size fits all'. In order to expedite the move towards neighbourhood working the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) from 2005 will assess how Councils are involving users and neighbourhoods. A paper by the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) advises;

'While the Government has avoided prescribing a specific form of neighbourhood engagement, it wants to increase the pressure for some devolution and will use CPA to enforce this'

The LGIU also notes that it is Government's intention that neighbourhood governance should be integrated with and supportive of the Council's role as the democratically elected institution in that area. Local councillors are seen as being at the heart of the new arrangements.

2. Neighbourhood Management

2.1 The Government definition for neighbourhood renewal is;

‘Neighbourhood renewal provides a platform for building strong and cohesive communities in which everyone regardless of race, faith, gender, age, sexual orientation and disability has a real stake and where services are tailored to meet local needs’

The introduction of neighbourhood management is seen as being central to the delivery of effective neighbourhood renewal. Neighbourhood management aims to tackle quality of life issues in communities through

- ◆ Better management of the local environment
- ◆ Increasing community safety
- ◆ Improving the housing stock
- ◆ Working with young people
- ◆ Encouraging employment opportunities

2.2 Neighbourhood management teams ‘on the ground’ relate closely to residents and local groups. The trust that develops over time between the neighbourhood team and the community has proved more effective in engaging hard to reach groups than other measures. Government states;

‘The key to neighbourhood management is that residents’ concerns should be more important in defining what is done than agencies’ assumptions’

The experience of the pathfinder NRA’s was that mainstream organisations and the community working cooperatively through a local team have a far greater chance of success.

2.3 Organisations such as the Primary Care Trusts (PCT), local authorities and the Police are more likely to change the ways they allocate resources and to ‘bend’ their mainstream programmes to tackle the issues that really matter to local people where a neighbourhood team motivates and reinforces the messages.

3. Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and The Role of Local Strategic Partnerships

3.1 The preparation of a Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (NRS) for a local authority area is a key responsibility for the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in all areas receiving neighbourhood renewal funding. These strategies provide the strategic aims and targets for tackling deprivation and other key areas identified by the partnership, whilst contributing to national targets for tackling deprivation.

3.2 In July 2003, the office of the deputy prime minister (ODPM), advised that neighbourhood renewal strategies could be incorporated into Community Strategies. There is no statutory requirement for LSP’s not in receipt of NRA funding to prepare a neighbourhood renewal strategy, however, it is recommended as part of the process of moving towards greater neighbourhood governance.

3.3 Local strategic partnerships also play a key role in the most important concept of neighbourhood renewal strategies; that of ‘mainstreaming’, that is, skewing the allocation of mainstream resources – such as health services – to better target the most deprived areas. This needs coordination and a strong commitment from the decision makers in each organisation. Delivering this is a key role for Strategic Partnerships.

3.4 The production of a Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy with contributions from all the partners should lead to a joined up, multi-agency programme of service delivery and regeneration initiatives within neighbourhood renewal areas, supported by effective monitoring and timely intervention as needed from the LSP.

3.5 The Harrow Strategic Partnership has established a management structure that is appropriate to oversee and deliver a Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. Development of the strategy would be led by the regeneration management group, with each thematic group having responsibility for key elements of the strategy.

3.8 Each Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy should

- ◆ Set out an agreed vision and plan for positive change in all neighbourhoods in need of renewal
- ◆ Have the agreement and commitment of all the key people and those who have a stake in the neighbourhood or an impact on it
- ◆ Clearly set out a local strategic framework for local public body priorities
- ◆ Set challenging targets for improving local services taking account of local and national priorities
- ◆ Establish systems for monitoring delivery of locally agreed targets
- ◆ Include actions to equip those involved in neighbourhood renewal with the skills and knowledge they need to take forward this agenda

4. Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRA)

4.1 The 2004 review of neighbourhood renewal areas revealed the following common patterns

- ◆ A clearly defined NRA area typically covers 10,000 to 15,000 people
- ◆ A full time neighbourhood manager and community development worker as a minimum, located within the NRA, through which service agencies are co-ordinated
- ◆ A NRA Board, including local residents and service providers, steers the initiative
- ◆ A number of thematic working groups to develop ideas and projects
- ◆ Board membership typically between 20 and 25
- ◆ Board composition variable but can be 50% local residents and 50% Councillors and mainstream service providers.
- ◆ An 'accountable body', where government funding is provided, usually the local authority
- ◆ Each NRA has unique features reflecting the diversity in the nature of neighbourhoods and in the specific local needs and solutions being pursued

4.2 Baselines and Performance

A clear baseline position needs to be established for all neighbourhood renewal areas at the start. Common baselines established are

Social Capital - Research has shown that higher levels of social capital (the extent that factors such as neighbourliness, trust, community involvement, volunteering etc, exist in a given community) are associated with better health, higher educational achievement, better employment outcomes, and lower crime rates. It has been demonstrated that the most effective intervention to strengthen social capital is to empower local people. Baseline established through small scale surveys, focus groups, impressions of community/ faith groups, etc

Community cohesion - 'common vision, sense of belonging for all communities, diversity valued, similar life opportunities for all and strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds'. Baseline established through small scale surveys, focus groups, impressions of community/ faith groups, etc

Vitality Profiles – local data collected on deprivation indicators, property and environmental conditions, mobility, health, crime, etc

Mori - Quality of Life indicators

Performance – local targets are agreed between statutory providers and Neighbourhood Board

4.3 Neighbourhood Action Plans

In order to customise services and use mainstream investment in an efficient and effective way in prioritised neighbourhoods action plans are developed. This process encourages the community to identify their needs and aspirations for a better quality of life. Action plans are developed, implemented and monitored through the neighbourhood management boards. Boards bring together agencies and neighbourhood in a genuine facilitation process to identify where residents require improvements and how they will be delivered.

4.4 Action planning contains the following key steps

- ◆ Understanding the root causes of the problems
- ◆ Mapping current resources into these neighbourhoods
- ◆ Identifying the geographic areas in need of improvement
- ◆ Identifying the thematic areas in need of improvement
- ◆ Agreeing on additional work that needs to be done and setting relevant targets
- ◆ Implementing and monitoring the work through the neighbourhood management board
- ◆ Identifying, at every stage, the role of residents, and the support systems needed to ensure effective engagement

4.5 The following elements are tackled in each action plan

- ◆ Residents priorities – take on board the priorities of the residents of the neighbourhood and channel these to service providers
- ◆ Education and skills – increasing access to education, training and learning for all which will improve the employment prospects of residents and their quality of life
- ◆ Health – achieving better access to health services and initiatives to reduce the inequalities of health
- ◆ Crime – achieving a safer neighbourhood reducing crime through tackling the causes and effects of crime
- ◆ Housing – balanced communities creating choice of tenure of affordable housing and working with private landlords to improve the quality and the safety of private sector housing
- ◆ Employment – reducing poverty through new employment opportunities by, improving inward investment, growing indigenous companies and supporting social enterprises

A crucial element of these action plans is the proposed means by which statutory agencies will direct mainstream funding into the area in a coordinated way.

7. Resourcing Capacity Building and Community Engagement

7.1 Local learning plans to support skills and learning in neighbourhood renewal areas for all stakeholders forms an integral part of the action plan. This can include training, consultancy support, organisational and personal mentoring and peer group support. Particular emphasis is placed on involving hard to reach groups, eg BME groups, young people, faith groups, etc, from the outset.

Delays in accessing funding for this work has been demonstrated to be a significant problem with pathfinder NRA's and a recommended approach is to establish a neighbourhood empowerment fund, within the remit of the Board. A neighbourhood empowerment fund can be established jointly by the statutory agencies.

7.2 Routes to success

Measures for supporting community involvement in neighbourhood regeneration often incorporate the following

- ◆ Written contracts between communities and the statutory agencies, spelling out the relationships, roles, responsibilities and subject to regular review
- ◆ Ensure community representatives have the majority of places on the board
- ◆ Encourage community-led consultation and community planning such as door to door surveys and community planning events
- ◆ Paying residents for community development work
- ◆ Supporting capacity building projects identified by the community itself
- ◆ Training for officers and professionals provided by the community
- ◆ Development of community consortia and networking bringing together community groups with common interests
- ◆ Locating more professionals within communities giving them everyday experience of problems
- ◆ Introduce community champions or entrepreneurs to pump prime the capacity building process and provide leverage for communities
- ◆ Simplifying grant applications procedures
- ◆ Flexible funding packages recognising local diversity
- ◆ Commitment to investment in longer term programmes
- ◆ Prioritising support funding of community controlled bodies such as development trusts
- ◆ Neighbourhood empowerment fund
- ◆ Low administration costs
- ◆ Effective evaluation

Anna Robinson
Director of Strategy, Urban Living