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Wakefield Area Working Evaluation Framework- Literature Review

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1 Introduction

The Wakefield Metropolitan District Council (MDC) Area Working programme offers a radical and innovative approach to service improvement and redesign with the aim of better meeting community needs and addressing inequalities. Community participation is a core component of the Wakefield model, which is underpinned by the wider goals of encouraging active citizenship and community empowerment. There is an acknowledged need to evidence whether the Area Working approach leads to improved services, to what extent there is meaningful community engagement and ultimately to assess whether it makes a difference to people in their neighbourhoods. This literature review addresses a range of key questions that will usefully inform the development of an evaluation framework in relation to the deployment of Area Working within Wakefield.

The aims of the literature review were to scope existing models of evaluation used to assess the deployment and impact of Area Working and to identify potential evaluation frameworks and benchmark indicators. A systematic literature search was undertaken to identify published and grey literature on Area Working and similar programmes and relevant literature was reviewed. This search was supplemented by key literature identified through previous research. This brief report presents a summary of findings and makes some recommendations for the development of an evaluation framework for Wakefield Area Working Programme.

2 Findings

2.1 Policy Context

A number of issues mean that the UK Coalition government is particularly focused upon changing the delivery of public services. The UK budget deficit, declining GDP, increased public sector spending and declining levels of satisfaction with local authority services have all been cited as the reasons for change. Current services are seen as being too centralised, too complex and ultimately resistant to change. As a result of these drivers, government policy is has been focused upon putting power back into the hands of communities and is therefore moving in a direction to support this. For example, place-based budgeting initiatives have taken place in which pooled service budgets from a variety of agencies are used to improve public service delivery, with local communities ultimately delivering better results (Maginn 2010). Total Place is just one example of this, in which The Treasury (2010) describe how through bold local leadership and collaborative working, service delivery is improved in meeting needs, delivering outcomes and producing better value for money.

Area Working is another example of this, in which joined up working with between agencies, local authorities and citizens are joined together is used to tackle local problems. The development of Area Working is closely correlated with the central aim of the Big Society programme. The IDeA website (2010) outlines outlined the Big Society as follows; “[...].The Government wants to give citizens, communities and local government the power and information they need to come together, solve the problems they face and build the Britain they want. They emphasise that building this Big Society isn’t just the responsibility of just one or two Government departments but of every Department and of every citizen too.” Big Society policy focuses upon

- giving communities more powers;
- reforming the planning system to give neighbourhoods far more ability to determine the shape of the places in which their inhabitants live;
- introducing new powers to help communities save local facilities and services threatened with closure;
- giving communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services;
- training a new generation of community organisers and support the creation of neighbourhood groups across the UK, especially in the most deprived areas;
- encouraging people to take an active role in their communities.

This policy change is also strongly driven by the need to make efficiency savings, with cross-departmental and inter-agency programmes seen as one approach that is able to increase savings. There is an acknowledged need for early intervention, and focusing upon prevention as currently the public sector spends the majority of money on treatment despite preventative programmes often reaping benefits in terms of cost-savings (Maginn 2010).

Localism is at the heart of the policy focus, in which the local is simply prioritised. Thus, local areas are being encouraged to identify needs related to service provision and to co-produce such services. Co-production is “[...]delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professions, people using services, their families and their neighbours” (Boyle and Harris 2009, cited in Slater 2010: 30). Previous policy has been criticized for failing to focus upon places and individuals, with local agencies often described as working in silos. Members of local agencies members can also develop rivalries in relation to competition for resources (Perkin 1989). Thus, Area Working is a policy approach which aims to address the problematic issues associated with local service delivery.

Public policy has been also aiming to develop and encourage local empowerment rather than central prescription. Indeed, community- led support programmes have been illustrated as being more effective at tackling some social issues than state-led provision because local circumstances and networks influence problems (Savage and Dalzell 2009).

Given this current policy focus, and despite local variations in issues many Area Working programmes are likely to share the same purposes as Dobson (2010) identifies, including:

- Community engagement
- Community development
- Community responsibility
- Partnership working and the integration of services
- Bending mainstream services
- Understanding and promoting neighbourhoods.

Therefore, an evaluation of any Area Working programme will need to consider indicators and outcomes in relation to these areas. Furthermore, there may be other purposes too that are less universal such as addressing inequalities and monitoring performance management improvements (Dobson 2010), thus evaluations will also need to pay attention to area- specific goals. As a starting point for developing the evaluation framework for WMDC Area Working, a review of existing

models of evaluation has been conducted to establish if such methods are applicable to the WMDC programme.

2.2 Existing models of evaluation used to assess the deployment of Area Working

Area Working has been used across the UK in a number of different local authority wards, deployed in a variety of ways with differing goals therefore there are a number of ways in which success has been measured, with differing evaluation models being used. This section looks at whether there any existing models of evaluation used to assess the deployment of Area Working initiatives and what they tell us. The table below summarises the range of evaluation models illustrated used to assess a range of Area Working programmes within specified contexts.

Table 1. Summary of existing models of evaluation

Area deployment of Area Working	Evaluation model/data collected	Reference
City of York Council - area based working pilot	Criteria only proposed so model to illustrate.	City of York Executive Report of the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods (2010).
Bexley Borough Council – local area working in community safety action zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed analysis of crime and disorder statistics and data from partners, overlaid with information from other services and residents. 	IDEA Knowledge case study (2005)
Leeds Intensive neighbourhood management programme	Interim report examining 2 years of delivery was based upon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 42 key stakeholder interviews Attendance at a sample of local resident meetings and networks Review of statistical and perception survey data Review of programme documentation 	ERS Report (2008)
Area and Neighbourhood working in the North East	No evaluation, networking activities allowed for the collection of data via; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A survey completed by 25 managers and front-line staff responsible for area working Interviews with a small 	Dobson (2010)

	<p>number of managers responsible for area working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion at seminars and peer group meetings involving 60 participants in total • Reports and observations from local workshops aiming to facilitate service integration • Analysis of documentation (local authority and partner organisations) 	
Total place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final reports produced for all pilot areas based upon lessons learned • Numerous local authority reports 	http://www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/news/pilots-final-reports/
Participatory budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phased evaluation process • Literature review • Survey of PB areas • Process evaluation • Impact evaluation 	SQW Consulting (2010b)
Sheffield Area Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best value review based upon consultation with stakeholders and the production of case studies to compare to other local authorities 	Sheffield City Council (2003)
Transforming Your Space	<p>Predominantly qualitative evaluation included several stages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping stage – looking at the design of the programme and operational information • Case Studies – 36 case studies across the UK • Beneficiary research – 10 case study areas examining beneficiary feedback 	SQW Consulting (2007)
Asset Transfer Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping report • Baseline report • Field work • Monitoring information • Review of relevant contextual literature 	SQW Consulting (2010a)

The literature as summarised in Table 1 demonstrates that evaluation can be conducted in a number of ways, with a variety of evaluation models being used. This is hardly surprising since evaluation should be context specific and measure the objectives of individual programmes. These evaluations also show data collection at various stages across time. Therefore, the evaluation of Wakefield Area Working needs to be context

specific, with data collected at various points in time in order to effectively measure change.

The use of 'theory of change' (TOC) as part of the evaluation will also be useful as it provides a robust methodology for the evaluation of complex initiatives being delivered at the community level (Connell and Kubish 1988). This approach is simply about allowing stakeholders to illustrate how they will achieve change via identifying the necessary steps required to achieve specific goals. This approach also encourages the exploration of connections between activities undertaken by services (Judge and Bauld 2001), and therefore is a good tool to evaluate Area Working as there are many partners involved in service delivery. It is necessary when using theory of change to identify the expected outcomes of Area Working at different stages of development and then select relevant indicators for inclusion within any evaluation (Green and South 2006). Given the need to identify indicators in order to evaluate Wakefield Area Working, the impacts that are reported upon within the existing literature are now summarised within the next section.

2.3 What does the evidence tell us about the impact of Area Working?

The evidence shows that there are a number of ways in which Area Working is being measured in terms of its impact. The table below summarises the range of evaluation data being collected and used to demonstrate the success of Area Working within the contexts identified.

Table 2. Summary of impact measures for Area Working and similar initiatives

Area deploying of Area Working	Impacts measured	Reference
City of York Council - area based working pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service delivery being more accurate in reflecting the needs of the local community • Increased partnership working • New, more focused action plans for area working • Numbers of residents engaged with local decision making • Increases in voluntary sector engagement • Financial savings Non-cashable added value resulting from	City of York Executive Report of the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods (2010).

	partnership working	
Bexley Borough Council – local area working in community safety action zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in crime in identified areas • 4% reduction in crime since 2001 • Quicker response to vandalism • Reduced burglary in hotspots • Reductions in vehicle crime • Decreases in street crime • Reductions in calls made to the police relating to disorder. 	IDeA Knowledge case study (2005)
Leeds Intensive neighbourhood management programme	<p>The evaluation aimed to assess a number of success criteria including partnership working, service delivery and community engagement and influence via the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of changed working practice and service delivery including enablement of a locality approach and strengthened operation and performance of tasking groups • Evidence of improved outcomes for target neighbourhoods including improved cleanliness of areas, less graffiti, reductions in fly posting, reductions in crime, reduction in residents dissatisfaction levels. 	ERS Report (2008)
Area and Neighbourhood working in the North East	<p>No formal evaluation. Networking activities provided information around key themes such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement • Community development • Partnership working and integrated service delivery • Bending mainstream services • Closing the gap including a focus on quality of life indicators. 	Dobson (2010)
Total Place	No outcome measures rather plans of action/lessons learned.	http://www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/news/pilots-final-reports/
Participatory Budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported improvements in self-esteem and confidence for participants • Improvement in people’s sense of their ability to influence local decision-making • Improvements in people’s understandings of budget setting and their understanding of the local democratic process • Improved relations between councillors and their constituents • Increased community capacity • Better reflections of local people’s views • Improvements in area’s abilities to lever 	SQW Consulting (2010b)

	in additional resources.	
Sheffield Area Working	<p>Area working has 3 clear aims but no specification of outcome measures.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing the local voice of the community 2. Co-ordinating and improving local service delivery 3. Supporting local regeneration. 	Sheffield City Council (2003)
Transforming Your Space	<p>Environmental and community benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved green and brown spaces • Lower pollution • Increased volume of wildlife <p>Social benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing anti-social behaviour • Engaging young people <p>Health benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anecdotal evidence <p>Economic impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs, training and qualifications <p>Softer impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased confidence, capacity and pride within local communities. 	SQW Consulting (2007)
Asset Transfer Unit	<p>Local authorities found to be engaging in asset transfer and assessed impact upon a number of indicators including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic engagement with partners • Materials and promotion • Support • Capacity and rate of transfers • Programmes. 	SQW Consulting (2010a)

Area Working is being deployed in numerous ways with different aims, hence the range of impact measures evident in terms of evaluation data as Table 2 illustrates. The limited reports that have been published about this also tell us that there are challenges to consider when evaluating. For example, Dobson (2010) highlights issues such as:

- Demonstrating value for money and producing evidence to support this.
- Variation in commitment, capacity and skills across members, partners and communities.
- Variations in resources with the lack of resources in some areas clearly restraining activities
- Corporate vs. neighbourhood operational strategies can be difficult to link.
- Neighbourhood level partnership working is essential according to the national evaluation of the pathfinder programmes.

2.4 Measuring community involvement

The broader academic literature also offers further discussions about community engagement indicators and the measurement of community involvement and engagement, which is again an important component of Area Working.

Table 3. Measuring community engagement and involvement

Context	Measuring community engagement and involvement	Reference
<p>Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Programme (Citizen involvement within community development)</p>	<p>Local evaluations used a ten-step process of a learning wheel to choose priority goals, develop indicators of the goals, design a research plan, gather data, analyse findings and then share them.</p> <p>Indicators of effective process included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive planning and implementation process • Leadership development • Social capital • Organizational capacity • Democratically skilled facilitators. <p>Indicators of personal growth within the learning teams included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill development • Relationships and networks • Community operation and functions • Confidence • Leadership. <p>Indicators of learning teams impact upon accountability included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased public accountability • Effective local feedback structures • Effective national feedback structures. 	<p>Morrissey (2000)</p>

<p>The development of community indicators in a healthy communities initiative</p>	<p>Participatory process used to develop vision statements, priority areas, action plans and indicators. In creating such indicators it was found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators lacked relevance to community members • Community members felt no ownership of such indicators • Community members drew upon measures of success that were informal or experiential. <p>Therefore, community development initiatives should focus upon measures of success that the community see as relevant.</p>	<p>Smith et al (2008)</p>
<p>Indicators for community participation and partnership working</p>	<p>Indicators may be required in a number of categories.</p> <p><i>Partnership working</i></p> <p>Structure e.g. specification of rules, consultation, formal service agreements, pooled budgets, performance indicators requiring inter-agency working, staff development related to improving partnership working.</p> <p>Process e.g. staff opinions about changing working relationships, training and staff development that includes partnership working, designation of led persons responsible for inter-agency working, new partnerships, volume of post, electronic communication between agencies, secondments to other agencies etc.</p> <p>Outcomes according to residents and agencies e.g. staff opinions, staff assessment about changes, residents perceptions of changes, assessments made by third parties, front-line staff etc.</p> <p><i>Resident participation</i></p> <p>Structure e.g. specification of rules, levels of participation, types of consultation</p>	<p>Ambrose (2001)</p>

	<p>Process e.g. attendance at meetings, opinions about distribution of power, methods used to record customer satisfaction</p> <p>Outcomes according to agencies and residents e.g. opinions about how residents influence outcomes (agency and residents), % residents aware of participation arrangements, % residents aware of community representatives, residents views about their participation.</p> <p><i>Service quality</i></p> <p>Structure e.g. formal rules, consultation in defining standards,</p> <p>Process e.g. agency views about the delivery process, residents knowledge and understanding of standards.</p> <p>Outcomes according to both agencies and residents e.g. staff opinions about changing quality of service, residents opinions.</p>	
Evaluating community involvement	<p>Review of literature and evaluation resources undertaken, led to the development of the Well-Connected Tool based upon 6 areas of assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diversity – whether community diversity is reflected in the organisation and its processes? • procedures – whether organisational procedures facilitate participation? • communication – whether effective communication strategies are in place that allow information to flow between organisations and communities? • staff support – how does the organisation support and develop staff in relation to community engagement? • opportunities – are communities involved in a range of decision 	South et al (2005)

	<p>making occurring within the organisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> resources – do communities have access to and control over resources ? 	
<p>Developing indicators of community capacity (qualitative action research project)</p>	<p>Indicators of overall community capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> community welcoming and supportive to all residents hold positive perceptions of their community residents celebrate together people participate actively in the social, political and economic life of the community people unite in relation to issues and work together towards a common purpose people from all parts are involved in community activities community members have a sense of control 	<p>Jackson et al (2003)</p>
<p>Points of involvement in area based interventions</p>	<p>Points of involvement are seen as a useful mechanism for assessing the benefits that are associated with the benefits of involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> funding applications or designations preparation of strategies for intervention creation of detailed operational plans day to day management and on-going monitoring of projects evaluation impact. 	<p>Burton et al (2006)</p>
<p>Measuring the benefits of public participation</p>	<p>Public participation exercises can be measured on a number of criteria:</p> <p><i>Acceptance criteria</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> representativeness independence early involvement influence transparency <p><i>Process criteria</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> resources 	<p>Burton (2009)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • task definition • decision structure • cost effectiveness <p>The benefits of participation can also be measured:</p> <p><i>Developmentally</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved self-esteem • increased knowledge • increased awareness • expression of personal identity • social citizenship <p><i>Instrumentally</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wider range of views • reality check • political legitimacy • specific decisions • decision-making system • whole system governance 	
Auditing community participation	<p>There are a number of areas that can be measured:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the history and pattern of participation • the quality of participation strategies adopted by partners and partnerships • the capacity within partner organisations to support community participation • the capacity within communities to participate effectively • impact assessments. <p>There are 3 main types of audit tool described to measure participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • baseline mapping exercises to establish context • checklists of activities and approaches that contribute to effective community involvement and questions that need to be asked if community involvement is to be effective • scales to help stakeholders think through the extent of participation activities that they are putting in place. 	Burns and Taylor (2000)

Active Partners – Benchmarks for community participation in regeneration	This framework has 12 benchmark indicators grouped into 4 domains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence- ensuring community participation leads to real influence. • Inclusivity – valuing diversity and addressing inequality to ensure inclusive and equal participation. • Communication – clear information processes, transparent and accessible policies and procedures. • Capacity – developing knowledge, understanding and skills of all partners and the organisational capacity of communities. 	Yorkshire Forward (2000)
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Table 3 shows that there are numerous ways in which engagement, community involvement, community capacity and partnership working within communities can be measured. There are also a number of issues with involvement and it is not necessarily linear (Warwick-Booth 2007) which makes measuring it challenging. Burton (2009: 280) argues that ‘the lack of conceptual clarity around the scope and form of participation and its benefits has served to impede the development of more robust evaluation designs’. Furthermore, there are many problems associated with partnership working, which is a central lynchpin of Area Working and community involvement. McArthur (1995) described issues such as varying assumptions and expectations about the role of the community between the main partners and within stakeholder groups themselves. Given the complexities that exist in relation to motivations and expectations, McArthur suggests using a pluralistic evaluation approach in order to understand the perspectives and goals held by each group of participants especially as new initiatives such as Area Working can place demands upon people, and community decision making can be blocked via a number of mechanisms. Indeed, Burton et al (2006) also draw attention to how contextual factors have a number of possible impacts both positive and negative. For example, the history of previous attempts at involvement, patterns of locally devolved decision making, techniques of involvement and resources are all likely to impact differently across areas. Indeed, success and failure in relation to community involvement may be expressed by different stakeholders within the same area, thus evaluation research needs to pay attention to all of these complexities. Given the variety of impacts outlined, a key question remains in relation to which indicators are most suited for use when evaluating the WMDC Area Working programme.

2.5 Benchmark indicators for assessing processes and impacts from Area Working

There are a number of benchmarks that can be used to assess both processes and impacts that result from Area Working. The benchmark indicators to some extent will in part result from the objectives of the Wakefield MDC Programme once these have been agreed. A clearly designed evaluation will assess impact and added value, chronicle the lessons learned and make recommendations.

- *Structure indicators* – those which reflect formal, written or legal structures
- *Process indicators* – those reflecting working practices
- *Outcome indicators* – those that measure outcomes.

Below is a list of indicators that have been used in previous evaluations discussed within the academic literature in selected areas to demonstrate the range of options that can be considered.

Skills development – corporate knowledge and learning/community members learning.

There are existing evaluations that have measured talents and skills within various categories that could be drawn upon here to inform the measurement of skills development. For example, Jackson et al (2003) categorised skills into 5 groupings such as organizing, hospitality, human relations, technical and finally professional and academic skills.

Community engagement benchmarks

There are existing tools that can again be used in relation to development benchmarks for measuring community engagement. For example, the Well-Connected tool (South et al 2004) could be drawn upon to assess community involvement across numerous domains.

Local people influencing priorities and shaping provision

McArthur's (1995) analysis of active involvement for community citizens could be drawn upon here to help develop benchmark indicators in this area. He argues that there are potential blockages to community influence in decision making processes, so based upon his analysis assessment could include

- Perceptions of the status of community representatives
- Satisfaction levels of community representatives
- Levels of perceived bureaucratic barriers within the decision making process

- Levels of empowerment of community representatives in relation to decision making

Given that there are several priority neighbourhoods across the WMDC district, each facing challenges a variety of benchmark indicators should be considered to capture the key changes occurring in relation to specified priorities including:

- Health improvements/healthier communities
- Empowered citizens
- Efficiency savings
- Changed budgeting e.g. participatory budgeting
- Changed local delivery of services e.g. increased co-production and a more preventative focus evidenced within service delivery
- Improved service delivery
- Organisational change
- Increased social capital
- Identification of critical success factors
- Identification of barriers to delivery

These potential benchmark indicators are by no means the only ones that can be used. The Wakefield Area Working programme will have its own set of benchmark indicators to assess delivery within this context and to determine if the objectives of the programme are being met.

3 Summary and recommendations

- The Wakefield MDC evaluation framework needs to assess whether the Area Working programme is meeting its objectives in relation to changing service delivery, engaging communities and addressing priorities.
- The evaluation of Wakefield Area Working needs to be context specific and locally relevant, with benchmark indicators measured at various points across time to record changes happening as a result of Area Working.
- Benchmark indicators and tools are well reported in the literature and some may be appropriate to draw upon within the Wakefield MDC evaluation. All indicators used need to relate to the clear measurement of the Area Working programme vision and objectives.
- Whilst there are a range of potential benchmark indicators to draw on, the review has highlighted the importance of indicators that track community capacity, confidence and control.
- Theory of change is a useful tool to apply within the evaluation strategy to establish which steps are being taken to meet specific goals and to robustly examine the connections between activities undertaken by services within the WMDC Area Working programme.
- Existing models of evaluation have used multiple methods including survey, analysis of routine data, consultative methods, interviews and focus groups. Using mixed methods and drawing on different sources of evidence will strengthen the quality of the evidence.
- Community involvement and partnership working are core processes within Area Working, nevertheless they present challenges for measurement. The evaluation framework needs to be flexible enough to incorporate different stakeholder perspectives including seeking residents' views.

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