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In the past twenty years successive governments in Britain have launched a series of initiatives to address growing disparities between areas of relative affluence and those characterised by high levels of unemployment, poor housing conditions, ill health and crime and anti-social behaviour. These initiatives were largely funded by central government and resources were channelled either to local authorities or partnership arrangements with boards drawn from agencies, employers and residents with a direct interest in the targeted areas. Early approaches to area-based initiatives can be traced back to the 1970s when special funding from central government was channelled to designated areas, for example to improve inner city schools. The War on Poverty and the Model Cities programme in the USA were also major influences including the rhetoric of 'maximum feasible participation' (Levine, 1970). In the 1980s regeneration strategies had favoured an economic and property orientation in areas where 'market failure' was clearly evident, such as in London's redundant Docklands. With the election of the Labour government in 1997, a wider vision became more evident and Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote: 'My vision is of a nation where no-one is seriously disadvantaged by where they live, where power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many not the few' (SEU, 2001: 8). Two primary objectives were set: (i) to lower worklessness and crime, and to improve health, skills, housing and the physical environment, and (ii) to narrow the gap on these measures between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country (op cit.: 8). Both proved far more difficult than originally envisaged and neither was fully achieved.

At the beginning of the new millennium Britain was becoming an increasingly divided nation. In the 10 per cent most deprived wards in 1998, 44 per cent of people relied on welfare payments, compared with a national average of 22 per cent and over 60 per cent of children lived in households that depended on welfare payments; the proportion of burglaries and violence against the person were significantly higher and 43 per cent of all housing did not meet decent standards compared with 29 per cent nationally (op cit.: 12). Moreover, 70 per cent of all people from ethnic minorities lived

in the 88 most deprived local authority districts, compared with 40 per cent of the general population (op cit.: 14). These stark facts relating to the concentration of multiple deprivation clearly had a wider impact on society and the need for concerted action became a priority for both main political parties.

The period under review is a remarkable one in that central government was willing to channel large amounts of public resources into a relatively few areas suffering varying levels of deprivation. In the past, the management of resources and delivery of services at the local level were perceived as entirely the responsibility of local government. This raises fundamental questions about why this was considered such a priority, whether tackling deprivation at the local level, rather than through national strategies, was the best approach, how far the target areas and populations changed for the better, and to what extent were the objectives over-ambitious and unlikely to be attainable.

Two decades later most of these initiatives have come to an end and a series of national evaluations have been published. These enable us to reflect on what has been achieved and what lessons can be learnt for the future. This chapter will be divided into three parts. The first will describe the main characteristics of area-based initiatives (ABIs) towards areas of deprivation in England. The second will discuss the main findings regarding impact and outcomes of three main regeneration programmes: the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), the New Deal for Communities (NDC) and the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders (NMP) which operated between in England between 1993 and 2010. The discussion here will relate solely to initiatives in England because separate programmes were launched in the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The final section will briefly outline the paradigm shift towards the 'Big Society' which occurred after the election of a coalition government in May 2010.

Key Characteristics of Area-Based initiatives
The ABIs under consideration here had a number of characteristics in common. They had evolved out of a perception that central and local government had failed to channel sufficient resources to areas of need and to rectify poor service delivery. In addition, policy delivery normally occurred in 'silos'. Previous initiatives had tended to address single policy areas such as housing, education and health and, it was argued, improvement would only emerge from a holistic approach to a neighbourhood and its residents and for this additional resources would be needed.

As a result, new governance regimes of collaboration and partnership had to be established to co-ordinate what had become disjointed and non-hierarchical networks of agencies involved in local service delivery.

There are six key characteristics of the ABIs discussed in this chapter. First, the areas selected were largely based on a statistical analysis of Census and related data published and updated regularly by central government as the Index of Multiple Deprivation (CLG, 2011) which ranked local authorities by a standard set of indicators of deprivation. These indicators measured seven sets of statistical data relating to: income, employment, health, education, housing, crime and the environment. The Index then ranked each local authority area according to its level of deprivation. In identifying ABIs, local authorities were invited to nominate areas, or submit bids, which were then approved if they met a range of criteria, including levels of deprivation. The precise boundaries were normally determined locally and these tended to include a population of approximately 10,000. Residents' perceptions of 'community' were rarely taken into account.

A second set of characteristics related to the management of these initiatives. While the finance was normally channelled through the local authority as the 'accountable body', the project itself was under day to day management of a board. This was normally made up of representatives of key 'stakeholders' in the area: officers and elected members from the local authority, representatives from other agencies such as the health service and police, executives from local businesses or business organisations, local voluntary and community organisations, elected councillors and residents. The reasons for this commitment to a partnership approach emerged from the view that the post-industrial landscape was increasingly creating inter-agency networks which required close collaboration and that substantial economies could be achieved if effective working relationships could be established. Small teams of officers worked on project planning and delivery and reported directly to the board. Officers were normally seconded from local agencies and often proved highly motivated. Their main responsibility was to prepare and deliver locally agreed action plans. This formulation of boards and officer teams were characterised as 'local regimes' by one commentator (Lawless, 2011: 530).

The third set of characteristics related to the power relationship between central government and the local delivery boards. This was not always a smooth and productive relationship. Central government not only devised the programme and

provided most of the resources but also wanted to retain control over how resources were used and approve the representation of different interests on the board. Governance arrangements and funding were managed by the ten regional offices, made up of representatives of central government departments, and based in the ten English regions. Thus the Government Office for London was responsible for ABIs in the capital. In addition, a complex 'performance management system' was devised whereby the local teams had to follow detailed guidelines, obtain approval for certain levels of expenditure and to submit regular reports. The local boards and teams had the authority to draw up annual action plans and to decide on priorities within the overall resource envelope given to them. The politics of the relationship was not always straightforward and if things went wrong blame could be past backwards and forwards. Residents were often confused about ownership and responsibilities and in some cases could not understand why the projects were not functioning solely in their interests (see for example Hoggett (ed.), 1997).

A further characteristic was the flexibility surrounding the preparation of annual delivery plans. These were prepared locally and then approved centrally within predetermined budget parameters. There was considerable freedom as to the objectives set and projects were often funded and delivered by a variety of different agencies. These might include physical and environmental projects, those aimed at particular problems in the area – anti-social behaviour, drug-dealing and teenage pregnancy for example – and those designed to assist particular minorities, such as asylum-seekers, the unemployed and those with disabilities for instance.

The initiatives being discussed here involved varying degrees of community engagement, although the concept of 'community' is fraught with contested definitions and meanings. There appeared to be an implicit assumption that target areas were made up of one, relatively homogeneous community which could be persuaded to engage with the project team. In practice, community is used as shorthand for a variety of often conflicting interests united or divided by age, gender, ethnic origin, length of residence, housing tenure and many other fracture points. In addition, there was uncertainty about how best to engage residents and how far those involved needed to be representative of the wider community(ies). Concepts such as bridging and bonding social capital (Mclean et al., 2002) have been applied in this context but again problems of definition arise. The programmes discussed below used a variety of community development models and NDC projects for the first time had a majority of residents on their boards. These were often elected from

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small groups of streets or to represent particular communities of interest. Likewise, the expectations varied from providing information and consulting residents about priorities to more complex forms of community 'empowerment' whereby residents were encouraged to run services themselves and to set up community organisations which could take over assets such as land and buildings. The high point of this approach was reached in 2008 when the Department for Communities and Local Government produced a policy paper entitled 'Communities in control' (CLG, 2008). As support for political parties and voting at the local level appeared to be in long-term decline, some saw community engagement as a means to promote 'democratic renewal' and increased engagement with local politics.

The final characteristic is the constant flux of government policy at the centre and towards particular localities. The period of study begins in the 1990s when the UK was still recovering from a period of rapid industrial decline and restructuring and many of the future target areas were suffering high levels of unemployment, poor housing and ill-health. A decade later some areas were experiencing economic buoyancy through the rapid growth of finance and service industries while others remained little changed. As governments came and went and ministerial responsibilities changed, new policies and approaches were devised as issues rose and fell on the political agenda. Thus projects funded for between five and ten years were not only expected to deliver rapid results but also had to constantly adjust to the changing policy environment. In addition, ABIs were often overloaded with policy objectives which produced confusion and internal tensions which could not easily be resolved. Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) identify at least four main rationales for neighbourhood governance: civic, social, political and economic (op cit.: 62).

Having discussed the broad characteristics of regeneration strategies in England, the next section goes on to review the main findings from three of these.

The Single Regeneration Budget
In November 1993 the government announced that it intended to merge approximately 20 separate funding streams into a single budget. Most of this was already committed but about £100 million was to be made available through competitive bidding to local authorities and other lead agencies for the following financial year. The bidding guidance made it clear that the government wanted to encourage the formation of partnerships between local state, business and community interests. These partnerships could select any area or type of activity

which required intensive treatment over five to seven years. As a result, bids were both area-specific and thematic and addressed issues of economic development, housing improvement as well as ill-health, unemployment and crime prevention. Project funding varied from £1m to over £10m spread over five to seven years. The expectation was that these resources would be used to leverage additional investment from the public and private sectors.

In all there were six annual SRB bidding rounds for central funding and the final evaluation report summarises the range of projects and lead partners involved:

> Most partnership schemes sought to regenerate a relatively small local area, consisting of a number of wards, and these accounted for almost a half of all the schemes. A further 20% overall concentrated on an entire local authority district. Over two-thirds of all schemes were set to run for five years or more with a third designed for seven years duration. The most common lead partner was the local authority accounting for 53% of all schemes. This remained the dominant type of lead partner although by round six this had fallen to only 40% with an increase in joint partners and voluntary sector involvement. (Rhodes et al., 2007: iii)

In retrospect, SRB was a programme which drew partly on the experience of earlier initiatives, such as urban development corporations, and partly experimented with new approaches which were to be adopted by later programmes. The innovative features of SRB were that resources were allocated on the basis of competitive bids to a range of different organisations, that it was the locality which defined the need and ways of addressing it, that projects should at least in part be match-funded by other stakeholders in the area, and that social and economic objectives could be linked to major physical and environmental schemes. For example, in Kings' Cross in central London funding was allocated, in part, to provide training for local residents to obtain work in the construction of a major housing and office development around two railway stations.

In the six rounds of SRB approximately 60 per cent of SRB funding was spent on environmental and housing improvements, 10 per cent on training and employment and 6 per cent on education. Community development was allocated only 5.5 per cent of the total spend (Rhodes et al., 2005: 1934). In many cases, funding was used to carry out projects which local authorities felt to be necessary but could not otherwise fund. A survey of seven SRB areas carried out by the team from the University of Cambridge found only modest changes in social conditions between 1996 and 2001. For instance, 2 per cent felt more involved in their community

although the percentage claiming their area was safer than five years ago increased by 5 percent. The percentage on low incomes had declined by 10 percent and those on higher incomes had increased by 8 percent in the same period (Rhodes et al. 2005). These statistics illustrate one of the major problems of ABIs: some of the most deprived neighbourhoods have high levels of population turnover so that when those benefitting from a new job or increased income move out, others who are less well off move in.

The New Deal for Communities

The NDC programme was launched in 1998 and arose out of a government commitment to 'help turn around the poorest neighbourhoods' (DETR, 1998: 1). The same year the Social Exclusion Unit had highlighted the continuing existence of at least 4000 deprived neighbourhoods in England (SEU, 1998). As a result, over £2 billion was to be spent in 39 designated areas in England's major cities.

The approach adopted with NDC had significant differences to previous initiatives. This time there was no competitive bidding and particular local authorities were invited to identify relatively small areas with a population of about 10,000, but there were considerable variations. The areas selected by central government varied from out of town estates of mainly social housing to mixed use, inner city locations. Of the 39 neighbourhoods selected, 28 were in the 10 percent most deprived local authority areas, 10 in the second, and one in the third most deprived decile. The preference was to choose areas located in major urban areas in all English regions. The boundaries were largely selected on the basis of administrative convenience; they did not always reflect residents' perceptions of 'neighbourhood'. Most could be defined as 'inner city' locations with ethnically diverse populations, housing in different tenures and a mix of land uses, in some cases with adverse environmental conditions. A minority, such as in Brighton, were out of town housing estates made up largely of social housing. These tended to demonstrate adverse conditions across a wide variety of indicators as can be seen from Table 1.

Table 1: A Selection of Indicators of Deprivation in 39 NDC Areas in 2002

Indicator	NDC Areas %	England Average %
Residents feeling 'a bit' or 'very' unsafe walking alone in their area after dark	55	22
Residents unemployed	21	10
Residents satisfied with their area as a place to live	60	86
Residents reporting ill-health in previous 12 months	23	14
Residents who smoked tobacco	40	26

Source: CLG, 2010c, p. 12.

The proportion of black and minority ethnic (BME) populations in each area varied considerably. While 91 per cent of the population of England and Wales defined itself as white in the 2001 Census, in the NDC areas the average was around 77 per cent of residents classifying themselves as white. However, this overall figure masks a great deal of variation: at one extreme there were 17 NDC areas with more than 90 per cent of white residents: at the other there were seven neighbourhoods where white residents make up less than half of the population. A number of NDC teams developed projects specifically targeting BME groups in their area, such as the Salaam Project in Hartlepool. This was set up to become a training centre and focal point for BME groups in the area (this is discussed in detail in Rausch and Gillborn, 2003). In practice, NDC funding was applied to a variety of special needs which attracted particular ethnic groups, such as homework clubs and mentoring after school, sports and leisure for particular age groups, and meeting the health and dietary needs of groups with a high incidence of certain diseases.

Each NDC area had approximately £5 million to spend each year and each was to be managed by a specially selected management board and run by a team of officers. Also for the first time, funding was made available for an initial start-up period in order to set up the board and to prepare the delivery plan. Five key policy areas were identified: health, education, crime, worklessness, and housing and the physical environment. Each board was to be constituted from the public, private and voluntary sectors but for the first time residents would be in the majority. Also, for the first time a national evaluation team was appointed to evaluate all aspects of the programme during its lifetime (CLG 2010a, 2010b, 2010c).

The national evaluation of NDC faced all the difficulties of evaluating the impact of a specific programme for a fixed period of time and there are significant challenges in capturing all the outcomes (see Lawless, 2011: 524). The team also compared equivalent outcomes in comparator areas not subject to regeneration programmes and found that the NDC areas scored highly particularly on environmental improvements, resident perceptions of change for the better and in the reduction in frequency of mental health occurrence (op cit.: 524).

As with the SRB, by 2007-08 a third of programme spending was going towards housing and the physical environment, often as part of plans to redevelop estates and include a wider mix of housing tenure. In fact, the national evaluation notes that overall housing tenure in the 39 NDC areas hardly changed. One explanation for this is that planning for the redevelopment of large housing estates often took much longer than anticipated and redevelopment with tenure diversification only occurred after project funding ceased. Health, crime and worklessness received much lower relative proportions of total spend. Community engagement was highlighted as a major objective but in practice the proportion of residents becoming actively engaged only reached 17 per cent in 2008 (Lawless, 2011: 528)

Thus to summarise, NDC brought substantial benefits to 39 designated areas but these did not produce 'transformational change' (op cit.: 527). Although local communities played a much bigger role than in previous initiatives, this did not result in 'community empowerment' (op cit.: 528). The main benefits were recorded in residents' perceptions of the local environment and in a reduction in the incidence of mental health problems. The target neighbourhoods which benefitted the most were those in urban areas, with larger and more diverse populations and it was the indicators relating to changes in the local environment where improvement was most significant (Beatty et al., 2009). Lawless also highlights the 'primacy of individual-level factors in explaining change' (op cit.: 527), particularly in terms of education, health and employment. To conclude, Lawless suggests NDC was one more 'pragmatic' interpretation and that 'the NDC programme can be seen as a form of 'locality managerialism' rooted in a centrally imposed framework…' (op cit.: 530). In future, the evaluation team argued, ABIs should be more focussed and aim for more modest but achievable outcomes for residents and their neighbourhoods:

> One implication of this may be the need for a more focused approach in future regeneration programmes: providing a range of opportunities for resident participation,

but perhaps thinking more strategically about the costs and benefits of the range of interventions associated with these broader community outcomes. The NDC Programme had grand, but perhaps unfocused, ambitions in relation to the community theme; in future a more limited, but perhaps more realistic, approach might be more appropriate. (CLG, 2010b: 86)

Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders

As part of a suite of initiatives, the incoming Labour Government in 1997 identified the importance of neighbourhood management in improving service delivery particularly in areas of deprivation. A series of cross-departmental Policy Action Teams (PATs) were set up in order to review current policy and make recommendations for the future. PAT 4 (SEU, 2000) was set up to consider neighbourhood management. This was seen as a way of formulating responsive and effective service delivery at the local level. Neighbourhood management's '…role should be to help deprived communities and local services improve local outcomes, by improving and joining up local services, and making them more responsive to local needs' (op cit.: 7).

The report also recommended setting up a series of neighbourhood management partnerships in deprived areas in order to test these ideas and identify best practice. In 2001 the Government funded 35 Pathfinder partnerships in two rounds from 2001 for seven years each at a total cost of approximately £100m. The areas selected were both urban and rural with populations of about 10,000 and were chosen from proposals submitted by local authorities. Each area was awarded £3.5m over seven years to cover core management, running costs and to leverage projects. Each had an accountable body to manage the financial arrangements and while most were local authorities, a few were third sector organisations or registered social landlords, such as housing associations. From 2007 this funding was fully integrated into mainstream central and local funding streams for the lifetime of the Pathfinders. Projects were run by small officer teams and managed by boards made up of local authority officers and elected members, representatives of service-providers and local residents. Overall, women (49%) and members of black and ethnic minorities (14%) were well represented on the boards. As with previous programmes, engaging and involving local communities was a major priority.

A team was appointed in 2002 to evaluate the programme and the final report was published in 2008 (SQW Consulting, 2008). The findings suggest that the NMPs had most influence in improving policing and the environmental quality of the area. Schools, health services and housing agencies were also active participants. Much of

the work of project teams involved breaking down cultural barriers and joining up service providers in order to improve existing services and to experiment with new ones. Community engagement was an important mechanism for identifying local priorities and getting feedback. Regular household surveys of a sample of residents revealed that resident satisfaction increased by about four percentage points between 2003 and 2006 and more residents felt they could influence local decisions (SQW Consulting, 2008: 7). Similar increases in satisfaction were recorded for crime reduction and environmental improvements. Changes in housing, education, health and employment were less easy to measure. An additional significant improvement identified was in the working practices and cultures of the delivery teams and service providers. These teams often demonstrated high levels of motivation, strong links with key residents, board members and service providers and a willingness to operate beyond normal bureaucratic parameters (Pill and Bailey, 2010).

The NMP programme is due to come to an end in March 2012, although some such as that in the City of Westminster was wound up a year earlier. Some of these initiatives have been absorbed into local authorities while others have developed modified roles or have been reconstituted as community-based, not-for-profit organisations. One of the main conclusions to emerge from the NMPs is that effective neighbourhood management can appear to be expensive in that local pressures can ensure that new projects are launched or existing ones are better resourced than might be the case in normal circumstances. Neighbourhood management teams and boards can be perceived as a strong lobby for additional expenditure when currently local budgets are heavily constrained.

The 'Big Society'

The coalition government was formed as a result of the general election in May 2010. For reasons related to the financial crisis of 2007-08, its main priority was to reduce the economic deficit and thereby limit the role of the state. The 'Big Society' agenda is intended to fill the gap left after substantial cuts in public expenditure have been implemented at central and local levels. 'Localism' is the term being applied to a wide range of strategies emphasising devolving power down the hierarchy. As the coalition government's strategy document states: 'It is time for a fundamental shift of power from Westminster to people. We will promote decentralisation and democratic engagement, and we will end the era of top-down government by giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals'. (Cabinet Office, 2010)

Recent research already suggests that local authorities have different understandings of localism and, as their central funding is cut by an average of 7.25% per year over four years, they are not 'reconfiguring their organisations for localism with the same energy that they are for, say, budget cuts' (Deloitte 2011, page 3).

Funding for new initiatives, so far as it is available, will come from a proposed 'Big Society bank' drawing on the dormant bank accounts held by the clearing banks. Social investment bonds are also being considered as a way of introducing private investment into welfare provision. Four local authority areas have been designated as 'vanguard communities' to develop particular self-help initiatives, although Liverpool City Council has already withdrawn. Any attempt at redistribution and the targeting of the most deprived areas prevalent in previous government sponsored initiatives which gave rise to neighbourhood governance is conspicuously absent from this approach.

The previous government had advocated 'double devolution, which is the transfer of power 'not just to the town hall, but beyond, to neighbourhoods and individual citizens' (ODPM, 2006: 8), although this commitment was conspicuously absent from a subsequent policy document on empowerment (CLG, 2008; Bailey, 2010). More recently the Conservative party has argued for varying degrees of localism with a greater emphasis on community self-help (The Conservative Party, 2009).

The coalition government's commitment to the Big Society has been criticised on philosophical, political and practical grounds but it is not possible to examine all these arguments here in any detail. Kisby (2010), for example, refers to the 'vacuity' of the concept in that it attempts to revive ideas around 'small state', 'active citizenship' and volunteering promoted by previous Conservative governments. It tends to favour community organisations in more affluent areas (with high levels of social capital) and does nothing to challenge the growing levels of economic inequality or reduce social exclusion. Powers are included in the Localism Bill (2010) to enable communities to prepare land use-orientated neighbourhood plans but only where these set out new opportunities for development. The Act of Parliament will come into effect in 2012.

Thus May 2010 marks a dramatic shift for deprived neighbourhoods away from the relatively well resourced, big state model of targeting the most deprived communities to a low cost model emphasising self-help, volunteerism, and with no positive discrimination towards those in greatest need. In addition, as local government reduces its expenditure local communities are being persuaded to take over local services such as libraries and community centres. All public bodies are being encouraged to dispose of any unwanted land and buildings to community-based organisations, such development trusts. These operate on a similar non-profit basis to community development corporations in the USA (Salamon, 2011). And like the USA, it will be those areas which have a more skilled and affluent population which will benefit most from this policy shift.

Conclusions

This chapter began by asking whether taking a neighbourhood approach to issues of deprivation was likely to be effective, how far deprived areas changed for the better and whether or not the strategy was over-ambitious. From the evidence presented from the three sets of programme case studies it certainly represented a major commitment of economic and political capital. Large amounts of public money were channelled into the most deprived areas and heroic efforts were made at the local level in order to ensure they were used effectively. Yet all the evaluations discussed here tend to suggest the outcomes and impact were modest and that in reality the relative differentials between areas and populations in terms of income, employment, health and education did not change a great deal. However, the programmes were not without positive outcomes. Communities were engaged and services undoubtedly improved for those living in the defined areas but when the money ran out those service levels were often hard to sustain in the longer term. For a variety of organisational, cultural and financial reasons there was only a limited transfer of 'best practice' from these programmes to those engaged in regeneration and service delivery elsewhere. More to the point, it is almost impossible to establish the counterfactual; how much more deprived might these areas have become without programme interventions?

ABIs have advantages in targeting resources on those in greatest need and relatively low cost improvements, such as increased policing, improved youth and community facilities and housing renovations can have a big impact on residents' perceptions of where they live. But reversing growing inequalities in income, health and life chances, as the original political rhetoric suggested, requires a long-term

commitment at both national and local levels. 'Big Society' models may also bring benefits of increased social capital, increased volunteering and even greater engagement in 'civil society' but they will tend to benefit the relatively affluent and well organised neighbourhoods over and above those with real social problems. Meanwhile, income differentials have widened, unemployment is increasing and social mobility has declined (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). A series of urban riots taking place in August 2011 in the more deprived parts of London, Manchester and Birmingham has reopened the debate about growing inequalities and opportunities in British society. Clearly, turning round the poorest neighbourhoods has proved to be a much bigger challenge than originally envisaged in 1997. Perhaps the most important conclusion to draw is that targeting deprivation in narrowly defined neighbourhoods will only have a limited impact without also addressing broader social and economic trends at the national level.

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