

feda

**quality
learning
skills**

feda responds

National strategy for neighbourhood renewal

A framework for consultation

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Contents

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Introduction

1. The Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) welcomes the Government's *National strategy for neighbourhood renewal* consultation document and the key role of learning and skills set out in the strategy.
2. FEDA believes that the document reflects an honest appraisal of the problems of the most deprived neighbourhoods and their causes. We agree that the Government has made concerted efforts to address the issue of neighbourhood decline – for example, through the New Deal programmes, Education Action Zones, literacy and numeracy strategies, Sure Start, Health Action Zones, as well as crime reduction and anti-drugs strategies. These initiatives have begun to have an impact on disadvantaged communities, but we agree that more will be needed to achieve the aim of the National Strategy, which is to arrest the wholesale decline of deprived neighbourhoods, to reverse it and to prevent it from recurring.
3. We support the vision set out in the paper and would like to play a significant role in taking forward the National Strategy. We are currently carrying out research and development in relevant areas including the following:
 - Learning centres
 - Learning communities
 - Raising achievement
 - Partnerships
 - The extra cost of working in disadvantaged areas
 - The role of education in economic regeneration
 - Colleges and their communities
 - Employability
 - Good practice in working with disadvantaged young people.
4. In addition, FEDA has a track record of accomplishment in identifying and disseminating good practice through case studies, analysis, networking and collaborative research, etc. We look forward to the next stage of implementation of the strategy and playing our part to support it.
5. We would like to draw attention to some key points in our response:

Disseminating good practice

6. Further work is needed to identify the mechanisms that will achieve the vision. We believe that mechanisms could be identified through detailed analysis of successful practice. Successful practice does exist and there is much to learn from initiatives such as New Commitment to Regeneration, Single Regeneration Budget and City Challenge.
7. We recognise that models of good practice cannot simply be transferred, as each context is different. However, it may be possible to identify critical success factors through analysis of established provision. We are aware that some of the successful examples of neighbourhood renewal have not had the resources to be able to reflect on their experience. We believe analysis of their experiences could provide the basis for the development of frameworks or critical success factors to guide new initiatives.

Timescale

8. Work to engage people from disadvantaged communities in education and training is time and resource intensive. Results cannot necessarily be delivered rapidly. We welcome the recognition that a ten-year strategy is required to make a lasting difference.

Cross-sector working

9. The co-ordination of effort between providers from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors will be vital to the success of this strategy. We recognise that there is a serious danger of initiatives being confined and distinctive to a single sector rather than drawing together contributions.
10. In the delivery of education and training, the strengths of large public sector colleges, specialist private training providers, national voluntary sector training providers, locally based community and voluntary sector organisations, and public sector adult and community education need to be harnessed to address neighbourhood renewal. There is a distinctive role for local community and voluntary organisations in the local neighbourhood context, but their long-term effectiveness will depend on robust partnerships and collaboration with the range of providers.

Reviving local economies

CHAPTER 5

QUESTION 5.1

Is this the right vision for reviving the economies of deprived neighbourhoods?

11. We believe that the vision contains many key ingredients for the economic revival of deprived neighbourhoods. We particularly welcome the placing of adult skills as Key Idea 1, indicating the vital contribution of education and training to neighbourhood renewal.

First-rung learning opportunities

12. We welcome the recommendation for first-rung learning opportunities and the recognition that initial steps back into education and training will not necessarily lead to qualifications. The capacity of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to fund all kinds of learning, including first step provision, should make it easier for appropriate provision to be offered. The relevance of the curriculum that is offered to 'disengaged' learners is vitally important and must carefully build confidence. For example, we have concerns about the development of Basic Skills provision and the impact the increased emphasis on testing may have.
13. It will be important that the new LSC funding system does not make qualification-bearing programmes significantly more attractive 'business' than non-qualification bearing provision. Equally, the funding should not undermine forms of accreditation such as Open College Networks (OCNs). While not necessarily within the National Qualifications Framework, they provide national recognition and progression towards national qualifications. Much voluntary and community sector provision and access to further education (FE), return to learn and community outreach work in colleges is accredited by OCNs. It is valued both by learners for the tangible recognition it offers, and by providers as a mechanism for quality improvement.

Neighbourhood learning centres

14. We welcome the proposal for neighbourhood learning centres to ensure access to learning within communities and we support the aim that they should be run by local people. They should always be under local community management and the aim should be to maximise the extent to which they are staffed by local people. We believe that for effective neighbourhood renewal the involvement of local people in delivering the services is a vital goal.
15. The document does not elaborate on what is understood by the term 'neighbourhood learning centres'. We believe that work needs to be done to set out the operating principles that might define these centres – what they might look like, how they might operate – building upon an analysis of what already works in this context. We also suggest that the issue of quality needs to be addressed. Quality standards should be developed but their application will need to be sensitive. Staff skills and training also need to be considered carefully.
16. There are several models of neighbourhood learning centres, including local authority adult community education centres and FE college outreach facilities and community-based annexes. An example of the latter is the Community Education Resource at Rotherham College of Arts and Technology, an arms-length unit that acts as a conduit for funding and support to community organisations. All these models have a part to play in neighbourhood renewal.
17. In addition, a model for neighbourhood learning centres can be found in the community economic development tradition. This places particular emphasis on:
 - Local community ownership and management: for example, they may be run by local community enterprises, mutual organisations or co-operatives
 - Employment of local people – this is a vital means of building the confidence and self-esteem of local communities.
18. Neighbourhood learning centres could also provide a focus for the delivery of other local services such as:
 - Generalist and specialist advice facilities, providing information and advice on employment (Key Idea 3: helping people from deprived areas into jobs), information relating to benefits regulations and entitlements (Key Idea 4: making sure people know work pays), and information on education and training opportunities.
 - Family learning to provide an all-age facility.
 - Locally managed workspace and business incubator facilities – these could be a focal point for the development of local employment strategies to foster initiatives in the local social economy (Key idea 6: supporting and promoting business) and could include business and employment advice.
 - Communal meeting space, perhaps incorporating a cyber café facility.
 - Childcare support service, linking childcare to lifelong learning and vocational training. This could develop into a more broadly focused community business, offering, for example, subsidised childcare for local people moving from learning into work (Key Idea 5: keeping money in the neighbourhood).
19. Neighbourhood learning centres could provide a means of linking learning tangibly with social and economic development. Successful outcomes could be measured in terms not just of progression in learning and skills, but, for example, in creation of social businesses, volunteering and community activity. Examples of this approach, such as the Manor Training and Resource Centre in Sheffield, could provide case studies from which to analyse critical success factors as the basis for extending effective practice.
20. A critical feature of any model for neighbourhood learning centres will be effective networking with the range of education and training providers in an area. This ensures that progression is available to higher levels and to the range of curriculum opportunities. The Government's proposals for Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) potentially offer a more effective framework to enable education and training providers to work together more collaboratively. Partnerships between community and voluntary organisations, FE colleges and other training and education providers will facilitate the transition of learners from first-step to higher level programmes.

Tackling deprivation as a core objective of the Learning and Skills Councils

21. We strongly support this recommendation. We have also supported the inclusion of a disadvantage element within the new LSC funding system. The role of LSCs could be significant in supporting the Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, in particular through discretionary funding. We would support earmarked funding for this purpose as a key element of the implementation of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.

Better training for further education professionals

22. We are pleased that this recommendation from the Policy Action Team on Skills report (*Skills for neighbourhood renewal: local solutions*) has been included in the National Strategy. Current initial and continuing professional development does not specifically address the skills needed to work effectively in disadvantaged communities. Increasingly FE professionals are working more collaboratively with other providers and with a wider range of partners as they seek to widen participation and reach more disadvantaged communities. Specific professional development in this field would therefore be welcome. A recent FEDA publication, *Competence and competitiveness* (Derrick Johnstone with Simon James, 2000), should inform this work.
23. FE colleges can contribute significantly to supporting and building the capacity of community organisations and the intermediary bodies or consortia they create. This may require a reorientation away from a primary role in delivering learning to deprived neighbourhoods, towards capacity building of community organisations to deliver services. Some experimentation with models and approaches would be useful in this area. This role for colleges would have implications for the way this recommendation is taken forward.

Improving IT in deprived neighbourhoods

24. We support this Key Idea and the recommendation. We believe that IT (information technology) could be one dimension of provision in neighbourhood learning centres. IT training is a strong magnet to draw learners back into education and training. We believe that neighbourhood learning centres should include an information and communications technology (ICT) resource facility that would not just be the locus for the acquisition of skills needed in the 'e-economy', but would also facilitate the development of:
- Community Information Networks (CINs)
 - E-learning (including Community Grids for Learning)
 - ICT-based project work, etc.

QUESTION 5.2

Are the proposed changes the right ones?

25. The proposed changes make an excellent start in the right direction. However, they will need substantial investment if they are to realise the impact intended. Work will be needed to identify and disseminate elements of effective practice to support implementation.
26. To address disadvantages faced by ethnic minority groups, it must be recognised that communities can be based on race or shared interest and are not exclusively geographical. Implementation will need to examine the interplay between geographical and other communities, and recognise the important role of wider representative and development organisations such as those for the black community. We also suggest that clarification of the term 'neighbourhood' would be helpful.

QUESTION 5.3

Have important issues been missed?

27. As acknowledged in the consultation document, the capacity and effectiveness of community and voluntary organisations in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is frequently limited and mechanisms are needed to enable them to develop and to access mainstream resourcing. We sketch out below two models of how they might be supported.

Intermediary bodies

28. Intermediary bodies can have a critical role in capacity building. The chapter mentions intermediary bodies, but only in relation to new ways of reaching out to jobless people in deprived areas (under Key Idea 3: helping people from deprived areas into jobs).
29. Intermediation has grown in significance in recent years, particularly within the context of European funding initiatives. It has grown as a result of a recognition that voluntary and community organisations, typically the smaller, grass-roots groups, are often unable to access or benefit from the European Social Fund (ESF) and other European funds. The reasons for this relate to:
- Lack of time and resources required to submit often lengthy and detailed applications
 - The complexity of the funding regimes, including complexity of language used in the application procedures
 - Inability to attract the required match funds.
30. If funds are accessed direct, organisations and projects often then founder due to protracted payment delays and consequent cash-flow problems. This leads to an ironic situation where precisely those community and voluntary groups that are vital to achieving the aims of the European funds are often unable to access them successfully.
31. Intermediaries can provide a mechanism to obtain European grant-aid, match it at source, and then distribute it via pre-matched small grants to grass-roots organisations. The voluntary sector Key Fund in South Yorkshire, for example, gives out grants up to a maximum of £25,000. The grant regimes are accessible, involving rationalised application processes, customisation of monitoring and evaluation, and up-front grant payments to avoid cash-flow difficulties.

32. There is potential to build a raft of additional complementary capacity-building activities around the core function of grant-aid. These could include:

Training

For example, in management, community work, enterprise, preparation of bids.

Research

A central role of the intermediary would be gathering intelligence – involving, for example, analysis of capacity-building methodologies, community profiling, surveys of labour market trends, etc.

Project stimulation

'Animateurship' can stimulate the initiation of projects in the community and amongst groups and organisations. This can include advice relating to project design and management.

Skills exchange

The formation of a local network for skills exchange can be a key activity. This could be achieved through:

- Skill scanning to identify existing skills in voluntary and community organisations
- Inputting of data into a central databank
- Matching skills to demands within the network.

33. Intermediaries could also have a key role in enabling the development of neighbourhood learning centres as described above, through the provision of:
- Pre-matched start-up capital and revenue development funding
 - Facilities management services to provide, for example, centralised maintenance teams that can carry out repairs and maintenance to learning centre buildings (run as a community enterprise, employing local people from the target neighbourhoods, or deploying them through intermediate labour market schemes)
 - Training – for example, tutor and assessor skills
 - Learning mentorship
 - Learning centre management (for paid staff, volunteer workers, New Deal and Intermediate Labour Market, placements, and volunteer members of the management committee).
34. Work carried out under ESF Objective 3 Priority 4 has been seminal in this area.

Consortia arrangements

35. Another model would be based on a partnership or membership consortia arrangement. This might also provide a model for more localised learning partnerships and could provide the local infrastructure to local strategic partnerships. The consortium would aim to provide a direct bidding mechanism for LSC and ESF funding.
36. Consortia would be membership based with a central support unit responsible for:
- Strategic planning, particularly in relation to LSCs, learning partnerships and Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)
 - Collection and collation of data (for making data returns)
 - Networking, for example to exchange skills
 - Information and advice, for example on funding opportunities, quality assurance issues, effective working practices, etc.
37. The responsibility of member organisations would include:
- Delivering learning opportunities to client/target groups
 - Participating in the consortium network
 - Managing the central support unit through a management group/board structure.
38. Such consortia could realise a number of benefits. For example:

Needs analysis and curriculum planning

Joint market assessment and curriculum planning (especially where the same learning programmes are being provided by two or more of the consortium members) could be undertaken. Ultimately this might lead to the delivery of joint programmes with the mapping of appropriate progression routes from one provider to another.

Strategic planning

Linked to joint curriculum planning and market and needs assessment, corporate strategic planning could also be co-ordinated through a centralised function. This centralised function would stimulate, guide, collate and shape the different strategic aims and objectives of each member organisation.

Promotion, publicity and student recruitment

Instead of relying solely on programmes being advertised discretely by each individual organisation, promotion could be done jointly as a central, co-ordinated function. Recruitment might also be collectivised by sign-posting students from one provider member to another.

Human resources

Networking for skills exchange would operate extremely well within this scenario. There would also be the possibility for shared pools of tutors and assessors.

Quality assurance and inspection

Strategies for continuous improvement, self-assessment, and managing inspections could be co-ordinated through the consortium. Learning and teaching observations, for example, could be organised through peer support arrangements, where staff from one member organisation could visit the classes of another to offer a supportive critique of activity. Alternatively, quality assurance support could be offered through the central support unit. This could employ staff independent of any single member organisation to carry out observations and other aspects of quality assurance and internal verification, etc.

Data and information handling

This is a key area, as it is often the functional requirement with which most community-based learning providers struggle. Data collection and reporting could be a key function of the central support unit with complementary management information systems and procedures set up in the member organisations.

Joint bidding

In addition to bidding as a consortium to LSCs with matching ESF funding, joint bids could also be made for specific projects, for example, the development of particular capital projects across the consortium.

39. There would be dangers of such a consortia arrangement becoming a club or cartel for its members to keep out new providers. It would be essential that they remain dynamic and able to incorporate new members. Equally, consortia might expand to a point where sub-divisions into smaller consortia would be necessary.
40. Models such as those described above place particular emphasis on community capacity building. They are being actively discussed within voluntary and community organisations in particular and could be supported and evaluated as possible models for taking forward the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.

QUESTION 5.5

What measures can help money to circulate within a deprived neighbourhood, rather than immediately leave it?

41. We believe that thought should be given to trading of goods and services both within disadvantaged neighbourhoods and between them.
42. The experience of Local Exchange and Transfer Schemes (LETS) as inter- or cross-community arrangements is relevant in this area. Intermediaries maintain a central data-bank of human resources that can be brokered across a network (see response to question 5.3 on skills exchange).
43. One type of exchange currency to promote skills exchange could be a bartering system, as in traditional LETS. Another is actual cash through the creation of an internal market for the defrayment of small capacity-building grants. For example, a grant is awarded through the intermediary body or consortia to a network member to develop computerised learner tracking systems and this money is then used to contract another network member to provide relevant consultancy support.
44. The development of credit unions can be an effective mechanism for encouraging both savings and investment in a community. There is currently renewed interest in the development of credit unions partly as a result of the increasing withdrawal of commercial banking services from inner city and remote rural areas. The growth of financial mutuals will be supported by proposals to modernise the legal framework that governs them. We are particularly interested in the potential for credit unions to link with education and training providers to support individuals and groups to develop skills and local businesses.
45. Targeting of New Deal and Intermediate Labour Market schemes can further facilitate the creation of local wealth. This could underpin local employment strategies linked to the running of, for example, neighbourhood learning centres and locally managed workspace facilities. Such initiatives can combine to create a comprehensive, neighbourhood-based income generation strategy.

QUESTION 5.6

How can the Government ensure that social enterprises get the support they need? And how can it ensure that they get the same level of support as other enterprises?

46. To achieve a level playing field, non-profit making social enterprises need to be acknowledged by government offices as small- and medium-sized enterprises just like their private counterparts. At the moment, this acknowledgement is patchy across the country.
47. Centres of excellence for social entrepreneurship could be established to serve a cluster of neighbourhoods. These could provide a resource for community entrepreneurs, social enterprises, social firms, and the wider third sector. Such centres could comprise managed workspace for start-up community businesses, co-operatives, and social firms, combined with enterprise training, support and capacity-building facilities and units.
48. Support should be given to community learning enterprises that foster the growth in skills, confidence, and local social capital needed to encourage social enterprise. The new LSCs could use discretionary or initiative funds to test out models for community-managed neighbourhood learning centres, intermediary bodies or consortia as discussed above.

Reviving communities

CHAPTER 6

QUESTION 6.1

Is this the right vision for reviving communities?

49. We support the vision and the analysis outlined. We are particularly supportive of:

- The significance given to self-help and involvement of local residents
- The emphasis on community capacity building (Key Idea 12)
- The ideas for making it easier for local organisations to get funding (Key Idea 13)
- Involving community and voluntary sector organisations in service delivery (Key Idea 14).

Community capacity building

50. References to community capacity building are not consistent throughout the document. For example, in Chapter 2 it is referred to as an optional mechanism:

There is more that the public sector could do to help to rebuild this 'social capital', by consulting residents more about local services, or by helping them acquire the skills to help themselves (what is often known as 'community capacity building').

51. In FEDA's opinion, capacity building is the preferred approach that should be promoted to achieve the vision for neighbourhood renewal. The work of ESF Objective 3 Priority 4 has developed a body of experience in capacity building that could be built upon for the neighbourhood renewal strategy.

52. The recommendation from PAT 1 (*Jobs for all*), that effort should be put into developing the capacity of local organisations, is specifically related to organisations that have the potential to get residents into work. This is an unnecessarily narrow view of their potential role, and as stated above, we support a more extensive role for community sector organisations.

53. The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal requires a comprehensive and concerted approach to community capacity building if it is to be successful. The key, as recognised in some sections of the consultation document, will be to nurture community self-regeneration, as opposed to imposing solutions from outside. Such an approach needs to be sustained over time and we therefore welcome the statement that this would be a ten-year strategy. Ideas related to neighbourhood learning centres, intermediary and consortia arrangements discussed earlier could help to build community capacity.

Involving community and voluntary sector organisations in service delivery

54. We support this Key Idea and recognise that the voluntary and community sector has a particular role to play in tackling social exclusion for the following reasons:

- It is often the most accessible and meaningful medium for local participation and active citizenship
- It includes groups and organisations that are close (geographically, socially, culturally, and psychologically) to the most disadvantaged and marginalised social groups in the community
- It is a significant source of ideas and projects that contribute to regeneration initiatives and endeavours
- It is a locus for vocationally relevant volunteering opportunities, progressive intermediate labour market projects, and substantive employment creation.

55. However, as has been indicated throughout this response, we recognise that the capacity of the voluntary and community sector needs support and development to enable it to play a full part in the delivery of education and training services.

56. We also believe that the key to successful community learning will be for public, private, voluntary and community sector education and training to work in collaboration to achieve a coherent service. We believe that the proposals for new LSCs can provide a more effective framework within which to achieve this coherence.

Training in community leadership

57. We support the proposal that local training programmes in community leadership should be piloted. Development of community leadership skills for individuals can be an important element of a strategy. We suggest that the relationship between community leadership and community animateurship and entrepreneurship would benefit from clarification.

58. We wish to stress that action by individuals alone cannot transform the fortune of whole neighbourhoods. Turnaround of disadvantaged communities requires systematic and long-term action to raise skill levels, confidence, enterprise, and opportunities across the community. Individuals trained in community leadership can support that process, but care is needed not to raise expectations about the pace of change that can be achieved, or to create an elite to whom the community cannot relate.

QUESTION 6.2

Are the proposed changes the right ones?

59. We support the proposed change to the 48-hour rule. However, we urge that consideration be given to extending this further than one week both to attract volunteer commitment and to provide greater stability for those community organisations that rely heavily on volunteers.

QUESTION 6.5

Are there further barriers to community and voluntary organisations delivering public services, even when they are best placed to do so?

60. Limits to the internal organisational capacity of community and voluntary organisations are frequently related to inadequate resource bases. Transient, short-term funding compounds this problem.

61. The requirements of some funding systems and methodologies such as those associated with the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and ESF are difficult for small voluntary and community organisations. They lack the necessary economies of scale and central infrastructure. In addition, these requirements can deflect precious time and resources away from the core mission of tackling social exclusion or regenerating the local community.

62. The proposal for co-financing of LSC and ESF is welcome. This should enable efficiency savings in administration and accounting for beneficiary organisations. In addition, it could support the development of new forms of direct bidding through voluntary and community sector consortia. These could balance economies of scale with the benefits of flexibility and responsiveness associated with small organisations.

QUESTION 6.6

What more can be done to help build the capacity of people in deprived neighbourhoods to get involved in turning round their neighbourhoods?

63. We reiterate the importance of intermediaries and consortia as described earlier. These could provide a vital means of supporting community-led neighbourhood learning centres, community activity and social enterprise. Colleges can also play a pivotal role in building community and voluntary sector capacity as described earlier.
64. We also recommend that effort is made to strengthen the involvement of local people in representative capacities, for example, on school and college governing bodies, and on the LSC boards which are currently being established. Recent trends have focused on making these bodies more business-orientated rather than representative. We believe that it is time for this trend to be reversed.

QUESTION 6.7

Which public services can voluntary and community sector organisations help deliver and in what circumstances?

65. As already stated, community organisations (in the form we have described as community learning enterprises) can run neighbourhood learning centres. The capacity of such organisations to deliver would need to be assessed to meet quality assurance and financial probity requirements.
66. We are concerned that a narrow or bureaucratic approach to quality standards for LSC funding could limit the capacity of community and voluntary sector organisations to access LSC funds. Care will be needed not to impose crude baselines for quality without taking into account the added contribution and benefits, for example, of community-led providers operating within the new system. We have argued strongly in our response to DfEE consultation on the proposals for LSC systems, that the perceptions of customers should be taken into account in judging quality. For some learners the accessibility of provision or the empathy of tutors may be more significant than the facilities available.

QUESTION 6.8

How can voluntary and community organisations work better with the Government, with each other and with business?

67. The new developments around the voluntary sector compact should enable better working between the third sector and government.
68. In previous sections we have set out methods involving intermediary and consortium arrangements, particularly the capacity-building method of networking for skills exchange, that will assist voluntary and community organisations in sharing good practice with each other and generally working together effectively.
69. The business sector needs to be involved more closely in the social exclusion agenda. This should be given greater emphasis. The following approaches could be explored:
- Business people could act as advisers to the management committees of community and voluntary projects including community learning enterprises
 - Developing models for drawing large employers into local regeneration strategies
 - Local companies could be encouraged to offer work experience placements, work tasters, New Deal placements to people from deprived neighbourhoods, mentoring support to disadvantaged people moving into employment, and engage in intermediate labour markets initiatives
 - Local employers, including public sector employers, could be set local recruitment targets.

QUESTION 6.9

How can voluntary and community sector organisations establish a presence in deprived neighbourhoods which currently lack this sort of activity?

70. This is an important question and requires such organisations to be grown from within the community. They cannot be imposed from outside. Training in community leadership is a well practised and successful model that could be adopted. This would involve identifying local people who can demonstrate some level of community involvement, however limited and parochial it might appear initially. Suitably trained, these leaders could then begin to stimulate the growth of community activity. However, we reiterate the view that this should not be viewed as a quick-fix solution and structural change will take considerable time to achieve.

QUESTION 6.11

How can the new regional voluntary sector networks contribute to tackling neighbourhood deprivation?

71. These regional networks are an important source and locus of information, gathering relevant intelligence at a regional and sub-regional level. They can provide voluntary sector umbrella organisations with information about best practice, latest strategic thinking and legislative developments related to the neighbourhood renewal agenda.
72. Their relationship with other networks and partnerships will need to be clarified as decisions are made regarding, for example local strategic partnerships. The regional networks could provide a means of ensuring that the voice of the voluntary sector is clearly articulated within new arrangements.

Leadership and joint working

CHAPTER 7

Local strategic partnerships

73. We support the proposals set out for the creation of local strategic partnerships (LSPs) to provide a focus for co-ordination at local authority level, working with public, private, and voluntary sectors and with communities. We have two concerns. The first is that these may appear to be imposed on communities rather than being of the community. As recognised throughout the consultation paper, ownership of plans and solutions by the communities themselves will be vital to their success.
74. The second concern is the danger that different government initiatives will create more overlapping layers, partnerships and groups without clear remits. The respective roles, for example, of RDAs, learning partnerships, government offices, regional assemblies, local authorities, LSCs and community planning partnerships, must be rational and clearly articulated.
75. We are struck by the lack of reference to the existing and proposed infrastructure to education and training, namely learning partnerships and LSCs in this section of the document. We would support the role of learning partnerships being brought in line with the new local strategic partnerships, and would suggest that some of the models outlined above (neighbourhood learning centres, consortia and intermediary bodies) might provide a local infrastructure within local authority areas.
76. We recognise that significant education and training takes place under the auspices of other services, such as health services, housing associations, etc. LSPs might provide a mechanism for mapping and co-ordinating education and non-education budgets.

77. Mechanisms are needed to connect the strategic role of LSCs in education and training into the local, regional and national arrangements for neighbourhood renewal. As stated earlier in this response we believe that the more locally focused planning and funding arrangements of LSCs could enable resources to be directed towards disadvantaged neighbourhoods and to support a more appropriate range of provision than the current arrangements.

National and regional co-ordination

78. We support the need for neighbourhood renewal to have a high profile within government, and believe that a central unit may be the best means of achieving this. It could ensure that policy development across departments is supportive of the neighbourhood renewal strategy. We have some concerns, however, that a central unit could draw resources away from local provision.

Neighbourhood management

79. The idea of a focal person within the community is positive, but we would urge that employment of people from the community itself should be a key aim in appointing neighbourhood managers. We recommend that this be piloted through the pathfinder projects.

Better co-ordination of policies and services for young people

80. We support the proposals for a cross-departmental resource to develop the strategy for services to young people. We believe that the views of young people themselves must be a key focus of the new resource, and would urge that attention be given to the revitalisation of youth services.

Neighbourhood statistics

81. We strongly support the proposal for better information on neighbourhoods and have responded directly to the consultation on the PAT 18 report (*Better information*).

Key documents

DfEE. *Jobs for all*. DfEE, 2000.

DfEE. *Skills for neighbourhood renewal: local solutions*. DfEE, 2000.

FEDA. *Funding flows and business processes*. FEDA responds. FEDA, 2000.

Derrick Johnstone with Simon James. *Competence and competitiveness: colleges and local economic development*. FEDA, 2000.

Social Exclusion Unit. *Better information*. SEU, 2000. Available from: www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/index/pat.htm

Social Exclusion Unit. *National strategy for neighbourhood renewal: a framework for consultation*. SEU, 2000. Available from: www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/index/national_strategy.htm

Further information

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This report contains FEDA's response to *National strategy for neighbourhood renewal: a framework for consultation*, the report by the Social Exclusion Unit. FEDA supports the vision set out in the paper and would like to play a significant role in taking the strategy forward. Detailed responses are given to the chapters relating to reviving local economies, reviving communities and leadership and joint working.

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