Communities
and Local Government

Improving outcomes? Engaging local communities in the NDC programme

Some lessons from the New Deal for Communities Programme

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Introduction

This study explores the nature and impact of community engagement activities in six New Deal for Communities (NDC) Partnerships. The NDC programme offers particularly fertile ground in which to explore the implications of the various community engagement policy initiatives currently being proposed: one of its distinctive features is that communities are 'at its heart'. No previous area-based initiative has placed such a strong emphasis on community engagement.

'Community engagement' is a notion that has featured in many previous regeneration and neighbourhood renewal initiatives, but it has featured so frequently that its meaning has become obscured. Here are four distinct sets of objectives associated with attempts to introduce or extend community engagement:

- more responsive public services – engaging communities in governing and running public services can ensure that services are more responsive and sensitive to the needs of those they are meant to serve

- contributing to neighbourhood renewal by improving the outcomes from public services

- deepening representation and participative democracy, by engaging more people directly in decisions that affect their lives

- developing social capital and social cohesion: – engaging communities in governing and running public services can foster trust, generate networks, teach skills and empower those who are engaged

This study, which brings together a range of quantitative and qualitative data, is principally designed to identify and explore the impact community engagement has had in the six case study NDCs on NDC activities and outcomes, on the programme outcomes and actions of partner agencies and on the community itself. Attributing causality in social and economic research is never easy, and this is particularly true of any investigation of the impact of community engagement. However, we conclude that there is evidence that community engagement has made a difference to NDC programmes and outcomes.

The local context: challenges and complexities

Although community engagement is at the heart of the activities of all the NDCs in the research, they have had to confront a variety of complex issues in trying to engage communities effectively:

- *legacy of past programmes*: Many of the difficulties stem from the fact that the neighbourhoods selected have typically had experience of regeneration

programmes in the past whose promises of community involvement have not been fulfilled (at least in the eyes of local communities)

- *area boundaries and natural communities*: NDCs were expected to develop cohesive communities in neighbourhoods that often could not properly be described as communities at all: NDC boundaries were often arbitrary and rarely reflected neighbourhoods with which those who lived there could identify

- *diversity and population change*: The territorial diversity of many NDC neighbourhoods is often overlaid with ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, in areas which often experience high levels of population turnover

- *low capacity for community engagement*: The populations of NDC areas are typically characterised by a lack of capacity, which may be exacerbated where the local VCS is under-developed

- *externally imposed constraints and requirements*: In the early days, NDCs were under particular pressure to spend their budgets and deliver outcomes – imperatives seen by many as inconsistent with the need to develop local communities

- *focus on NDC funds*: The misconception shared by many local communities that the NDC grant was 'their' money, mistrust of public agencies built up over the years, and central pressure to spend and deliver, all combined to create a focus on the special funds rather than mainstream service activity

But the single biggest issue facing NDCs was the lack of clarity about the precise objectives of the community engagement they were all expected to develop and encourage, and NDCs therefore vary in the way they define the purpose of their activities to involve local communities.

Those areas selected as NDCs share many characteristics (poverty, high levels of worklessness, poor standards of health and educational attainment); but they also display wide variations in many other respects. The challenge of engaging local communities varies accordingly, reflecting the degree of ethnic and cultural diversity, the stability of local populations, the extent of existing community organisation, and local history of regeneration.

The New Deal for Communities approach

All the Partnerships in the sample have adopted a variety of different approaches to community engagement. The 'standard' model of NDC organisation involves a Board composed of a mix of local residents, representatives of local service provider agencies, voluntary organisations, and in some instances representatives of the business community. A variety of types of sub-committee (with a similar mix of membership) typically sit below the Board, for example covering project appraisal or specific policy themes.

Inevitably these governance structures only ever engage with a small percentage of the local population. But for all the NDCs, 'community engagement' includes communicating with and involving the population at large, as well as recruiting the limited numbers of local people to share responsibility for the management of the

NDC. In all the cases reviewed here, NDCs' structures for community participation extend beyond the involvement of 'elites' in decision-making, covering a wide range of options, including:

- the NDC Board
- the NDC's Committees and special groups
- theme groups
- wider community forums (principally the NDC-supported Neighbourhood Network)
- a resident panel overseeing the NDC's community grants scheme
- festivals, fun-days and road shows; and
- communications media like newsletters and radio stations.

Since most of the areas selected as NDCs were characterised by low skill levels, an underdeveloped voluntary and community sector, and had limited stocks of social capital, significant capacity building was required if NDCs' were to engage communities in their work. This requires more than skill development, and NDC capacity building activities include the provision of finances, staff resources and community facilities.

People's motivations for getting involved with their NDC vary, but generally include a desire to 'put something back'. Members of black and minority ethnic communities are (slightly) under-represented on Partnership Boards which are dominated by people over 30, most of whom have previous experience of voluntary or community sector activity.

What difference has it made? (1): The impact of community engagement on NDC activity

One of the main objectives of the practice study was to assess whether the various mechanisms for community engagement actually made a difference to the way NDCs approach their tasks. How far does community involvement really influence the priorities set by thematic strategies, and the kinds of interventions funded by NDCs? Are there variations in the extent of community influence across different policy themes? To explore the nature of community influence on the various dimensions of NDC activity, we focused on different themes in different case study areas:

- *education: Lambeth, Sheffield*: Lambeth NDC used information gathered from consultation exercises to shape its education programme, and has sought ways to promote the involvement of local communities in education activities and decision-making, and to involve young people in the development of services that affect them. In Sheffield education interventions were structured to develop community involvement

- *health: Newham, Walsall*: A range of different opinions could be found amongst stakeholders on the extent and nature of community influence on the

health theme in both Newham and Walsall but the majority view in both areas was that residents were both influential and largely constructive. Opinions in the two NDCs vary about the extent and nature of community influence, but the consensus is that residents were both influential and constructive. However there are uncertainties (shared by residents and professionals) about whether communities' influence is expected to point to a sharper analysis of the *problem* or contribute to a *solution*

- *housing/environment*: Knowsley: Community involvement in the theme has ranged across the spectrum, from communications through consultation and research to participation and delegation. Resident involvement was central to the development of the masterplan for the area, leading to some major changes and may have been decisive in enabling the scheme to proceed at all

- *worklessness: Newcastle*: Our research suggests that perhaps due to residents not identifying very strongly with business community at whom much of the theme activity is directed, the community did not make a significant contribution to the development of the jobs and business strategy. Nevertheless, there is still evidence of community influence in the detailed design of projects

There are variations in the extent of community influence between different themes examined in this study, but it is not possible say with confidence (given the limited sample) whether these reflect characteristics peculiar to the theme, or the particular circumstances of these NDCs. It is clear however that the opportunities for community influence and the challenges it presents change significantly over time, as programmes mature.

What difference has it made? (2): The impact on agencies and outcomes

The agencies

Although in comparison with previous regeneration programmes, the £50m awarded to NDC Partnerships is substantial, it is still dwarfed by the value of main programme expenditure going into NDC areas. Influencing the actions of the main service providers therefore is crucial to the overall success of the NDC programme.

In all the areas, agency involvement in NDC structures exposes them to the NDC community engagement ethos and ways of working, and through partnership working in the delivery of projects. Inevitably different agencies have taken different approaches to community engagement.

Across the case studies, there are numerous examples of positive co-operation between NDCs and staff from the agencies, and no shortage of examples where projects draw on agency resources as well as NDCs'. However, experience varies between agencies, is almost always dependent on particular individuals, and rarely extends to influence over actions that do not receive NDC financial support.

Outcomes

Assessing with precision the consequences of community engagement is not easy. Nevertheless, the evidence from this study suggests an indirect but important influence: community influence helps shape both the broad strategy, and in some cases the detail of NDC interventions; and therefore it must follow that community influence has contributed to whatever outcomes those interventions generate. The experience of the NDC Partnerships demonstrates the capacity of local communities to contribute to policy development and therefore, even if indirectly to outcome change; this is unlikely to be reproduced in relation to service provision more widely unless government can find ways of making agencies at the local and sub-regional level more sensitive to community engagement issues.

What difference has it made? (3): The impact on communities

The scale of investment in community development and community engagement activities varies in the case study Partnerships from £10.5m (or 26 per cent of the total) in Newcastle, to £.6m (or just 1.2 per cent in Newham), generating a wide range of outputs most of which would not have happened without NDC financial support. These include, for example, 'community chest' funds, communications, community development or engagement staff, and community facilities. Yet only a minority of NDC residents are involved in NDC activities (ranging from 25 per cent in Lambeth to 14 per cent in Knowsley).

Based on the results of the household surveys, indicators of social capital (for example, 'feeling part of the community' and thinking that 'neighbours look out for one another') have generally risen, the main exception being Newham, where levels have marginally declined. The high population turnover in the area may have had an impact. With a few exceptions, levels of trust in public agencies have increased since the NDCs were established. Generally local people feel more able to influence decisions that affect the area, but there has been little change in the numbers involved in voluntary organisations (thought to be a key measure of social capital), with levels of involvement in NDC areas substantially below the national average.

There is a widely shared and optimistic view held by across stakeholders interviewed for this study that, as a result of NDC interventions, communities are stronger and more capable. However, this is not entirely reflected in the results of the local household surveys where the variations in change over time between the six case study areas do not self-evidently relate to differences in the basket of community engagement interventions adopted by each of them.

A sustainable approach? The implication for forward strategies

Elements of succession planning are in place in all six, but as yet none has a formal written forward strategy. One of the lessons from previous studies of succession

strategies is that you can never start too early; however, NDCs appear to have remained focused on current delivery rather than succession planning until comparatively recently.

In some cases interviewees were sceptical about the prospects of the agencies retaining their focus on the NDC areas and community engagement locally once the grant funding period is complete. All the NDCs have recognised the need to build capacity within local communities as part of the forward strategy process, but with varying degrees of urgency and in varying ways. It is not always clear yet how arrangements for community involvement will survive after the NDC grant period. If arrangements established by NDCs for community engagement and providing local communities with the sense that they have influence do not survive, then there may be implications for broader levels of satisfaction with the area.

Lessons

For policy makers:

- community engagement has to occur from the bottom up because to really succeed, trust has to be developed and it is difficult for mainstream agencies to create and develop the required level of trust, this has to be developed through the community

- it is important to ensure that appropriately supported citizen engagement is built into regeneration programmes early in the development stage using a range of participatory techniques. This would also include appropriate engagement structures for young people

- be clear and consistent on expectations at the outset: are regeneration programmes expected to be resident-*led* or resident-*focused*? (Confusion between these different emphases appears to have bedevilled the NDC programme as a whole)

- NDC funding has been key in enabling innovative approaches to be developed – it has provided a resource that enables new (and often successful) approaches to be tested; it is not clear how these approaches will be sustained once NDC grant comes to an end

- there is very limited evidence that mainstream agencies are changing the way they engage with local communities on the basis of the lessons drawn from the NDC

- as proposed in the *Action Plan for Community Empowerment*, invest in local community anchor organisations to help secure their sustainability

- diverse and changing populations present particular challenges in terms of community engagement

For NDCs:

- it is important that projects stop supporting/building capacity at the right time – too early and capacity has not been developed enough but too late and then

capacity never fully develops as the community are always relying on additional support

- maintaining the balance in supporting local groups is difficult. Funding through community chest etc. can make groups dependent. It is important that any funding goes hand in hand with support to develop skills to become sustainable

- schools are a good means of engaging the wider community (across all social and ethnic groups): "*If you can engage children you can engage their parents and wider family*"

- develop, where possible, community assets as part of the succession strategy but be careful to ensure that community groups have realistic expectations in relation to the long-term management and financial sustainability of these assets

- the early development of community engagement strategies would help to embed community engagement activities throughout the work of neighbourhood renewal organisations.

- high profile community events can be important boosters to community morale, and provide opportunities for engaging with large numbers of people. However, these need to be supplemented by more targeted and direct work if engagement is to be sustained.

- in areas where a large number of community languages are spoken, the production of literature in a limited number of key languages but linking in to other voluntary and community sector (VCS) agencies for language and translation support has proved an effective method of ensuring engagement with all communities

For other neighbourhood renewal practitioners:

- when working with the community in deprived areas a careful balance needs to be struck between what the mainstream agencies think is 'best' for the area and what the community think is 'best'.

- there can be a tendency for the 'same old faces' to become involved in community activity and neighbourhood renewal. However, this can be crucial for ensuring continuity, and a further benefit is that a core group of residents develop expertise and knowledge over time

- build in time for community engagement and capacity building before programme spend begins in earnest. If a programme is to be genuinely resident led and focussed then you need to fully understand their needs before you develop projects

- build on existing community activity but seek to develop this to bring in new and/or excluded groups to widen participation and avoid the negative network dynamics of closed groups. Mapping of different levels of participation is important for identifying gaps

- deploy a mix of public consultation techniques spanning community-wide consultation and individual household-level discussions – and resource the programme accordingly. Train community activists and staff in these consultation techniques

- communication with residents is essential – through a variety of media. Newsletters, resident group meetings, Resident Board Directors, Theme Groups and one-to-one communication

- have dedicated community engagement teams that work across themes working alongside theme commissioning officers sharing the community engagement ethos and way of working 'out in the community'

- the purpose of community empowerment should not just be about developing the capacity of residents to influence projects, but should facilitate their role in scrutinising and holding service providers to account

- locate front line provision at a local level to improve access to services and the capacity to respond to local needs

1 Introduction

Why community engagement?

1.1 This study explores the nature and impact of community engagement activities in a sample of New Deal for Communities (NDC) Partnerships. 'Community engagement' is a notion that has featured in many previous regeneration and neighbourhood renewal initiatives. But it has featured so frequently that its meaning has become obscured. One commentator has argued that since community engagement or involvement are "*… held to be, self-evidently, 'a good thing'*", it comes as no surprise "*… that community involvement generally goes undefined, a mantra interpreted in various ways and leading to a wide range of policies, structures and social processes.*"[1]

1.2 Reflecting these variations, NDC Partnerships have deployed a wide variety of methods to involve local people. An earlier study for the national evaluation[2] identified the following activities as the NDC approach to community engagement:

- **informing** residents through newsletters, websites and videos and involving residents in the their production

- developing forums and other structures as a **basis for representation**

- places for **elected representatives** and volunteers in NDC structures: on the Board, theme groups and task groups

- **capacity building** for local voluntary and community groups to equip them to take a more active role in neighbourhood governance

- involving local people to **represent the NDC** in other governance arrangements (such as the URC working alongside the NDC in East Manchester) or in wider networks (such as a district-wide community network)

- involving local people in **presenting** the work of NDC, for example in workshops to share good practice, meeting ministers or giving tours of the area

- developing **related strategies** focusing on themes such as equalities and cohesion

- providing the opportunity for residents to work more closely with a wider range of agency representatives in **thematic or neighbourhood based groups**

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[1] Robinson, F., et al, (2005), 'On the side of the Angels': community involvement in the governance of neighbourhood renewal' *Local Economy*, Volume 20, Issue 1 February 2005 , pages 13 – 26

[2] Communities and Local Government (2008), *Community Engagement: some lessons from the New Deal for Communities Programme* http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/ndccommunityengagement

- **liaising with other organisations to promote community engagement** and develop more integrated participation arrangements

- developing **resident-managed projects**, such as community gardens

- developing **new facilities** that provide local meeting and activity spaces and scope for local asset management

The national policy context

1.3   The case study is timely given the government's objectives for community empowerment, set out in the local government white paper, *Strong and prosperous communities*,[3] and the 2007 white paper *Governance of Britain*.[4] Of course both these follow earlier discussion documents and initiatives including the *Together we can* plans[5], and *Citizen engagement and public services – why neighbourhoods matter*.[6] The proposals presented in the two recent papers include:

- giving people a new right to an answer from their local authorities when they demand action on any issue they want to raise through a new Community Call for Action

- increasing opportunities for communities to take on the management and ownership of local assets and facilities such as under-used community centres or empty schools

- simplifying and extending the scope of tenant management of housing

- encouraging local charters between communities and service providers which set out what local people can expect from their services and how they can take action if standards are not being met;

- providing a new power of well-being for the best parish councils to improve the development and coordination of support for citizens, communities groups and local authorities

- changing the 'best value' duty to ensure that authorities inform, consult, involve and devolve to all citizens and communities

- the possibility of a new provision for local communities to apply for devolved or delegated budgets to fund projects which will benefit the local community. These might range from the creation of a new park or playground to the provision of new services for the elderly

- the Communities Secretary's indication of government support for the notion of participatory budgeting

1.4   The increasing emphasis on the importance of citizen and community involvement, which embraces communities, their leaders, and organisations operating in the voluntary and community sector (VCS), is seen as a way to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of public services, extend

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[3] Communities and Local Government October 2006, *Strong and prosperous communities*, The Local Government White Paper.
[4] Ministry of Justice, (2007) *The Governance of Britain*
[5] *Together We Can* Action Plan, (2005) Civil Renewal Unit, Home Office.
[6] ODPM (2005) *Citizen engagement and public services – why neighbourhoods matter*.

civic and democratic participation, and contribute to the establishment of more cohesive neighbourhoods and sustainable communities. These principles were endorsed some years ago, by the Prime Minister while still Chancellor: "*It is my belief, after a century in which, to tackle social injustice, the state has had to take power to ensure social progress, that to tackle the social injustices that still remain the state will have to give power away, not just devolving power to empower local communities, but also enabling community and voluntary organisations to do more.*"[7]

1.5   Until recently, community engagement has been strongly associated with urban policy, where its incorporation into regeneration and other area-based initiatives has increasingly been seen not only as a way of improving outcomes in deprived areas, but also of developing the social capital of the area.[8]

1.6   These objectives, of greater community involvement in service design (and delivery) and in civic life may now be universal; but in areas of multiple deprivation, there are greater challenges in achieving them; and perhaps a wider set of motivations for meeting them. The additional burdens of civic engagement faced by those living in poverty and disadvantage were reflected in one interview in the Sheffield case study: "*the demands on the community are huge. There are so many things that involve consultation. Most people are trying to survive, to get food on the table and to make a living.*"

1.7   A common feature of many of these efforts to introduce or extend community engagement has been the absence of a precise definition of the objectives of doing so, and the expectations of what it may achieve. If objectives have not been defined, it is difficult to determine whether community engagement has succeeded. For example, an Audit Commission/Housing Corporation report[9] argued that "*there is considerable confusion about why landlords involve residents … if the reasons are not clear, this can lead to confusion and unrealistic expectations among residents – it may also mean that effort and resources are not concentrated where they are most needed or where they will have the greatest impact*". The objectives of the community engagement activities of the NDCs covered by the present study are set out in the next chapter.

1.8   Drawing on the various government statements alluded to above, we can perhaps say there are four distinct sets of objective associated with attempts to introduce or extend community engagement:

• more responsive public services – engaging communities in governing and running public services can ensure that services are more responsive and sensitive to the needs of those they are meant to serve

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[7] 'The Civic Society in Modern Britain', lecture by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, at the 17th Arnold Goodman Charity, London, 20 July 2000

[8] Putnam defines social capital as '… connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them'. See Putnam, R. D. (2000) Bowling *Alone. The collapse and revival of American community*, New York: Simon and Schuster. For a discussion of how far structures involving community representatives in governance contribute to the development of social capital see Skidmore *et al.*,(2006) *Community participation: Who benefits?* (JRF)

[9] Audit Commission, (2004) *Housing: Improving services through resident involvement* (Audit Commission, Housing Corporation)

- contributing to neighbourhood renewal by improving the outcomes from public services

- deepening representation and participative democracy, by engaging more people directly in decisions that affect their lives

- developing social capital and social cohesion: – engaging communities in governing and running public services can foster trust, generate networks, teach skills and empower those who are engaged[10]

Community engagement and New Deal for Communities

1.9   The 39 NDC Partnerships were launched in two waves, in 1998 and 1999, each given around £50m over a 10-year period. The main characteristics of the programme were:

- a focus on relatively small, tightly defined neighbourhoods, most with populations around or below 10,000

- delivery mechanisms based in local Partnerships bringing together local residents, the mainstream service provider agencies and the voluntary and business sectors

- problems are to be addressed in an intensive and co-ordinated fashion as set out in a 10-year delivery plan

- partnerships could identify local priorities but were expected to address five specific outcome areas:

  – education

  – health

  – housing and the physical environment

  – crime

  – worklessness.

- partnerships are to work with other agencies to improve the delivery of mainstream services into NDC areas

1.10   But the NDC programme offers particularly fertile ground in which to explore the implications of the various community engagement policy initiatives: its other distinctive feature was that communities should be at its heart. As the interim report for the national evaluation argued, "*… no area-based initiative has placed such a strong emphasis on community engagement.*"[11] All Partnerships have local residents on their Boards, in many cases in a majority. According to the interim report, the Partnerships have collectively spent about 22 per cent of total programme wide spend on community involvement and development.

1.11   This of course reflects a theory of change in which community development becomes a precondition for the other outcome changes.

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[10] The 2005 Citizenship survey showed that feeling able to influence decisions is a 'strong positive predictor' of community cohesion.

[11] ODPM (2005), *New Deal for Communities 2001–2005* http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/publications.asp?did=1625

The interim evaluation argued that: "*Residents and community groups in neighbourhoods experiencing multiple forms of deprivation are often socially excluded and reveal low levels of social capital. These factors can create a series of problems in their wake: low social esteem amongst individuals, households and communities; little sense of community cohesion; a distancing of households from the mainstream; and little evidence of any community infrastructure through which to build for the future of the neighbourhood. If unaddressed, these difficulties can lead to more visible forms of social unease and possibly higher levels of crime and disorder. Community engagement is intended at least in part to tackle this raft of problems.*"[12]

1.12   An earlier practice study[13] looked at strategies for and experience of community engagement, in a different sample of NDCs from those covered in this research. It found that:

- while NDCs embraced a wide range of approaches to community engagement, the *purpose* and *anticipated outcomes* were not always clear

- the processes of community engagement could be time-consuming and called for a wide variety of skills in Partnership teams

- the focus of engagement activity changes over the lifetime of a regeneration Partnership or programme

- not all sections of the community are equally easy to engage: children and young people, some minority ethnic groups, and people with mental health issues are among the groups often thought to be 'hard-to-reach'

- the main outcomes being pursued were process-based – for example, engaging more (or harder-to-reach) residents, rather than say, improving educational attainment

1.13   This case study progresses beyond the ground covered in the earlier work, and explores in more detail the *consequences* of NDC community engagement activity, for programme and project design, outcomes and impacts, and the development of social capital and a sense of 'citizenship'. Specifically this study focuses on four sets of issues:

- the mechanisms through which the case study NDCs engage with local communities: this provides important contextual information for the other objectives of the research, but since this aspect was covered (albeit in relation to a different sample of Partnerships) in the practice guide referred to above, this constitutes a relatively minor element of the case study

- the characteristics, experiences and backgrounds of community representatives: who they are, their motivation, perceptions of their role and relationship to their communities. Do community representatives on NDC Boards and other committees typically have previous experience of

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voluntary involvement? Is there a local 'busybodycracy', in which NDC representatives have their fingers in a range of other community pies? What's the turnover/throughput of community representatives, and why do people step down? How many people stand at elections? How have community representatives benefited individually from the experience, in terms of development of new skills, confidence etc?

- the prospects for sustainability: as Partnerships approach the end of their funding, we have reviewed the arrangements NDCs are putting in place to sustain their mechanisms for community engagement, and to ensure community influence – on local authorities, agencies, government – continues to be heard: expressed differently, we have asked: what are NDCs doing now to 'mainstream' the machinery and practice of community engagement?

- but above all we have explored the impact and consequences of, community engagement. The HM Treasury *Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration*[14] asserted that: 'The experiences from New Deal for Communities and neighbourhood management pathfinders have provided examples of how increasing community engagement can improve the quality of outcomes at a neighbourhood level.' This case study is designed to test that assertion

1.14   This is a challenging aspiration. As we discuss later in the report, the last few years have witnessed a variety of attempts to get beyond the ritual assertion that more community engagement leads inevitably to better services or more integrated communities, trying to assess exactly what difference it makes. As one of these reports stressed, 'If it is hard to establish reliable and meaningful measures of community engagement, it is even harder to establish a firm causal chain from level of engagement to desirable social goods.'[15] However, given the weight of expectation described earlier, (not to mention the costs), it is vital to explore this causal chain, to understand better the real impact of community engagement and how to maximise it.

The case studies

1.15   This report presents the findings of one element of the second phase of the national evaluation of the NDC programme: research in six case study NDC Partnerships. In the first phase of the NDC evaluation, detailed research was carried out in each of the 39 NDC Partnerships in order to support the NDCs in building and developing Partnerships, working with agencies and designing and implementing neighbourhood renewal programmes based on robust baselines and understanding of local problems. This phase culminated in the interim evaluation, NRU Research Report 17 *NDC Evaluation 2001–05*.

1.16   In the second phase of the evaluation the focus of enquiry is very much on understanding how and why change has occurred in NDC neighbourhoods:

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[14] HM Treasury (2007), *Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration*
[15] Rogers, B., and Robinson, E., *The benefits of community engagement* (Active Citizenship Centre)

utilising administrative data and Ipsos MORI household survey data to identify outcome change and undertaking detailed research into NDC approaches and interventions in order to explore relationships between interventions and change and to identify, if possible, what has worked in effecting positive change in NDC neighbourhoods, and why.

1.17   It is not possible to carry out this detailed enquiry in all 39 NDC Partnerships and so six case study NDCs have been identified in which research into different aspects of neighbourhood renewal is being explored. In broad terms the six are amongst the 'better performing' NDCs (on the basis of evidence available at the time of identification), although inevitably there is variation across the six both in absolute terms and over time, but they have also been selected to encompass a range of other factors which may be important in affecting outcomes, notably differences in relation to local contexts, models of Partnership and demographics. The six are:

- Knowsley
- Lambeth
- Newcastle
- Newham
- Sheffield
- Walsall

Brief pen portraits of the six areas are included in the next chapter.

Researching the outcomes of community engagement

1.18   This study is principally designed to explore the outcomes of community engagement. Attributing causality in social and economic research is never easy, as there is always some 'background noise' which can dilute and distort the impact of the precise object of the research. As the quotation above indicated, this is particularly true of any investigation of the impact of community engagement. In addition to the increased levels of community involvement they may generate, NDCs' impact locally derives (at the very least) from first, the expenditure of their core budgets of around £50m, and second, from the influence they exert on the design and delivery of main programmes and services.

1.19   However, as we show later in this report, the study allows us to draw some at least tentative conclusions. We have pursued two main lines of inquiry:

- *qualitative:* we interviewed a sample of both community and agency representatives in the case study areas, asking each about the extent and nature of community influence and impacts. (The detailed research template used for interviews is reproduced in appendix 1). The weakness of this approach of course is that it draws only on perceptions. However, by cross-checking community and agency views about what's different as a result of community engagement (which incidentally, were generally broadly in accord), we are able to arrive at a balanced judgment

- *quantitative:* we also drew on analyses of a variety of quantitative sources, including the household survey and administrative data. The former contains a series of questions which constitute 'social capital indicators', which have enabled us to plot the development of what might be summarised as 'community confidence'. Correlating changes in administrative data (describing for example improvements in educational performance or reductions in reported crime) with levels of community engagement is more problematic, both theoretically and empirically

1.20   We concur broadly with the conclusions of an earlier study on the impact of community engagement on mainstream services, which concluded that although there were clear benefits, these were "*… often difficult to quantify*"[16] We return to the issues of impact evaluation in our conclusions, but without more rigorously defined objectives for community engagement this kind of hesitant conclusion may be the best available.

This report

1.21   The remainder of this report is structured as follows

- section two examines the local context in which attempts to engage communities have taken place, discussing some of the issues and ambiguities which the process has generated

- section three describes the approaches adopted by the case study Partnerships to engaging local communities, and reviews their community engagement strategies

- section four reviews the influence community involvement has exerted on NDC activities, across a range of policy themes

- section five examines the ways in which community engagement has influenced programme outcomes and the actions of the agencies

- section six assesses the impact on the communities themselves, and the development of 'social capital' in NDC areas

- section seven assesses how far NDC actions are likely to prove sustainable in the longer term, and how this sustainability is being addressed in Partnerships' forward strategies

- section eight summarises our conclusions and offers lessons for policy makers, NDC Partnerships and other neighbourhood renewal practitioners and service providers

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[16] SQW et al., (2005) *Improving delivery of mainstream services in deprived areas – the role of community involvement* (ODPM)

2 The local context: challenges and complexities

The challenges for community engagement

2.1   In a variety of ways, community engagement is at the heart of the activities of all the NDCs in the research – if for no other reason than it was fundamental to central government objectives for the programme. From the start, the NDC programme was seen as embodying community leadership in a way and to an extent that went beyond what any previous regeneration programme had attempted. Inevitably therefore, the notion of community involvement or leadership features prominently in the delivery plans and strategies of all six. Tiesdell describes the launch of the NDC programme, emphasising how '… the government pledged that it would be neighbourhood based; would work through local Partnerships and *promote and sustain community involvement*'[17] (our emphasis).

2.2   The Lambeth NDC business plan for example, highlights the organisation as being one 'whose mission is to promote sustainable community led-regeneration … … and to ensure that our services meet the needs of our diverse communities by involvement of communities in the planning of services, projects and decision-making.' This kind of language is common to all the NDC Partnerships, and not just those selected as case studies; in practice however, NDCs have had to confront a variety of complex issues in trying to put these aspirations into practice.

Legacy of past programmes

2.3   Many of the difficulties experienced stem from the intrinsic nature of the kinds of neighbourhoods that require comprehensive regeneration of the sort provided through the NDC programme. The neighbourhoods selected have typically had experience of regeneration programmes in the past whose promises of community involvement have not been fulfilled (at least in the eyes of local communities). In some of the areas in the study, relations between local communities and service providers were poor, particularly in the case of police and local authorities, and in consequence, as they sought to establish themselves NDCs encountered a complete absence of trust between residents and anything which smacked of authority. The situation described to us in one NDC is just an extreme version of what all NDCs experienced.

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[17] S. Tiesdell, P. Allmendinger (2001) 'Neighbourhood regeneration and New Labour's third way', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 2001, volume 19

> ### The legacy of past programmes: an illustration
>
> One of the case study NDCs had experienced a variety of initiatives and interventions over the years, which had eroded community trust in any 'official' organisation. As one community representative said:
>
> *"The trust thing was a massive issue to begin with. It still can be, don't get me wrong, because of the way we've been treated by so-called council workers and service providers and managers of big organisations … The way this community has been treated has been dreadful and all the derogatory remarks they've made about the people who live here has had a massive impact on the way we feel about them. So there's been a lot of hatred. I know that's a strong word, but there has, for the way we've been treated."*
>
> More bluntly, a resident in another NDC said: *"There is a lack of trust. Professionals spent all the money and buggered off again."*

2.4   Chapter six presents a detailed analysis of the social capital indicators in the household survey. However, the survey shows how in the early days levels of trust in public institutions were significantly lower among NDC residents than the population as a whole (though the gap is closing).

Table 2.1 Trust in public institutions			
Institution	All NDCs 2002 %	All NDCs 2006 %	National 2006 %
Local council	41	46	52
Local police	58	63	68
Local health service	75	78	84
Local schools	51	53	67
Source: Ipsos-MORI household survey			

Area boundaries and natural communities

2.5   NDCs were also expected to develop cohesive communities in neighbourhoods that often could not properly be described as communities at all. Like all area-based initiatives (ABIs), NDCs required boundaries, but these were often arbitrary and rarely reflected neighbourhoods with which those who lived there could identify. Thus the mechanisms for community engagement had to be established in areas that in practice consisted of a series of diverse neighbourhoods, with histories of rivalry if not enmity. In the Newcastle NDC area for example, community capacity building initiatives focus on 13 distinct neighbourhoods, while in Walsall there are 24 'patches', each with its own representative.

Table 2.2 Community cohesion			
Indicator	All NDCs 2002 %	All NDCs 2006 %	National 2006 %
Feel part of the local community	35	42	54
People in area are friendly	83	85	92
Know most/many people in neighbourhood	40	42	47
Neighbours look out for each other	59	61	72
Can influence decisions that affect area	23	25	34
Involved in local organisation on voluntary basis	12	13	23
Source: Ipsos-MORI household survey			

Diversity and population change

2.6   This territorial diversity is overlaid (and in some cases reinforced) by ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. The needs, traditions, and levels of experience of different distinct groups require an appropriately diverse approach to community engagement.

2.7   Moreover, the populations of a number of NDC areas are not only ethnically diverse; the ethnic make-up of the areas is also changing rapidly. In the Newham NDC area for example, at the beginning the Bengali community was perceived as 'hard-to-reach'; now, newly-arrived communities from Eastern Europe are seen as the most impenetrable, separated by language and custom from the NDC's community engagement activities. Newham NDC has adopted a formal equalities strategy which reflects the diversity of the communities with which it seeks to engage, and sets out its objective of enabling: "… *the whole community, including those who have traditionally not taken up mainstream processes and services (for example on grounds of race, ethnic origin, culture, religion, residency status, gender, sexuality, age, ill health, disability, mental health, lack of English language skills), to participate in, and benefit from the New Deal for Communities programme. It also seeks to put equality and diversity issues at the heart of the NDC programme*".

2.8   The populations of NDC areas as a whole show greater ethnic diversity than the rest of the country. A variety of studies, in Scotland as well as England, have confirmed the additional challenges this creates for the development of community engagement strategies that connect with all groups in the community.[18]

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[18] For example, Farnell, R., (2003), *Faith in urban regeneration? Engaging faith communities in urban regeneration* (Policy Press); CURS (2003), *Empowering communities, improving housing: Involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities* (ODPM); Blakey, H *et al* (2006), *Minorities within minorities: Beneath the surface of South Asian participation* (JRF); Organisational Development and Support, (2005) *Developing good practice for effective community engagement and housing needs assessment for minority ethnic communities* (Communities Scotland)

Table 2.3 Ethnic diversity in NDC areas			
Self-reported ethnic group	All NDCs 2002 %	All NDCs 2006 %	National 2006 %
White	75	71	91
Mixed	2	3	1
Asian	11	12	4
Black	10	11	2
Other	2	3	1
Source: Ipsos-MORI household survey			

Totals do not add up to 100 because of rounding

2.9   Evidence on the relationship between population churn and community engagement and its impact on cohesion is ambiguous. Data from the NDC household survey suggests, unsurprisingly, that those who have lived in an area for less than three years are less likely to report that they feel part of the community or that they know many people. Yet the analysis of the 2005 Citizenship Survey[19] casts doubts on the impact: "*When other factors are controlled for, the number of years an individual has lived in a neighbourhood has no effect on perceptions of community cohesion*". However, it also suggests that the ethnic origins of incomers can make a difference: "*At the community level, population turnover/in-migration does not have a significant effect on perceptions of community cohesion. However, in-migration has a negative effect on cohesion if large proportions of the in-migrants are non-White and originate from outside the UK.*"

Low capacity for community engagement

2.10   The populations of NDC areas are also typically characterised by a lack of capacity, often compounded by the diversity and population turnover described above. This may be exacerbated where the local voluntary and community sector is under-developed – a major community capacity building resource. NDCs were thus faced with the task of building the capacity of the communities with which they were expected to engage – a process which is necessarily time-consuming.[20]

2.11   One of the first tasks facing NDCs was to raise awareness of their presence and to encourage local residents to become involved in NDC activities. Levels of awareness of the NDC have increased but still relatively low. In 2002 63 per cent of residents were aware of their local NDC (ranging from 21 per cent in Coventry to 87 per cent in Luton) but of these only 16 per cent said they had been involved in any activities organised by the NDC.

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[19] Communities and Local Government (2008), *Predictors of community cohesion: multi-level modelling of the 2005 Citizenship Survey*

[20] The challenges faced by NDCs in this respect and their responses to them are discussed at length in Communities and Local Government (2008) *op. cit*. See also Communities and Local Government (2007) '*Neighbourhood Management and Social Capital*', which discusses the variations in levels of bonding capital, (the 'glue' that holds communities together) but suggests that most lack bridging and linking capital (which provides the ties to other communities and society at large). It also argues that both kinds are needed for effective and sustainable community engagement.

Table 2.4 Awareness of NDC			
	2002 %	**2004 %**	**2006 %**
Heard of NDC?	63	79	80
Of these, involved in NDC activities?	16	19	22
Source: Ipsos-MORI household survey			

Externally imposed constraints and requirements

2.12   In the early days, NDCs were under particular pressure to spend their budgets and deliver outcomes – imperatives seen by many as inconsistent with the need to develop local communities.[21] In Newcastle for instance, members of the Community Regeneration Team (CRT) described a tension in the early stages of the programme between their community development approach to building capacity, and the delivery team's priority of spending and delivering. Because the two processes were seen as separate, the CRT operated *alongside* the main programme delivery structures rather than within them. By contrast, in Lambeth a deliberate decision was taken early in the NDC programme that the NDC would mainstream capacity building and community engagement activity across all themes and projects. It was recognised that community engagement and capacity building were not distinct themes that could be tackled in isolation. Rather, they needed to be at the core of the programme and are central to what the Lambeth NDC is trying to achieve.

2.13   It was not only central government that had expectations about early results; in many cases (and quite understandably) so too did local communities. These expectations were stoked up when communities were told that it was 'their' money, a phrase which may have been understood by regeneration professionals for the shorthand it was, but which was often taken literally by local communities. NDC staff seeking to introduce mechanisms for community empowerment also had to develop an understanding among inexperienced community representatives about the constraints on and procedures for spending public money.

Focus on NDC funds

2.14   This in turn contributed to another set of tensions which, initially at least, frustrated what appears now central to government expectations about community engagement – its capacity to influence public service design and delivery. The misconception that the NDC grant was 'their' money, mistrust of public agencies built up over the years, and central pressure to spend and deliver, all combined to create a focus on the special funds rather than mainstream service activity. Thus in a number of areas – Newcastle again providing an example – community engagement actions focused (until recently) on *project-based* activity; now, as they move towards their exit (or at least the end of the special funding) the emphasis is shifting towards

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[21] Wright *et al* (2006) 'Assessing the participatory potential of Britain's New Deal for Communities' *Policy Studies* 2006 7(4)

the development of more strategic (and perhaps sustainable) influence over mainstream providers. Newham's community involvement strategy (one of only two NDCs in the sample to adopt one formally) includes among its activities "… *ensuring community involvement is applied to the design and delivery of all local services*".

2.15   But the single biggest issue facing NDCs was the lack of clarity about the precise objectives of the community engagement they were all expected to develop and encourage. As one commentator put it (writing about regeneration generally rather than the NDC programme specifically), since "… *community involvement is held to be, self-evidently, 'a good thing', it comes as no surprise … that community involvement generally goes undefined, a mantra interpreted in various ways and leading to a wide range of policies, structures and social processes.*"[22] Unsurprisingly, the objectives for community engagement adopted by the NDCs in the sample are extremely varied, often imprecise, and even on occasion, have to be inferred from their interventions.

2.16   But NDCs' community engagement initiatives have not always been seen as radical.[23] Dinham describes NDC community development activities in this fashion: 'Yet though community development may be understood as having within it the potential for political challenge, even radicalism, the Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (SEU 2000) suggests that NDC work with communities is understood primarily in terms of community organising and planning at the non-radical end of the spectrum.'

2.17   Community involvement (or empowerment, engagement or participation – and the variety of language reflects the confusions) is typically described as fundamental to the NDC's activities. Knowsley's delivery plan argues that "… *plans imposed on a community…won't deliver lasting change. The community must be involved in identifying problems and needs, and in the development of the regeneration scheme*". It also explicitly recognised that community participation was "…*the most fundamental activity driving the NDC programme*".

2.18   The objective of Newham's community involvement strategy (which derives from the community involvement project through which almost all its community engagement activities are delivered) is set out as follows: "*The community involvement strategy seeks to ensure that Newham and Plaistow is a place where members of this diverse community, including those who have traditionally not been involved, are positively encouraged and supported to do so at the level they want to and in relation to the things that matter to them.*"

2.19   The strategy is silent on the purpose behind the encouragement to get involved (though the phrase '… at the level they want to' is crucial: for Newham it is important not to assume that everyone will either want to or

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[22] Robinson, F., et al, (2005), 'On the side of the Angels': community involvement in the governance of neighbourhood renewal' *Local Economy*, Volume 20, Issue 1 February 2005
[23] A. Dinham (2007), Raising expectations or dashing hopes? Well-being and participation in disadvantaged areas, *Community Development Journal*, vol. 42

should get involved). It is possible to infer elements of the wider purpose from some of the actions which it is proposed will be undertaken in pursuit of the strategy's objectives, which include:

- generating greater awareness of the opportunities for residents to influence, shape and participate in NDC activities

- supporting the continuing development of participatory governance structures including the NDC Board and Theme Groups

- supporting existing residents and community groups, and supporting the development of new groups where appropriate

- encouraging and supporting more residents to be actively involved in the NDC by ensuring they have the confidence and skills to participate fully in this programme and other NDC based initiatives

- developing the skills, knowledge and abilities of residents to enable them to participate actively in the NDC governance structures and to take advantage of the opportunities being generated in the area

- promoting and administering a community initiatives fund to support community activity

- promoting a range of opportunities for residents to influence and participate in NDC activities

- identifying and providing support to those individuals and groups currently under-represented in their involvement in NDC activity

- ensuring community involvement is applied to the design and delivery of all local services

- actively consulting and informing local residents using communications methods that reach out to groups who have traditionally not participated in mainstream processes and services

- ensuring that traditionally excluded groups benefit from NDC activities

2.20   Three sets of objective are implied in the Newcastle NDC approach to community engagement: "*To engage residents of the Newcastle NDC neighbourhoods in ways which*

- *increase community activity*,

- *develop the strength of community organisations and*

- *give local people real opportunities to be influential, through Newcastle NDC and other routes, in bringing about the lasting changes they would like to see in the area*"

2.21   To some degree, these statements of objective confirm the observation quoted earlier, that community involvement is simply and self-evidently a good thing that needs no further justification. The Walsall NDC statement of objectives goes some way towards defining the purpose.

Walsall NDC: Objectives of community engagement

- To increase the confidence and capacity of residents and groups to participate actively in their community through structures that are supported and maintained.

- To build the capacity of community led service providers to plan and deliver activities and programmes to meet local needs.

- To engage with the voluntary and community sector organisations that are based outside of the New Deal area in Walsall, and those that are national providers in order that they may invest their expertise and resources to provide a more diverse range of support services for the community.

- Raise awareness of the New Deal programme in order to enable a greater number of residents to become involved in the regeneration of the New Deal area.

- To enable young people individually and collectively to have a greater say in decisions that effect their community

2.22   As mentioned at paragraph 1.7, without being clear about objectives, it is difficult to know how to decide if you have succeeded. Although projects established to deliver community engagement included target outputs (though rarely outcomes), the case study NDCs did not generally set overall strategic targets by which to assess their community engagement progress. Two exceptions were Knowsley and Walsall.

Outcome measures

Knowsley

Primary Outcome 9: *"By 2011 there will be a culture of active participation in community life and community involvement in decision making. 30 per cent of people will report involvement in community activity whether at a strategic, project delivery or more casual level."*

Walsall

- Increase the number of residents involved in community activities by 15 per cent by 2008

- Increase the number of new groups assisted by ND:NH by 30 per cent annually

- Increase the number of young people annually added to ND:NH contact list by 20 per cent

- Increase the number of young people annually using the YPIC by 20 per cent annually

- Increase percentage of residents who feel part of the community to 50 per cent in 2008

The communities

2.23   Those areas selected as NDCs share many characteristics (poverty, high levels of worklessness, poor standards of health and educational attainment); but they also display wide variations in many other respects. The challenge of engaging local communities varied accordingly, reflecting for example, the degree of ethnic and cultural diversity, the stability of local populations, the extent of existing community organisation, and local history of regeneration.

2.24   **Knowsley** A predominantly residential, working class neighbourhood which, before the NDC consisted of almost 80 per cent social rented accommodation. It has not had to cope with the rapid influx of migrants into private rented accommodation that other NDC areas have experienced, and its population remains predominantly white, relatively young and with a relatively high proportion of single person and lone parent households. As one local resident said, the NDC consists of "*… long-established communities, communities that were long-established even before they moved to Huyton – because they were strong communities that came as a whole from another area to here. A strong community spirit was maintained.*" Between 1991 and 2001, the NDC's population fell 17 percent (from around 11,500 to 9,500) and estimates suggest that this decline has continued by a further five percentage points up to 2005–06 with the population now standing at just over 9,000. A core of organised community activity preceded the NDC, in part because of the European Objective 1 'Pathways Partnerships', which had been operating in the area since 1994.

2.25   **Lambeth** The NDC area is home to some 7,100 residents in around 3,200 households. It is a hugely diverse neighbourhood with a mixture of residents that have lived in the area for a long time, alongside newer arrivals, including eastern Europeans. Approximately 65 per cent of residents are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, and there is a high proportion of young people. Pre-NDC community activity tended to be fairly sporadic, though the neighbourhood was chosen as the NDC area partly in the belief that there was sufficient existing social capital for a new Partnership to get off the ground fairly quickly. The NDC estimates that Lambeth has had 30 per cent population churn over the last three years. A number of groups have proved more difficult to engage, including Portuguese, Latin Americans, and Somali communities. There is also a 'closed community' of illegal immigrants with whom it is almost impossible to engage, according to NDC staff.

2.26   **Newcastle** The NDC sits to the west of the city centre in an area originally developed as dense terraced housing for the armaments factories and ship yards on the banks of the Tyne. It consists of neighbourhoods with distinct identities, with little mixing across the area as a whole. The population is relatively young: more than 20 per cent of residents are under 16 and two-thirds are of working age. Nearly one third of these are unemployed, on benefit or in the lowest grade jobs. The area is ethnically diverse: the Asian/Asian British population is the largest non-white group in the NDC area accounting for almost 20 per cent of the population. There is evidence of significant population 'churn' in the area together with changing demographics. In 2006 42 per cent of residents wanted to leave the area

and 43 per cent had lived in their current residence for less than three years. The infrastructure of representative community groups across the area is fragmented and unevenly developed. The area's previous regeneration history has left a legacy of mistrust of professionals from outside within the community:

2.27 **Newham:** The Newham NDC area is located in East London along the western boundary of the London Borough of Newham, is bordered by Stratford to the north, Canning Town and the Royal Docks to the south and an industrial area and the river Lea to the west. It has a population of some 9,600 people in 3,900 households and is racially diverse: almost 50 per cent of the population is non-white. It is also a very young area: in 2001 over a quarter of the population were under 16, with almost 20 per cent aged 0–9. It also has a high proportion of lone parents with dependent children. The area has had little previous regeneration history: it sits on the edge of the old London Docklands Development Corporation, and therefore missed out on the investment – and regeneration experience – that offered. Although one interviewee suggested that there were variations in the experience of communities in different parts of the NDC area, compared with many NDC areas, there was relatively little community infrastructure when the NDC was established.

2.28 **Sheffield:** The Sheffield NDC area lies to the north east of the city centre. It has a population of just over 8,800 people in around 4000 households. The population of the NDC area has a number of distinctive characteristics: it is relatively young, with a high proportion of single person households, a high proportion of lone parent households and a large and mixed ethnic population. It is also changing – the steelworks that used to have a strong connection to the area have closed. There has been a lot of demolition and, as the area has repopulated, it has developed more of a multicultural mix. Although there is an established voluntary and community sector in the area, it has lacked investment historically and has operated largely in isolation from city-wide networks and forums. Interviewees characterised the VCS as relatively weak, comprised predominantly of faith-based and ethnic organisations, and operating in 'silos' with little collaboration or co-operation between agencies.

2.29 **Walsall** Some 11,700 people live in the NDC area, in about 4,600 households. Unlike many other NDCs the Walsall NDC area includes a higher than average number of residents over 75. The population is largely white, and remarkably stable: almost 80 per cent have lived there for more than five years, and 40 per cent more than 20. There are lower proportions of lone parents and single person households than the NDC average: in fact 53 per cent of residents live as married or cohabiting couple, compared with the NDC average of 38 per cent. Interviews for this and earlier studies suggest the area is inward-looking and suspicious of change. There were a few community associations operating before the NDC, not claiming to be representative of the whole population. Involvement with community organisations has increased slightly since the NDC arrived, from 11 per cent in 2002 to 14 per cent in 2006.

3 The NDC approach

Introduction

3.1   As we saw in the last section, there is a variety of dimensions to NDC community engagement, and in consequence, all the Partnerships in the sample have adopted a variety of different approaches. The 'standard' model of NDC organisation involves a Board (usually called this whether the Partnership is incorporated as a company or not), composed of a mix of local residents, representatives of local service provider agencies, voluntary organisations, and in some instances representatives of the business community. A variety of types of sub-committee (with a similar mix of membership) typically sit below the Board, for example covering project appraisal or specific policy themes.

3.2   Inevitably these governance structures only ever engage with a small percentage of the local population. But for all the NDCs, 'community engagement' includes communicating with and involving the population at large, as well as recruiting the limited numbers of local people to share responsibility for the management of the NDC. Newham NDC's community involvement strategy is based round a version of the ladders of participation.[24]

Levels of participation: Newham community involvement strategy (extracts)

Information – an effective communication strategy is an essential cornerstone of community involvement and information needs to be clear and accessible. Residents need to know of the opportunities for their involvement and how these can be accessed.

Consultation describes the process of explaining and enabling residents to understand ideas and plans, and to solicit their views.

Participation signifies the playing of an active role by residents with the power to influence the decision-making processes.

Control is the level of involvement that allows residents through formal organisations to make decisions themselves; deliver projects and services and manage resources.

3.3   NDCs are not unusual in discovering that only a small percentage of local people have the appetite for formal involvement with structures of governance and decision-making. Paul Skidmore and his colleagues explored

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[24] Arnstein, Sherry R, 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol 35, No. 4, July 1969

whether policies to involve people in making decisions about their own communities are effective in building strong social networks.[25] They conclude that "*… the message from our research is that, no matter how hard people try, existing forms of community participation in governance will only ever mobilise a small group of people. Rather than fight this reality, the solution lies in maximising the value from the existing small group, while also looking at longer-term approaches to governance that would create a broader bedrock of support for governance activity*".

3.4   The NDCs reviewed here appear to have understood this lesson. In all cases, the NDCs' structures for community participation extend beyond the involvement of 'elites' in decision-making, covering the whole range of options, including:

• the NDC Board

• the NDC's Committees and special groups

• theme groups

• wider community forums (principally the NDC-supported Neighbourhood Network)

• a resident panel overseeing the NDC's community grants scheme

• festivals, fun-days and road shows and

• communications media

We review the main approaches below.

The structures:

Community representation on the Board

3.5   As table 3.1 shows, in all but one of our case studies, local residents are in a majority on the main Boards overseeing NDC activity.

Table 3.1 Resident membership of NDC Boards*			
Partnership	Total Board membership	Resident members	% resident members
Knowsley	20	12	60
Lambeth	16	8	50
Newcastle	23	12	52
Newham	24	15	63
Sheffield	25	15	60
Walsall	38	24	63
Numbers in the table refer to seats available; some may be unoccupied at present			

3.6   Periods of election (or appointment) vary but are generally for three years. This is the case in Newcastle for example, though a third of seats come up for election each year. While this guarantees some continuity, it also commits

[25] Skidmore, P., *et al.*, (2006) *Community participation: Who benefits?* (JRF)

the NDC to the costs of annual elections. In the cases reviewed here Board membership has been generally stable (perhaps after some turnover in the early days). The consequent experience and maturity of existing Board members may have helped with the oversight of the NDC, but in some areas is seen as creating challenges for wider capacity building and succession planning. For example, a review of governance arrangements in Lambeth last year concluded that the Partnership needs to attract new Board members who have specific skills and expertise which can assist the organisation to continue post-NDC.

3.7   Resident majorities of course are no guarantee of influence or authority. The frequency of meetings, the nature of agendas, the quality (and accessibility) of information provided to Board members and the way Board meetings are managed all affect how authority and influence are exercised[26]. In one case, some interviewees argued that the size of the Board is thought to be unwieldy (38 in Walsall), and that this can limit the effectiveness of the resident voice since the opportunities for meaningful debate are limited. In other cases, the frequency of meetings means that Boards can have at best light touch authority (Sheffield, where meetings are every two months). It is of course the case that in all the NDCs covered in this study Board members have the opportunity to exert influence in a variety of other ways beyond attendance at Board meetings.

3.8   While it remains true that most resident seats on NDC Boards are elected positions, doubts are now being expressed about whether this approach remains appropriate. The Lambeth NDC has accepted a recommendation from a governance review that took place last year to replace elections with an appointment system. The recommendation (and the decision to accept) was based principally on first, the declining levels of turnout in elections, and second, the costs of staging the exercise. In Newcastle, now that the NDC is in the process of converting to a more commercially oriented successor body, the Board is currently debating whether to continue with annual elections.

3.9   This is partly triggered by the decline in numbers participating over the lifetime of the NDC. Electoral engagement was relatively high at the start of the programme (52.1 per cent in 2002) but since then interest appears to have waned (22 per cent in 2004 and 19 per cent in 2006), leading some Board members to wonder: 'Are democratic elections the best way to approach community representation in an area where only 5 per cent of the community votes? Is that truly for the people or for the people that are connected to the electoral system? Electoral participation is not something that many people in the Sheffield area have been brought up with. Many are not on the electoral register. When you say vote, New Deal is seen as politicians'.

3.10   But others argue that elections are still critical for NDCs' accountability: "*The fact that we are elected is highly symbolic; it gives a legitimacy and status to what we do. We are more legitimate in our own eyes and it puts*

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[26] The experiences of board members of, *inter alia*, the way boards operate is to be the subject of a future piece of research as part of the National Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities Programme.

our status on a par with local councillors. The local authority has realised that we weren't just self-appointed. We are on their spectrum rather than just having invented ourselves".

3.11   This debate does suggest that a system of elections is no guarantee that Boards are either accountable or representative. Dinham's study[27] suggests that a system of elections can actually exclude some sections of the community: "*All the respondents regarded the primary gateway to participation as the community elections which, though democratically conceived, were felt to have discriminated against newcomers to community activity who lack a natural 'constituency' of support because they had not previously been visible.*" More generally, Dinham and others[28] have argued that 'power imbalances' between community representatives and professionals can limit community influence.

3.12   Another study[29] under the national evaluation programme examined NDCs' experience of elections more widely. Some kind of election for places on the Board has been held in 37 of the 39 NDCs, with turnout ranging from five to 53.5 per cent, with an average around 23 per cent. This study found that candidates for election are "*… often already active in the community in clubs, resident associations and tenant association*". It recommended that Partnerships "*… support involvement in the electoral process from groups who may not be actively involved*", thus perhaps confirming Dinham's thesis.

Community involvement in sub-committees or appraisal panels

3.13   The detail of decision-making structures in the six NDCs reviewed here varies, but wherever there are sub-committees or appraisal panels, resident board members are involved, often as is the case in Knowsley, in a majority.

Resident involvement in Knowsley structures

Resident Board Directors are also involved in all of the NDC's committees:

- the Approvals Committee (which now approves project bids up to £250,000) is made up of eleven of the twelve Resident Board Directors, a Strategic Partner Director (from the voluntary and community sector) and a Council Director. A Resident Board Director and the Strategic Partner Director jointly Chair the Committee

- the Finance Committee is Chaired by a Strategic Partner Director (from the voluntary and community sector) and also has a Council Director and five Resident Board Directors as members

- the Human Resources Committee is Chaired by the NDC Board Chair (a Strategic Partner Director from the faith communities and local resident) and is made up solely of five Resident Board Directors

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[27] A. Dinham (2007), Raising expectations or dashing hopes? Well-being and participation in disadvantaged areas, *Community Development Journal*, vol. 42

[28] For example Purdue, (2007): Community leadership cycles and neighbourhood governance, in *Disadvantaged by where you live? Neighbourhood governance in contemporary urban policy*, I.Smith, E.Lepine and M.Taylor (eds) , (Policy Press)

[29] Communities and Local Government (2008), *NDC Elections: a significant event for Partnerships and Communities?*

3.14   Elsewhere, in Walsall, resident board members are involved in both project and grants approval sub-committees, and will be in Lambeth in the new projects performance sub-committee. In Newham, any Board member may attend appraisal panels.

3.15   These arrangements were developed when NDCs were all focusing on developing and approving interventions and expenditure. As the Partnerships approach the end of their funding, the functions of these various committees are changing, both in nature and significance: monitoring and evaluation become more important than approving expenditure. However, in some cases, the mechanisms for community engagement are not keeping up with these changes in function. In at least one of the case study NDCs, community representatives are not involved in evaluation, and there have been criticisms from Board members that they had not been approached to contribute to the evaluation of projects.

Community representation in theme groups

3.16   At the start of the programme all the NDCs had some kind of theme group structure, (though the actual names vary) which typically brought together NDC officers, staff from the appropriate agencies, and members of the community. The formality of membership varies, and in many areas theme groups are held in public, open to any community member.

3.17   In Knowsley there are five task groups (crime and community safety, education, health, employment and housing and environmental services). Resident attendance at these has varied, both across the different themes (with housing having the biggest attendance) and over time. It now averages around five or six across the different groups. A neighbourhood network survey conducted for the NDC in 2005 showed over 30 residents claiming to have attended the housing theme group, 13 the health group, seven for education and five for each of the crime and community safety and employment task groups. With the programme now pretty much up and running with most projects in place or in the pipeline, attendance still ranges between five and fifteen residents.

3.18   Elsewhere levels of attendance have dwindled to the point where theme groups are being abandoned or fundamentally reorganised. The decline in attendance largely reflects changes in the role of theme groups as programmes mature: expenditure is largely committed and the scope for new project activity is therefore limited.

3.19   In Sheffield, theme groups have been reorganised into Priority Areas, and public meetings focus on priority issues. In Newham, once the major projects had started and there was less project development work for theme groups, the NDC set up five area service user groups (SUGs) as a basis for neighbourhood management, so local people could get together with service providers to talk about local issues and how to tackle any new issues or problems that emerge. In Lambeth, theme groups are to be replaced by the projects performance sub-committee. Given declining attendance and the change of function, the abolition of the theme group is unsurprising; but in

some NDC areas there has been criticism from community representatives that this has diminished community influence.

Wider community forums

3.20   In all the case study NDCs 'engaging communities' was understood to mean more than recruiting a few individuals to share decision-making. Building contacts with the population at large was seen as important, to inform and consult on NDC activities, and also to help develop social capital: all but one of the Partnerships in the study have set up and managed a variety of community forums.

3.21   In Sheffield, the access to communities provided by these wider forums has been particularly important in the aftermath of a recent shooting: a staff member from the NDC explained: "*We held a public meeting targeting parents and elders and the young people affected. We also worked with the youth council to organise a youth conference and supported area panels and a range of public meetings. The response is ongoing – the NDC has dedicated 3.5k so far and will spend what is needed. There has been good attendance at all events*".

3.22   Walsall has established a variety of forums each designed to meet the needs of specific target groups, including young people, the elderly, and gypsies and travellers. In Lambeth the long-established community forum (which allowed community members to express views on any local matter) has been supplemented recently by a neighbourhood management forum, to provide a vehicle through which members of the community can engage with service providers. Knowsley funded a neighbourhood network which brings together representatives of community groups from across the area. The network has established and resuscitated a variety of residents' associations, and now has representation in twenty-six of the thirty-four roads in the NDC area.

3.23   The one exception among these NDCs is Newcastle, where there is no overarching structure to bring the community together across the whole of the NDC area. A working group of the Board was established and deliberated the matter for three years. The group disbanded as it proved impossible to reach consensus. A Board member commented: "*We've always wanted a community forum but couldn't find a mechanism*."

3.24   Events such as these can help to promote social cohesion, by bringing different communities together and providing opportunities for networking. They create a positive, friendly environment in which to engage the community and get a sense of its feelings and needs. Newcastle NDC has attempted to bring all its disparate communities together with a variety of events including the Lanterns Festival.

Newcastle NDC Lanterns Festival

Following discussions arranged by the Community Regeneration Team (CRT) five different community groups came together to discuss collaboration between various neighbourhoods. These groups organised Lantern Festival as a community festival, bringing together neighbourhoods that had only previously operated in isolation. The team helped the groups plan the event, engaging community artists to provide training in lantern making and costume design, assisting with fund raising, and planning for the event itself. NDC staff thought the final result had contributed to community cohesion, and created opportunities for the groups to meet and share views and experiences.

3.25   All the other Partnerships have included a variety of types of event or festival in their community engagement activities, which are seen not just as enjoyable gatherings to bring communities together (though that is important), but opportunities for the NDC and its supported projects to market themselves to local people. The Sheffield bonfire event, for instance, is attended by 3–4,000 people each year. As well as bonfire and fireworks the event promotes the NDC through project information and stalls.

3.26   Elsewhere events are designed to provide connections outside the NDC – such as Walsall's fund-raising event for Children in Need. There is no doubt that these festivals and carnivals are popular; it is hard to tell how far they provide real progression into other aspects of NDC activity.

Communications media

3.27   Finally, all the NDCs have adopted a comprehensive range of communications media, to keep local people informed about plans and activities.[30] The Newcastle communications strategy emphasises the significance of this: "Positive communications are of central importance to the success of Newcastle New Deal for Communities. Our vision – to include all local people in bringing about lasting change – can only be fully realised if we give residents the chance to keep in touch with our work and see the improvements to the area as they take shape."

3.28   The mechanisms for this adopted in Newcastle and elsewhere include regular newsletters distributed to every household, websites (though in Knowsley usage is reported to be fairly low), and in some cases a local radio station, or information shops. In Walsall the Blakenall Information Centre, is funded by the NDC as a means in which to provide a single point of access for various services, as well as housing the Community Involvement Team. The Sheffield NDC also maintains an information bus.

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[30] Communities and Local Government (2008) *Communications: some lessons from the NDC experience*, http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/970319

> **The Sheffield communications vehicle**
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> The Sheffield NDC Communications and Information vehicle is a multi-purpose utility vehicle that can be used for a range of events: exhibitions, presentations, promotions, mobile performance stage, consultation, road shows. The vehicle is used for community events and is also made available free of charge to Sheffield groups and residents and marketed to those outside the area for use for a fee.

Conclusions

3.29   Of course all these various mechanisms provide no guarantee that community views will be heeded or that their representatives will exert influence. Nevertheless a range of approaches spanning the separate stages of the ladder of participation referred to earlier are, at the very least, a necessary if insufficient condition for community influence – as are training and development programmes designed to build the skills to enable communities to participate effectively.

Capacity building

Introduction

3.30   Many and probably most of the areas selected as NDCs were characterised by low skill levels, an underdeveloped voluntary and community sector, with limited stocks of social capital. These conditions help explain the low levels of confidence, aspirations and pride among local communities, which in turn are related to high levels of worklessness and crime, and poor educational attainment, environmental conditions and health. If their aspirations to engage communities in the work of Partnerships were to be achieved (particularly since that included sharing in decision-making about regeneration strategies and interventions), NDCs concluded early on that significant capacity building would be required.

3.31   'Capacity building' is partly about developing the skills and confidence required for the range of community engagement approaches described in this paper. It is a term generally applied to community and voluntary groups, but may also be taken to apply to those representing public agencies as well. However, building the capacity of fragmented and demoralised communities requires more than skill development – it requires finances, resources and facilities as well. We review below the range of interventions developed by the case study NDCs to inject capacity into their local communities.

Teams

3.32   All the case study NDCs have employed dedicated community engagement or involvement teams whose functions have included capacity building, usually alongside a range of other responsibilities. Set out below are the functions of the Newham community involvement team, which give a good idea of the range of activities undertaken by the teams.

According to the project appraisal the Community Involvement Team will:

• continue to develop, and support the development of, community involvement initiatives and governance structures

• encourage and support more residents to be actively involved in the community by ensuring they have the confidence and skills to participate fully eg through the essential training for communities training (etc) and capacity building programme

• deliver open and inclusive mechanisms to encourage wider and more varied opportunities for resident involvement, and for future succession

• develop positive attitudes and a culture of support towards the most disadvantaged individuals and groups, to ensure that the programme responds to their needs and encourages their involvement

• ensure community involvement continues to be used as a method of improving local services within NDC

• support the development of mechanisms that facilitate liaison between service users and providers

• support the development of mechanisms which involve residents in the monitoring and evaluation of NDC initiatives such as neighbourhood management and neighbourhood agreements

• support NDC staff and its stakeholders and other service providers in methods of community involvement

• deliver community involvement that can be sustained by developing and capacity-building community members and facilitating the development of social networks

3.33   In some NDCs interviewees reported tensions in the past between the imperatives to deliver and spend that drive the programme teams and the extended timescales required for the community development work of the involvement teams. The establishment of distinct community involvement teams has sometimes hampered the process of integrating community involvement across all aspects of NDC activity.

Training

3.34   All the NDCs have included a wide range of training interventions within their capacity building programmes, principally aimed at community representatives, though Board development activities have usually been aimed at agency representatives as well. In some cases training provision has also been aimed at the wider community.

3.35   Topics covered in training have varied, combining skills development, imparting knowledge, and in some cases, behavioural issues. The Walsall training syllabus gives some idea of the breadth of topics tackled.

Walsall staff and Board member training programme

1. Induction training covering:
    • how the Code of Conduct works and people's duties and responsibilities
    • behaviour and conduct at meetings
    • understanding public sector procedures
    • awareness of local issues
 	
 2. Equal opportunities/diversity
 	
 3. Finance training
 	
 4. Evaluation and appraisal
 	
 5. Negotiation skills
 	
 6. Chairing meeting skills
 	
 7. Problem solving/decision making
 	
 8. Assertiveness skills/confronting issues
 	
 9. Interpersonal skills
 	
 10. Dealing with aggression and violence
 	
 11. Running consultation/ community engagement exercises
 	
 12. Facilitation skills
 	
 13. Leadership skills

3.36 Knowsley's training and development programme is central to its capacity building actions. It only took shape in the second year of the programme following the appointment of a human resources manager (now deputy chief executive) who developed the NDC's local learning plan 'from the bottom up' through a wide-ranging review of procedures and the introduction of a 'human resources strategy for organisational effectiveness' (and its constituent organisational capability review and training and development programme).

3.37 The Programme audits the training needs of two clearly identified groupings:

- within the NDC organisational structure
  - Partnership Board of Directors
  - Board Committees
  - Task Groups
  - Partnership Staff
- outside the NDC organisational structure
  - Delivery Partners
  - Neighbourhood Network
  - Youth Forum

– Community Volunteers

– Potential Recruits

– Hard-to-reach groups

– People in key positions within groups

– Mainstream service planning partners

– Mainstream Services front line staff

3.38 Training for these groups is delivered by four main methods:

• structured formal learning programmes by subject over a period of time and accredited wherever possible

• short courses for skills and knowledge required for a particular activity

• visits to best practice regeneration programmes in the UK

• visits to conferences and study tours as needs or opportunities arise

3.39 As part of its succession planning, the NDC has developed a learning and sustainability project out of the training and development programme which is specifically designed to assist 'sustainability' by ensuring that key community volunteers are equipped (in terms of both skills and training) to sustain their involvement in regeneration activity after the NDC programme has finished, including in the NDC successor body. It also includes training to help existing staff (40 per cent of whom are local residents) to develop their future education and careers.

3.40 Newham organised a series of training events, starting with programmes aimed at the community at large, and then aiming at those interested in more substantial involvement. Initial one day sessions covered topics such as 'What does it mean to represent your community' and 'How to run an event'. Each of the days attracted around 60 participants. When the training was evaluated and analysed, it was found to have wider benefits such as bringing people together to create greater understanding, and facilitating the formation of formal and informal networks. Subsequent training events were more extended, covering basic leadership skills, presentation skills, chairing meetings, etc. There is some evidence (admittedly anecdotal) about the impact of the courses: three people went on to be Board members, three or more have gone on to be school governors, while others have joined committees of community organisations or set up their own operations (ranging from community groups to networks and social enterprises).

3.41 Some NDCs have experienced difficulties attracting Board members to the training events they have organised, even where these have been requested by community representatives. In part these recruitment difficulties reflect the demands on Board members' (and other representatives') time; but also, they reflect the challenges of organising training that is equally suitable for community representatives and professional staff from the agencies: the former often feel that training should be aimed at all Board members equally,

while the latter often argue that their greater exposure to professional development means that their training needs are quite different.

Funds

3.42   In all the six case study NDCs, the absence of accessible, small-scale financial resources for community groups was seen as a barrier to community development and community capacity building. In response, all six established slightly different versions of community-based small sums schemes:

- in Lambeth a Community Chest was established early on to provide support to local people and groups through small grants

- in Walsall, two small sums schemes, the Accorn fund and Pauline Merrick fund, are being used to help develop the capacity of neighbourhood groups to represent and act on behalf of the community, and achieve sustainability

- in Newham, the community involvement team runs a Community Initiatives Fund, to develop the capacity of local groups to develop projects and activities, and the skills to apply for larger scale funds

- the Sheffield Small Grant Fund provides grants for both individuals and groups, to support involvement in education or employment or participation in the NDC and other activities that benefit the Sheffield NDC area

- Knowsley's 'Small Change, Big Difference' community grants scheme provides funding for community groups, and is also a vehicle for community participation, since the grants panel that takes decisions of awards is made up of local residents)

3.43   However in Newcastle, in addition to small sums schemes, the feasibility and development fund offers a rather different perspective on community engagement.

Newcastle: a Feasibility and Development Fund

The Feasibility and Development (F&D) was established as a means of both testing project ideas and securing engagement with the community and agencies. The F&D fund was used to fund feasibility studies and community consultation schemes in order to establish the viability of a proposed project. F&D funds also supported the costs of Project Officers to give hands on support to applicants delivering F&D projects and helped to develop the projects that emerge to the appraisal stage. This provided a supported route in to the programme for local organisations and project ideas. F&D project costs were recharged to projects that were successful in appraisal and final approval by the Board, thus replenishing the block fund for further use.

3.44   The sums available vary: in Sheffield, the fund provides grants of a maximum of £500 to individuals, and £5,000 to groups; Knowsley's scheme has a maximum of £2,000, while the Accorn fund in Walsall has paid an average of about £1,500 to the 140 organisations it has supported. Generally these funds are designed to provide catalytic or one-off rather than core funding: where groups require further assistance they are expected to progress to more mainstream funding, and indeed in a number of cases, the small sums schemes are explicitly used to support grant applications to other sources.

3.45   But simply-accessed schemes like these carry risks of creating a dependency culture. In Lambeth, the NDC noticed that in the early years of the Community Chest project, a lot of groups and individuals were requesting repeat funding and it was clear they were becoming dependent on the Community Chest and were not focused clearly enough on sustainability. However, the project is now offering smaller grants with enhanced capacity building support to try and encourage sustainability.

3.46   The scale of funding on offer makes impact evaluation problematic, but the consensus from interviewees across the sample suggests that these types of small sums schemes are important and relatively inexpensive mechanisms through which to develop community engagement and capacity. This is particularly true where, as in the case of Knowsley, local communities have a strong sense of ownership of the process as well as receiving the grants.

Local attitudes to the Small Change scheme in Knowsley

Quotations from community representatives:

"[The community projects funded] are all grassroots … that's people, that's residents themselves establishing that engagement. It's not somebody doing it. They're establishing that engagement. It's genuine engagement because of the willingness of volunteers to deliver where things are lacking. 'Small Change' made that possible and for things to develop."

"In some ways things that were being done [in the NDC programme overall] were too far removed from the community so you needed something that the community felt ownership of and that's what 'Small Change' has done."

"It's given people the confidence to take things forward. Whereas people wouldn't normally get involved because of the bureaucratic process now they can because it's on a more simplified basis. So you get more people involved."

"It works because it's the community doing it for the community. It rewards the community."

"All the grants have got an underlying element of confidence building, development, new skills."

Who's involved and why?

3.47   The Newham community involvement strategy, described earlier, implicitly embraces the notion of a 'ladder of participation'. These case studies suggest that the characteristics of those involved differ between levels, and so too to some degree does the motivation. A variety of factors motivated those interviewed for this study to pursue or accept representative positions in NDCs; however, irrespective of the specific motivation, a consensus among our interviewees confirmed their commitment. Many spoke of the amount of time and energy required by NDC Board membership, but in some cases, representatives face suspicion and even hostility from other community members. One resident representative in Walsall said: "*People say you must be getting something out of it but it costs money to get involved … we spend large amounts of time in meetings, travelling to places etc*".

3.48   The reasons people gave for accepting positions of responsibility fell into a number of categories (though of course individuals may be motivated by a combination), including:

- a desire to 'put something back': as one interviewee put it: "*I know I have acquired some skills which can be of use to this community*"

- a concern for the local area: one resident representative in Knowsley: "*Passion for your area. Passion for your community.*'" Where communities identify with one neighbourhood rather than the area as a whole this can be a source of tension. In one local election recently two community activists in one estate successfully opposed sitting resident Board directors, to push the interests of their estate, which they felt was not receiving fair treatment in the programme

- in the case of older Board members (and generally Board members on average are considerably older than the community as a whole), interviewees said they seek representative positions to give them something to do

3.49   Although in some cases Board members receive some kind of remuneration (though usually just as a contribution to expenses, of travel, ICT, childcare etc), in no case are the levels of financial reward sufficient to constitute sufficient motivation.

3.50   In a few cases, individuals are driven to seek Board membership to further the cause of some personal issues or 'crusades' (referred to by one interviewee as 'private agendas'). For example, one Board member who for many years had been involved with youth work, sought Board membership (among other things) to ensure resources for young people. In another, a Board member had always promoted the importance of healthy diets, and then used Board membership to argue successfully for a healthy diet project. More commonly, this kind of commitment explains involvement at the project level, as the project below from Lambeth illustrates.

> **Motivation for project involvement in Lambeth**
>
> The Community Chest programme has been particularly supportive of these individuals or groups of individuals. One example of this is the Progress Gardening project which received funding a few years ago. The project is led by a local resident who is passionate about educating children about growing vegetables and promoting healthy lifestyles. He grows produce in the park allotment and works with young people to link this into the curriculum, from planting the produce, harvesting it and taking it back to schools to cook it with the children. The project has been so successful that it has received funding from a number of other sources, including the Lord Mayor of London.

3.51   Generally the NDCs reviewed here displayed relatively high degrees of stability among Board members. Five of the original 12 community Board members in Knowsley were still in place at the time of our research, and in Newham, Walsall and Lambeth membership has been fairly stable. Of the 23 Board members currently in place in Newcastle, 13 have been members for two years or more. This stability brings obvious advantages: resident directors provide continuity to programmes, important given the relatively high turnover of agency representatives on NDC Boards. However, in some cases, interviewees pointed to the dangers that accompany such lack of turnover: particularly where existing directors are returned unopposed, Board members' accountability to their communities is diminished, and sources of new blood are choked off.

3.52   There are some interesting variations in the characteristics of Board membership in our sample, but with one consistent feature – age. In every case, young people are under-represented among community Board members in the six NDCs. In both Walsall and Knowsley for example, more than three-quarters of the community representatives are over 50. Seats reserved for young people or youth representatives are typically harder to fill than the rest. In both Newham and Knowsley, there is a very clear majority of women, in Walsall and Newcastle, the opposite. Community Board members in Knowsley and Walsall are exclusively or predominantly white (reflecting the local population), while about a third and a quarter of Board members came from minority ethnic communities in Sheffield and Newcastle respectively – in both cases a lower proportion than in the population of the NDC as a whole.

3.53   Although there are some notable exceptions, most of those in representative positions brought with them (often substantial) experience of voluntary and community sector activity. Almost all the original resident Board members in Knowsley were either in employment or involved in community activities. Community representatives on the Sheffield Board include professionals with experience of working in deprived communities. The chair of one of the case study NDCs (who had just received an MBE for services to the community) has been involved in all kinds of volunteering for almost 50 years, having served as a chair of school governors, a magistrate, the chair of a citizen's

advice centre, as well as being active in politics and trade unions. Some interviewees expressed concerns about the 'usual suspects' syndrome. But there are also examples of people who have responded to and flourished through NDCs' capacity building activities.

Routes to involvement in Knowsley

One of the young people involved in the Neighbourhood Network traced her involvement to a Golden Jubilee street party part-funded by the NDC that demonstrated the potential strengths of the 'community'. As she said, it showed her "*what it must have been like before*". Her awareness of the NDC was reinforced by other activities she gradually got drawn into the Network when it was established. It was her involvement that encouraged her mother to get involved too: she enrolled on the NDC's Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) project and found a job with community and youth services. Her interest in community involvement developed alongside her involvement in the ILM and she successfully stood for election as a Resident Board Director of the NDC.

3.54   But NDCs also try to engage communities more widely, and not just through involving a very small minority in representative positions. Although as the Newham community involvement strategy maintains, there is no reason to assume that everyone wants to become engaged – "*… local people should be encouraged and supported to (get involved) at the level they want to*" – some NDCs have struggled to broaden engagement out much beyond the usual suspects and reach into all sections of the community.

3.55   The Newcastle Partnership report for 2004–05 described a core group of dedicated and committed residents involved in the formal structures of NDC, many of whom had been involved in the Partnership since the beginning. Despite much effort, this style of participation in formal structures has not extended very far into the wider community. As such, community engagement has been limited to a small group despite extensive community development and capacity building. There is little evidence that engagement has been successful beyond a core group of residents and the NDC has identified it as an ongoing priority in the transition to a Neighbourhood Development Organisation (the NDC's proposed successor body).

3.56   In Sheffield, it was difficult for interviewees or the NDC to assess which community members were, or were not, involved in the NDC beyond the representative structures. Partly this was due to a lack of reliable information about community participants, but it was also a reflection of the changing nature of the NDC population, and the fact that some sections of the community were more 'visible' than others. One interviewee raised concerns about populations who were felt to be less engaged, particularly in the context of inadequate support for small groups:

> "*There are groups who are not connected – e.g. Muslim women, particularly in the Somali community, some young people, and new*

populations. There are some issues and English is a barrier. Diverse populations need grass roots Community Development Workers who can help small community and faith groups – but they don't need to be employed by the NDC. Gender is also an issue – I'm aware that there is a population that's not very visible – they probably have language and cultural issues and always seem to be looking after small kids but if issues are raised they always seem to be about childcare".

4 What difference has it made? (1): The impact of community engagement on NDC activity

Introduction

4.1 One of the main objectives of this practice study was to assess the extent to which the various mechanisms for community engagement described in the previous section actually made a difference to the way NDCs approach their tasks. How far does community involvement really influence the priorities set by thematic strategies, and the kinds of interventions funded by NDCs? Are there variations in the extent of community influence across different policy themes? Working with a sample of just six NDCs inevitably imposes limitations on our ability to generalise, but to explore the nature of community influence on different dimensions of NDC activity, we focused on different themes in different case study areas:

- education: Lambeth, Sheffield
- health: Newham, Walsall
- housing/environment: Knowsley
- worklessness: Newcastle[31]

Earlier case studies and practice studies examined NDC approaches to crime and community safety and this policy theme was therefore not covered by the fieldwork for this study. However we draw on some of the conclusions of the earlier work at the end of this chapter.

Education: Lambeth and Sheffield

4.2 In Lambeth, the NDC's various interventions aimed at working with and engaging young people have mainly been designed to improve access to services, with a secondary aim of empowering and building the capacity of young people (and older residents) to deliver services in the future. For example the Hattrick football project primarily focused on working with young people but also helped local residents to gain a recognised qualification and therefore coach football and support local football clubs once the project has finished. The same is true for the Young Arts project – it has a focus on working with children but it also has an element of capacity building for older residents.

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[31] Since crime and community safety was the focus of an earlier study it has been excluded from this one.

4.3 Schools-based interventions mainly focus on the three primary schools in the NDC area or on the immediate border, since there are no secondary schools nearby. One of the aims was to help these schools become 'community schools', providing activities that involve families in supporting their children's education, and to help build the extended schools services. The Partnership has helped set up breakfast and after school clubs as well as developing a range of support for parents, for example in the completion of secondary transfer forms.

4.4 Consultation during the development of the education theme suggested that:

- there was a lack of role models
- the curriculum was too euro-centric
- there is a lack parental involvement
- there are a number of language barriers

4.5 The NDC used this information to develop new projects such as the mentoring scheme to provide role models, using educational material from different countries to address the euro-centric curriculum, and setting up a parent forum to help engage parents in their children's education.

4.6 The NDC also sought ways to promote the involvement of local communities in education activities and decision-making. For example, the Community Chest and Community Education Zone projects were used to develop the capacity of parents to get involved and thus to influence educational practice. This support led to the establishment of a parents' group at one local school, which provided a forum through which teachers and parents could share concerns and develop school policy. The NDC also supported the establishment of mechanisms to involve young people in the development of services that affect them.

Putting 'consumers' and providers together: the Lambeth youth Partnership

The overall aim of the project is to increase residents' satisfaction with services designed for young people and to raise personal and academic enjoyment and achievement and economic wellbeing. Within this there are four objectives:

1) To build the capacity of young people in the community to coordinate and manage the process of youth representation (eg youth forums) in local decision-making structures and throughout the community as a whole.

2) To build and embed capacity through the local youth Partnership that provides young people with the support and services to extend their expectations, and to enable them to choose the best pathways for their future development.

3) To support youth empowerment by building the capacity of a wider and inclusive Partnership that includes local service providers, youth forums, pan-borough agencies and LAMBETH Themes.

4) To provide activities for young people that meet the needs of the community and most importantly address the immediate needs of the Partnership as a whole as part of an integrated and coordinated strategic approach to service provision.

The project provided the opportunity to look strategically at youth provision, identify the gaps and then provide quick fixes. It also helped to deliver and develop a wide range of new activities greatly improving the provision for young people in the area. The project has begun to have a positive impact on the behaviour and achievement of young people in the area. In addition to this the project has created a new level of aspiration amongst the community as they want to be involved and they want to develop new organisations. The project has also been very successful at engaging the hard to reach and those not normally engaged in NDC activity.

4.7   In Sheffield, the education theme group (and subsequent Children and Young People's Priority Area) has a mission 'to encourage the development of a thriving learning culture in the city. Among the contextual factors influencing how that is developed in practice is the area's population turnover: Sheffield continues to attract new arrivals and to have a growing and relatively mobile pupil population. For example, there were 66 Eastern European school children in the area in 2006

4.8   The NDCs' educational strategy has focused on:

- the provision of study support at critical key stages
- the development of projects (with the LEA) designed to improve the engagement of schools with parents and responsiveness to the community
- increasing the involvement of young people, for example through the establishment of a youth council
- promoting the involvement of parents in their own and their children's education, since it is critical to the long-term improvement of young people's achievement

4.9   The original education theme group included resident members but was mainly attended by educational professionals. The work of the group was split after a reorganisation of the NDC, with adult education going to the employment and skills priority area, leaving the responsibility for children and young people up to the age of 19 under the children and young people's priority area. There is now a resident majority on this strategy group which has a devolved budget of up to £250,000 but the theme is overspent and most funding is committed already.

4.10   The development of both the adult and young people's dimensions of educational work has been influenced by community engagement; but there have also been significant attempts to encourage community involvement *within* educational and related activities as the extracts below demonstrate.

Engaging communities through education projects in Sheffield: extract from local evaluation

Engaging Parents

• The Community Education Coordinators, the Bi-Lingual Teaching Assistants and the Family Support Home Visitors have been particularly skilled at engaging parents previously hard to reach. This is partly because of a shared language and culture and it also has to do with the ability of people in these roles to have the time to get next to parents and support them in simple but very important ways to remove barriers to access and then to support them gaining confidence with a consistent presence.

Community Engagement: Young People

• The establishment of the Sheffield Youth Council supported by the Streetworx project is an achievement.

• There was a significant engagement of young people in the election process (considerably more than the proportion of young people voting in Sheffield overall in the UK Youth Parliament elections).

Engagement of the Community: Sports Development

• The provision of 55 regular weekly activities in the area represents a significant contribution to the engagement of the children and young people of Sheffield.

Health: Newham and Walsall

4.11   Similar issues (and similar responses) characterise the health theme in both NDCs. Newham's original delivery plan identified key health problems in the NDC as:

- infant mortality rate well above the borough average

- high standard mortality rate

- high levels of respiratory and circulatory disease especially in men

- poor access to healthy food, with a food access score one of the lowest in East London

- poor access to GPs and good quality health facilities

- poor local knowledge about options to develop a healthy lifestyle

4.12   The NDC's strategy on health has been to improve access to health facilities and promote a healthier lifestyle. It funded the establishment of a new GP surgery in the area in a centre which promotes other NDC projects and activities. These centres also provide additional health facilities such as a pharmacy, health monitoring services, a nurse practitioner and a children's clinic. Its Health Improvement Team provided outreach health and healthy

living advice targeted at schools, elderly people and men, and promoted smoking cessation. Access to fresh food was tackled through support of a community food enterprise, which runs local fresh fruit and vegetable co-ops, and provides fresh fruit to schools and older people.

4.13 The Walsall NDC area includes a high proportion of people with a limiting long-term illness or disability, and lifestyle issues, including poor diet and lack of exercise. This has led to three main sets of strategic intentions:

- improving access to health services

- delivering appropriate services that meet the health needs of the local community

- changing the way in which health services are delivered and commissioned by involving the community in design, development and delivery

4.14 One of the main focuses of the NDC since its inception has been the provision of a centre of community activities and services – the Blakenall Village Centre. The services currently operating from the centre include a GP surgery, Primary Care Trust (PCT) services, restaurant, drugs aftercare service, complementary therapy, bereavement support and cancer services, and a pharmacy. The restaurant is designed to provide 'healthy options' to local residents, while also offering cooking and tasting sessions to promote healthier eating, including greater fruit and vegetable consumption.

4.15 Opinions in the two NDCs vary about the extent and nature of community influence, but the consensus, among both community representatives and health professionals is that residents were both influential and (largely) constructive. At the same time, there were concerns expressed about the extent to which 'representative democracy' through elected representatives truly reflects broader community influence, as opposed to mechanisms promoting wider engagement (participative democracy).

4.16 In Newham, both NDC and PCT interviewees were certain that residents had been influential in the development of approaches to health issues, especially on the theme groups. As with Walsall, the crucial decision to invest in a new, local surgery arose from the substantial and widespread consultation that accompanied the development of the original delivery plan. Another central project in the theme, the NDC's Health Improvement Team, was influenced by the Board and theme group, and its staff acknowledged that residents had been involved in shaping projects. In at least one case, (a food access initiative) a project was initiated by and then managed from within the community. Although there were already food co-ops in the area, through the food access project these were expanded into a wider network and many other services were added – directly as a result of community involvement in decision-making processes. Residents are now also involved in running these projects, as they are the community centres.

4.17 In both NDCs (and in relation to health perhaps more than other themes), there are uncertainties (shared by residents and professionals) about whether communities' influence is expected to point to a sharper analysis of the

problem or contribute to a *solution*. One local resident said: "*You are in the hands of the experts … we have no idea of the types of things health professionals do for things such as addressing long term conditions … our influence is therefore limited in coming up with the solutions.*"

4.18   In Walsall, interviewees generally thought that patch representatives had been very influential through the Board, approval group and health theme group, although the influence had been both positive and negative. Indeed, community influence over the original vision of the NDC and health theme group shaped the priorities subsequently followed. Perhaps most significantly, this includes residents' influence over the decision to establish the Blakenall Centre. Resident involvement has also shaped the development of individual projects. For example, a drugs aftercare service project was finding it difficult to engage drug users, while community representatives were concerned about the absence of interventions to tackle alcohol abuse. In response, the focus of the project was widened to include alcohol as well as drugs abuse.

4.19   But the Walsall experience also points to some potential tensions between professionals and residents. A Healthy Hearts project, with apparently good results, had intervened in a number of health and lifestyle issues, such as smoking, and a second stage proposed to target hard to reach groups. As one stakeholder describes it: "*The outcomes for that were really fantastic and really showing the way for PCT and the local authority about how they could deliver some prevention services.*" However the PCT proposal was rejected by an approvals committee that contained a majority of residents. Explanations for the rejection vary, though some have suggested that it was because the project was developed by professionals, and thus lacked community ownership.

4.20   NDC experience is now relevant to a far wider group of practitioners. The NHS Plan 2000 stressed the need to move from an expert-led system of care to one based on a Partnership between patients and clinicians. Putnam wrote that: "*of all the domains in which [he has] traced the consequences of social capital, in none is the importance of social capital so well established as in the case of health and well being*".[32]

4.21   The evidence of the impact of increased social capital on health is substantial, though much of this comes from international sources. For example, evidence from the US suggests that volunteering brings health benefits, both for those who volunteer and their communities. Neighbourhoods in the US with extensive volunteering have seen reductions in levels of demand for emergency and other health services (partly because the volunteers are undertaking some of the functions that would otherwise be carried out by professionals); and those volunteering have been found to claim less on health insurance than those who did not.

[32] Putnam, R. D. (2000) *Bowling Alone. The collapse and revival of American community*, New York: Simon and Schuster

Housing: Knowsley

4.22   Housing is the most important theme in the Knowsley NDC's programme, since the NDC is effectively a mini-'housing market renewal area' and a 'mixed communities' pilot. The scale of the re-development programme – with its extensive modernisation of existing social housing, the building of new housing for sale and the provision of new educational, health and community facilities – is relatively unusual among NDCs.

4.23   The NDC's housing and environmental projects include a wide range of physical and environmental improvements, and the establishment of community buildings. But central to the overall housing and environmental redevelopment programme are two projects driving the masterplanning process (the masterplanning and outline plan projects). Together these have only accounted for around five per cent of theme spend to date but their role is fundamental for the redevelopment programme as a whole.

4.24   The strategy for the theme has been to work around the masterplanning process with a set of projects that have included:

- housing clearance and the acquisition of some owner occupied properties
- external improvements to owner-occupied properties to match the programme for social housing
- the neighbourhood action team/ neighbourhood support team
- individual area and street-based housing and environmental work

4.25   Community involvement in the theme has ranged right across the engagement spectrum, from communications through consultation and research to participation and delegation. This is well illustrated in the case of the masterplanning and outline plan projects – the foundations of the NDC's overall redevelopment programme. Resident involvement was central to and highly influential in the development of the masterplan for the area. The involvement of community representatives in its production led to some major changes and may have been decisive in enabling the scheme to proceed at all. Specifically, residents, in the shape of the resident Board directors:

- directly influenced the evaluation of different redevelopment options. Three scenarios were originally identified for evaluation but residents proposed a fourth
- helped to produce a residents' charter that was to underpin implementation of any agreed outline plan. They also produced a statement to the Board, (which the Board endorsed), setting out the conditions under which they would agree to the outline plan going out to consultation
- were represented on the short listing and interviewing panel for the preferred developer, helping to ensure that community criteria were involved in the process

4.26 The principles underlying the residents' charter significantly influenced the future development of the whole scheme.

Resident directors' conditions for participation in consultation on the masterplan

- That the assumptions about tenancy turnover are significantly more optimistic with an understanding that if extra efforts to stabilise the remaining community are unsuccessful then there are consequences for new build social housing.

- That there is clear Partnership commitment that the interests of the residents of the area are the primary driving force of the objectives of the masterplan. This will be monitored through appropriate accountability measures that have resident representatives at the centre.

- That the partners therefore work together under guidance of [Government Office for the North West's Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor] to create a new structure for housing and neighbourhood management with a new joint identity to deliver on the promises of the Charter.

- These arrangements to deliver the masterplan would be formalised under a Service Level Agreement between all four parties [Huyton NDC, Knowsley Housing Trust, Knowsley MBC and Government Office for the North West].

4.27 These principles guaranteed the crucial involvement of the residents' representatives; but they also ensured that there would be proper mechanisms for engaging the *whole* community in the exercise. The Neighbourhood Renewal Adviser involved said:

> *"What [the consultation exercise] did was demonstrate that you could win a degree of support for a transformational plan by asking people whether they signed up to the objectives and the overall aims but, recognising that underneath all that there was a whole host of individual concerns over what it means for me individually. The consultation worked at two levels.*
>
> *It got the acceptance of the need to move forward and underneath that what's the deal for me? It established what was far more important, the principle that consultation with people in areas that are going to undergo significant development had to be intensive, one-to-one, door-to-door with continual handholding. Not snapshot consultation but part of a continuing process."*

Worklessness: Newcastle

4.28 Tackling worklessness has been a major focus of the Newcastle NDC's programme since the beginning. The theme's objectives are:

- reduce the number of JSA claimants from 25.4 per cent to 15 per cent of the total for the city

- increase the number of NDC residents participating in further education from 20 per cent to 25 per cent of the city's population

- increase the number of new enterprises in the NDC area from 3.9 per cent to 10 per cent of total business starts across the city

- increase the number of enterprises surviving for three years from 7.6 per cent to 10 per cent of the total for Newcastle overall

4.29   The focus of the theme has changed over time. Early on the focus was on reducing the number of Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants by building the capacity of the community to work, and trying to remove barriers to employment. A worklessness group was established in response to concerns from GONE that the Partnership had not focused sufficient attention on economically inactive residents. More recently, the emphasis within the Jobs and Business theme has been to encourage and support local enterprises.

4.30   Our research suggests that the community did not make a significant contribution to the development of the jobs and business theme and to the focus of the strategy. There are a number of factors contributing to this:

- community involvement across the themes has varied; engagement from the community regeneration team with the programme team has been more integrated in other themes

- the jobs and business theme has followed the NDC structured approach (use of Feasibility & Development Fund and working group review) less rigorously than others, and has been more susceptible to the pressure to deliver and to 'agency capture' as a consequence

- residents do not identify with the business community at whom much of the theme activity is directed, at least according to the CRT manager:

    "Jobs & Business had robust projects that delivered the outcomes but were mostly developed by professionals. The working class community didn't identify with the business community as possible partners in employment. The community wanted 'real' jobs but had low aspirations."

4.31   Nevertheless, there is still evidence of community influence in the detailed design of projects, if not in the overall shape of the strategy. One resident director described how community influence is evident "… *through the things the projects put in place, and by addressing barriers such as childcare; support for carers; community venues and times.*" This influence can be detected in a variety of individual projects, including the Workfinder initiative designed to assist members of minority ethnic communities find employment.

> ### Customising projects through community influence
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> The Workfinder project was a based on a generic local authority city wide approach but adapted to meet the needs of the minority ethnic communities in the NDC area. The project was set up to help minority ethnic individuals who experience barriers in addition to those associated with long-term unemployment, such as language, culture barriers and racial discrimination.
>
> Project development was influenced through the continued support of local residents at the jobs and business focus group meetings with regular attendance from the wider community at the barriers to employment and minority ethnic communities sub-group meetings. This group was established to ascertain the particular needs and requirements of these communities.

4.32   A literature review by SQW found evidence that some of the clearest benefits of increased provider-community involvement are to be found in relation to worklessness. These were said to be "*… significant, although hard to quantify, and tend to exceed the costs involved.*" In the case of 'Worklessness: the most useful evidence comes from the evaluation of the Flexibility Pilot initiatives which compared the flexible pilots with mainstream services and concluded that the more personalised delivery approaches:

- were more likely to address customers' needs

- increased the quality of the relationship and the trust between customer and adviser, and increased the confidence of the customer

- delivered improved service outcomes compared to mainstream programmes in terms of the volume, pace and sustainability of jobs secured; and were no more or less expensive to deliver than traditional approaches.[33]

Crime

4.33   As the earlier crime and community safety study[34] argued, "*Communities have a key role to play in the delivery of safer neighbourhoods, not only because they can provide useful knowledge and intelligence to delivery agencies but also because many crime and community safety outcomes are intrinsically about building community in its broadest sense*". Communities have been involved in the development of NDC crime and community safety strategies in the same wide range of forms of engagement described here in relation to other policy themes, including theme group membership, contributing to project design, project delivery and providing evidence and intelligence through types of neighbourhood watch scheme.

[33] ODPM (2005) *Improving delivery of mainstream services in deprived areas – the role of community involvement* http://www. neighbourhood.gov.uk/publications.asp?did=1561

[34] Communities and Local Government (2008), *Delivering Safer Neighbourhoods Experiences from the New Deal for Communities Programme* http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/deliveringsaferneighbourhoods

4.34   Interviews by community representatives, NDC staff and from the police service and other agencies involved with community safety suggest that there is real community influence over the nature of crime strategies and interventions. But the study also reported a number of issues including:

- differences of opinion between community and professionals on what is needed (eg desire to continue a target-hardening project when crime rates had already dropped)

- differences in style and approach that may result in the community being out of step with organisations operating on a wider territorial scale (eg a more punitive approach reflected in a higher use of ASBOs)

- communities not likely to prioritise issues underpinned by deep-seated cultural norms within the community: in one case, respondents said that local people were reluctant to become involved with the police or NDC community safety structures because of 'intimidation'

- difficulties in reconciling the different views and priorities of communities when these reflect social divisions such as age, gender, ethnicity, long-term residents as opposed to recent migrants

- difficulties engaging with young people

4.35   However evidence from other studies confirms that community engagement can exert an important influence on levels of crime in a variety of ways. For example the Institute of Public Policy Research's evidence review for the Civil Renewal Unit explored findings from a range of international studies which offered "*… very strong grounds for an argument that measures which promote social capital and active communities will cut crime, a fact born out more impressionistically by many regeneration initiatives.*"[35]

Conclusions

4.36   The nature and impact of community involvement varies, from the kinds of major and decisive interventions reported in Knowsley, to the more modest (though important) adjustments to project detail, as in some of Newcastle's employment projects. There are variations in the extent of community influence between different themes examined in this study, but it is not possible say with confidence (given the limited sample) whether these reflect characteristics peculiar to the theme, or the particular circumstances of these NDCs.

4.37   It is clear however that the opportunities for community influence and the changes it presents change significantly over time, as programmes mature. At the start, community engagement and particularly in theme groups, sought to influence at first the shape of strategies, and then the design and approval of interventions. As we mentioned in the context of the Sheffield children's and young people's strategy group, in many cases, the bulk

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[35] IPPR (2004) *Benefits of community engagement: A review of the evidence* http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/benefits

of NDC resources are already committed. The nature of the community representatives' task therefore has changed, and indeed changes to NDC structures reflect this (Newham is only one of a number of NDCs that have abandoned theme groups.) In some instances in this study, community representatives have complained that they do not have access to the kind of information that would enable them to monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions – which essentially becomes the crux of their role once funding decisions have been made.

4.38   A number of the examples set out here, and in particular from the two NDCs where the focus is on education, illustrate how there is circularity in the relationship between community engagement and thematic development.
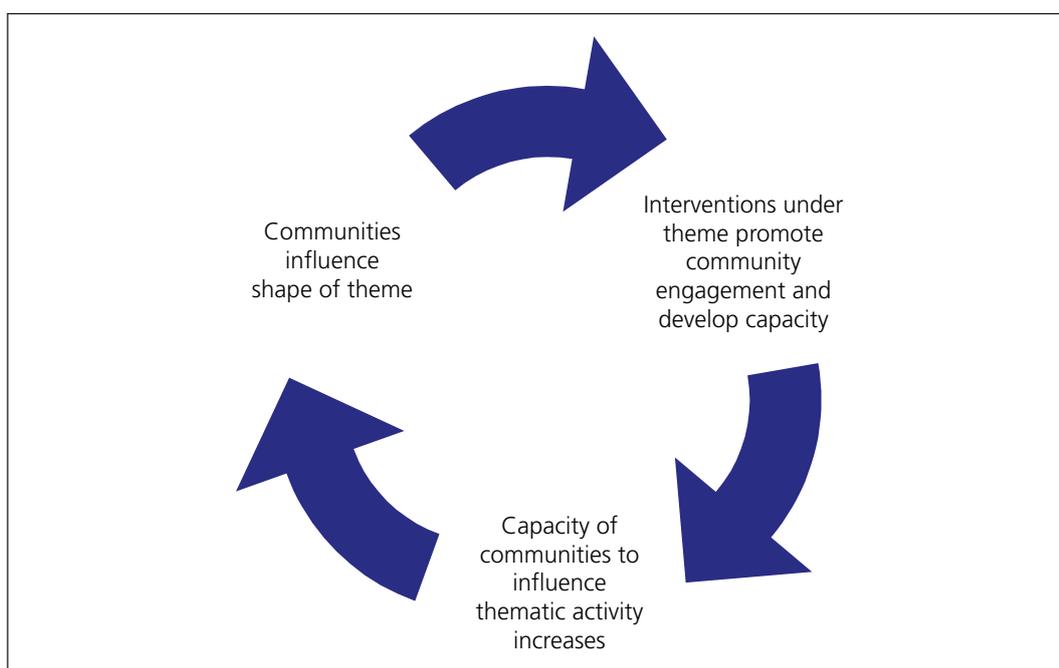
4.39   However most of the examples discussed so far focus on community influence over NDC activities. But has this influence had an impact on the agencies and the design of main programmes, and are there any discernible differences in the outcomes of NDC programmes as a result of community influence? We examine these issues in the next section.

5 What difference has it made? (2): the impact on agencies and outcomes

Introduction

5.1   Although in comparison with previous regeneration programmes, the £50m (or thereabouts) over 10 years awarded to NDC Partnerships was a substantial sum, it is still dwarfed by the value of main programme expenditure going into NDC areas every year. Few NDCs are under any illusion that their funds alone are sufficient to transform their neighbourhoods.

5.2   Influencing the actions of the main service providers therefore is crucial to the overall success of the NDC programme. It's important during NDCs' lifetime; but even more so in the longer term, when NDC grant funding is complete and the NDC has disappeared. In the past, short or fixed life regeneration programmes have seen the 'sensitising' of main service providers to the issues affecting their neighbourhoods as crucial in developing and sustaining longer term processes of change. Evidence from a recent study of NDC succession strategies[36] suggests that NDCs are focusing on reinforcing links between local communities and service providers. How far have NDC mechanisms for community engagement influenced the agencies, and the outcomes delivered through NDC and agency programmes?

Impact on the agencies

5.3   In all the areas, agency involvement in NDC structures inevitably exposes them to the NDC community engagement ethos and ways of working, and through partnership working in the delivery of projects. In Knowsley for example, the agencies are also involved in the NDC's structures through the strategic partner directors on the Partnership Board, and the officers who attend the various task groups. Agencies involved in the NDC and bidding for project funding cannot avoid being exposed to its community engagement principles. However, it has not always followed that the individuals concerned have been able to take this experience back to their own agencies.

5.4   Sheffield NDC has worked very closely with agencies in the identification of priorities and delivery of interventions. There have sometimes been tensions

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[36] Communities and Local Government (2008), *Delivering NDC Succession Strategies*

between the priorities of agencies and those of communities, but these have been addressed over time: according to one interviewee:

"In the early days there was a lot of differences of opinion between the community and the agencies – eg around the community police project – the community questioned why we were funding a statutory service which was our right and when the police harass black kids etc. But that has changed – it's a maturing Partnership and there is more understanding about what we are trying to do and how to change things in the long term".

5.5 There may have been differences but these have not always been polarised into community versus professionals. In relation to the community health and wellbeing priority area, for instance, one interviewee commented:

"It's not polarised (between communities and professionals), it's much more complex than that. (Community) reps and professionals have mixed views and front-line staff have chosen to work in difficult areas – some of them feel part of the community and so might choose to side with the community. For instance we have had demands for new community facilities from health visitors and Community Practice Nurses."

5.6 And inevitably (as we will see with other NDCs), different agencies in Sheffield have taken different approaches to community engagement. The children and young people's priority area has made some progress working with local schools. There are a number of examples where head teachers have contributed to project ideas. The re-vamped Advancing Together[37] programme resulted, in part, from ideas of a head teacher in the area. But there has been a mixed reception by head teachers about the value of increased parental involvement. Some teachers have been able to understand the added value this can bring in increasing children's educational attainment, whereas others have been slow to embrace new ideas.

5.7 Conversely, in health, where there is an established tradition in Sheffield of patient involvement, the PCT has dedicated resources for community development support and a thoughtful approach:

"Agencies think they know about engagement, but it's a superficial knowledge. People make presumptions about culture, race, appropriate meeting times etc – for instance not meeting on Fridays or during Ramadan – but we should not assume. It's up to the participants. Continuity and presence are important; you need to be exposed to community tensions, not frightened of that, not too polite. It's also about going the extra mile, turning up for meetings in the evening, at holiday time and being at events, it all makes a difference. (It has also been useful) having a small community development budget to respond to requests".

5.8 But there are limits to communities' ability to influence genuinely mainstream provision – and indeed agencies' willingness or ability to be influenced about

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[37] Advancing Together is a partnership between the NDC and local schools that supports a variety of interventions including a bi-lingual classroom assistant and breakfast clubs.

mainstream provision. A PCT interviewee in Walsall described, tellingly, their mechanisms:

 "… [we hold] one-off kind of consultation events, if you like, as opposed to ongoing arrangements for a formal committee. And they've worked really well, because we've got our projects that we've had some NRF money for, around healthy eating with the black and minority ethnic community. And that really – all of that work has been totally led by the findings of the work that we've done with community members in small consultation groups."

5.9   This kind of engagement apparently requires special funding through NRF; it is not clear whether these approaches, if not genuinely mainstreamed, will survive now that NRF has given way to the Working Neighbourhoods fund.

5.10   This concern (which applies not only to the Walsall example) is reinforced by local community perceptions about where their influence really lies. Those patch representatives interviewed were generally very positive about their role and influence in the health theme, but this is mainly in terms of NDC money and not that of partner agencies. The most positive of them said: "*I think 90 per cent of the projects are influenced by the residents*". Others are more cautious, recognising the limits of their influence. One patch representative describes the level of influence with professionals as '50–50' – but either way this refers to interventions with NDC funding.

5.11   Not all agency representatives (in Walsall as elsewhere) regarded community involvement (at least in its present form) as desirable or helpful. One agency interviewee said that some of their officers would never submit a project or work with the NDC because of their experiences at the Board and in theme groups where they have faced what they regard as a form of confrontation.

5.12   In Newham relations between agency staff and community representatives have been generally positive. However, there remains a gap between those staff working in the community, and the rest of their organisations. For example, In the case of health, in the early days the team working with the NDC was given a free rein to work with the community in whatever way it saw fit as long as it could demonstrate effectiveness and it was well supported by the community. However, when the PCT experienced a budget crisis, the team working in the NDC was expendable; the NDC project an 'extra' that could no longer be afforded. There is no evidence that the PCT rolled out any of the good practice developed in the NDC area or replicated it elsewhere.

5.13   Nevertheless there are examples with other agencies where NDC influence, together with mechanisms for empowering residents, has succeeded in altering agency behaviour.

> ### Resident influence over the agencies in Newham
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> One of the streets in the Newham NDC had a particularly high rate of youth crime and anti-social behaviour. It was agreed that redesigning the street would help and residents listed all the things they would like to see, which then formed the basis of a 'home zone' plan prepared by a group of architects. But the plan still did not meet residents' requirements and after further consultation it was revised until it did.

5.14   In Lambeth according to respondents, there is little evidence that the NDC has succeeded in shaping the community engagement agenda of other agencies. The NDC has clearly helped the agencies engage with the local community; for example, the new neighbourhood management forum provides an opportunity for consulting, engaging and involving residents in the design and delivery of local services. This is in line with Lambeth's corporate plan, community engagement strategy, the local area agreement, and the priorities outlined in *Strong and Prosperous Communities*. However, these types of forums appear to be heavily reliant on the NDC taking the co-ordination role at this stage. Whether this will be sustainable, and who will take the lead post-NDC is unclear.

5.15   In Newcastle there are a number of NDC-funded projects that have been developed through close engagement between agencies and the community, and in particular interviewees referred to projects in health and work with schools. However, the processes for this co-operation appear to have been neither systematic nor sustainable, and there are notable differences across the NDC themes and between agencies. The differences partly reflect the approach of the individuals involved; but also reflect the preoccupations of the different agencies. For example one respondent said that "*Agencies are more involved in their own internal politics – for example the problems of being reduced in size or outsourced – like Jobcentre Plus or the PCT.*" In addition, some interviewees suggested that the willingness of the agencies to engage with communities is reducing as the end of the NDC grant funding period is approaching.

5.16   The experience in Newcastle illustrates how NDC attempts to influence the behaviour of the agencies is hampered by organisational and staffing changes. The NDC's ability to work constructively with Jobcentre Plus was affected by the withdrawal of their Action Teams. One interviewee said:

> "*There was a good relationship with Jobcentre Plus but they are tied to their establishment view on how to approach people. Action Teams were very constructive and could explore things differently. Where they worked with NDC they could integrate with NDC infrastructure and pass people on. NDC helped them to work differently but when the team was disbanded JCP lost the inroads into the community.*"

5.17   As we discuss in our conclusions, in general NDC relationships with the agencies are dependent on the individuals with whom they deal. The turnover in agency representation does not help.

The consequences of agency staff turnover: Jobcentre Plus in Newcastle

Representation from Jobcentre Plus on the NDC Board has undergone a number of changes of personnel. Initial representation was from the Jobcentre Plus district manager who was replaced by the Partnership manager. When she moved on to Newcastle Futures she was replaced by the next Jobcentre Plus Partnership manager. The opportunity to build on her experience and link into Newcastle Futures, the emerging city wide initiative on worklessness was missed. Once the role of an individual changes in the organisation then they move on from the Board. This does not help to deliver a consistent approach or develop understanding of the NDC ethos. Individuals have made a useful contribution this has been undermined by the throughput of personnel. It seems that agency representation has been dictated by organisational function rather then the ability of an individual to contribute to the NDC.

5.18   Across the case studies, there are numerous examples of positive co-operation between NDCs and staff from the agencies, and of course no shortage of examples where projects draw on agency resources as well as NDCs'. However, experience varies between agencies, is almost always dependent on particular individuals, and rarely extends to influence over actions that do not receive NDC financial support.

Impact on outcomes

5.19   As previous evaluations have discovered, assessing with precision the consequences of community engagement is not easy. In their study for ODPM in 2005 SQW concluded that although there were clear benefits of community involvement, these were "*… often difficult to quantify.*"[38] Indeed it is far from straightforward to attribute outcome change in NDC areas to the whole of the NDC's contribution, let alone the influence of local communities as just one element in the whole package that NDCs bring. Nevertheless, the evidence does emerge from this study of indirect but important influence: community influence helps shape both the broad strategy, and in some cases the detail of NDC interventions; and therefore it must follow that community influence has contributed to whatever outcomes those interventions generate. However, on the evidence of this study:

- the influence in some policy fields (notably housing) appears (from this research) to be more direct than others

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[38] ODPM (2005) *Improving delivery of mainstream services in deprived areas – the role of community involvement* http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/publications.asp?did=1561

- the influence is more marked over interventions that involve NDC expenditure than influencing mainstream service provision

Education

5.20   It was hard to quantify or capture the impact of community engagement on NDC outcomes at the Partnership level in Sheffield. There were individual success stories, for example regeneration apprentices[39] who have gone on to obtain jobs which might otherwise have been beyond their reach. And as is demonstrated in relation to the children and young people priority area, projects have made considerable efforts to engage with residents. However schools in the area have been able to report some successes: value added improvements in results at KS2 and GCSE. To some degree, these improvements derive from NDC supported projects (like study support) which in turn reflect in part resident involvement.

5.21   Similarly in the Lambeth NDC it was difficult to aggregate output data to understand the impact of interventions; for example, project outputs include 'number of residents trained' and 'number of trips organised'. Whilst these might give some indication of the volume of residents engaged in activity, it does not tell us about the impact of these interventions – only that people have taken part. However, if we look at individual projects, in the same way as with Sheffield, a picture of community influence, albeit indirect, starts to emerge. For example, the Youth Programme is reported as having "… *made progress against each of its four objectives and has also begun to have a positive impact on the behaviour and achievement of young people in the area*." The Young Arts project is thought to have contributed to increased achievement levels for those NDC pupils who have taken part. Since both projects reflect in some fashion community involvement, we can see how, again indirectly, community involvement has contributed to improved outcomes.

Housing

5.22   For the case studies reviewed here, community influence over housing and environment outcomes appears more straightforward than other policy themes, though it is not clear if this reflects something intrinsic to the theme or the particular approach adopted in Knowsley. We have already discussed the way in which community engagement helped shape the masterplan for the area. Local residents are also heavily involved in service delivery, working in the Neighbourhood Action/Support Team.

5.23   The team contributed to improvements in the neighbourhood in a variety of ways and specifically to:

- improved housing maintenance (through the programme of external walls for owner-occupied properties and complimentary heating programme for properties missing out of the main housing renewal programme (as part of the Outline Plan)

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[39] A scheme to enable local people to train for jobs in regeneration work – including working for the NDC

- improved maintenance of, and reduced fly-tipping and rubbish and litter in public spaces (through its environmental clean-ups and use of CCTV/ neighbourhood intelligence to identify and tackle incidences of fly-tipping and litter)

- greater community involvement and improved levels of trust (through officers' attendance at resident group meetings, liaison with Neighbourhood Network and resident Board directors and outreach work of area-based officers)

- better Partnership working (work with police and housing trust on crime and community safety issues and with council's environmental and operational services on environmental issues, developing Partnership working with the council's new neighbourhood management Pride Team that is based in the same building)

5.24   A Neighbourhood Action Team officer interviewed as part of an earlier study argued at the time that: "… *we've had hundreds of problems but none that we couldn't resolve or work out with residents*" and stressed the importance of dialogue with residents and the 'need constantly to listen' to residents' concerns. This is of course immensely assisted by the involvement of local residents directly in service delivery.

Health

5.25   Assessing the impact of community involvement on health outcomes is complicated by the difficulties in assessing health outcomes at all, partly for the reasons mentioned earlier, compounded in the case of health by the long-term nature of change. In both areas, interviewees were clear that interventions have had an impact, but that *outcome* change will only be evident in the long term. For example, increased numbers of young people taking exercise should produce more active communities in future which will eventually feed through to improved SMR levels.

5.26   With that caveat in mind, interviewees in both Walsall and Newham spoke of the positive impact of various NDC interventions, most important of which were the new local health facilities that local communities had demanded:

- the Blakenall Village Centre in Walsall, which has brought a range of health services to the heart of the NDC area where provision was not previously evident

- the new GP surgery in Newham, which combines a variety of local services

5.27   In Walsall, agency representatives also believe that residents have had an impact on outcomes through the Healthy Hearts project. This included a young people's overweight and obesity clinic, smoking cessation, and health walks, while food access workers have delivered one-to-one healthy eating consultations. There is a general feeling that residents are making informed decisions to improve their lifestyles, although again, the *ultimate* impacts of these decisions are medium to long term in nature.

5.28   Secondary health data (for example, on Low Birth Weight babies, or Standardised Illness and Mortality Ratios) suggests that overall, the health of the people in Newham seems to have changed little over the lifetime of the NDC; in Walsall, there is an uneven pattern across the health indicators. But in both areas there are clear signs of improvement in what we may call *intermediate* outcomes. The Newham Health Improvement Team has provided additional locally based services as requested by NDC residents which complement mainstream services and address the health needs identified in the NDC baseline and the PCT and other agency plans. This is evidenced by the comprehensive package of services and activities and the number of residents using them. There has also been an increase in access to health enhancing produce at affordable prices and this has been community led.

5.29   All this led an external evaluation carried out in 2004 to conclude that 57 per cent of residents were aware of the health programme and 70 per cent of users reported that their health had improved due to the projects. The evaluation concluded that *"usage and provision has certainly increased, people spend more time with NDC health professionals, there is a lesser burden on GPs and there is an increased focus on local health issues in the area"*.

Worklessness

5.30   In Newcastle, this research indicates that the involvement of the community through the NDC has resulted in a number of innovative and community led projects. However, interviewees did not think that the overall improvements in the employment related outcomes could be directly attributed to these interventions, because the key measures did not reflect significant community involvement.

5.31   The Partnership has achieved two key ten-year targets in the Jobs & Business theme:

- *reducing JSA claimants* (surpassing the original ten year target by more than five percentage points). The employment rate rose fifteen percentage points in four years at a time when the NDC programme wide average and national equivalent flat-lined

- *establishing new enterprises* as a percentage of city start-ups. Performance against the *Increasing the number of new enterprises surviving for more than three years* target has increased in absolute terms from 52 in 2002 to 137 in 2006. However, this target may require further consideration, as the city's overall performance has improved relative to the NDC area

5.32   Interviewees attributed these improvements to the way the interventions were designed to address targets, but these improvements did not derive from community involvement in project design and development. As we indicated earlier in the report, community influence over the Newcastle employment and business programme was not particularly marked.

Conclusions

5.33   Communities have exerted considerable influence over NDC programmes, and in some cases have championed particular interventions (for example the establishment of locally based health services in Newham and Walsall). However, there is less evidence that so far they have been able to exert similar influence over main programme providers' actions that do not draw on NDC funding.

5.34   Agency staff actually working in NDC areas and with the Partnership have, in many cases, adapted their styles and approaches because of NDC community engagement activities. But there is little sign that this has generated significant *institutional* change. The experience of the NDC Partnerships demonstrates the capacity of local communities to contribute to policy development and therefore, even if indirectly to outcome change; this is unlikely to be reproduced in relation to service provision more widely unless government can find ways of making agencies at the local and sub-regional level more sensitive to community engagement issues.

6   What difference has it made (3)? The impact on communities

Introduction

6.1   As we suggested at the start of this paper, NDC areas are characterised by low levels of social capital that both derive from, but also compound, the problems associated with poverty and deeply entrenched disadvantage. This is reflected in low levels of voluntary and civic engagement, profound suspicion of 'officialdom', and a sense of powerlessness. Responding to these issues has been central to the strategies of all the Partnerships.

6.2   Establishing precisely how much NDCs have spent on community engagement is not straightforward. There is a wide range of different types of activity covered within the theme, and in some cases some costs associated with for example community consultation are absorbed outside the community development theme. Nevertheless there are significant variations across NDCs in the level of expenditure associated with the whole community engagement agenda, as the following table shows.

Table 6.1 NDC expenditure on community engagement		
NDC	**Total spend £**	**As % of overall programme spend**
Knowsley	3,649,102	11.5
Lambeth	2,561,835	6.9
Newcastle	10,506,171	26.2
Newham	574,217	1.2
Sheffield	7,978,770	23.0
Walsall	8,553,202	26.5
All NDCs	230,331,244	17.2

6.3   This expenditure has generated substantial and varied outputs as the following table shows:

Table 6.2 Gross project outputs for the NDC Programme, 1999–2000 to 2006–07				
Activity categories and output codes	**Total outputs**		**Minority ethnic outputs**	
	Outputs	**Outputs per 1000 population**	**Outputs**	**Outputs per 1000 population**
Community development outputs				
No. people employed in voluntary work	31,073	83	4,743	13
No. new or improved community facilities	547	1	N/A	N/A
No. people using new or improved community facilities	130,784	349	9,859	26
No. community/voluntary groups supported	14,565	39	1,757	5
No. community chest type grants awarded	3,768	10	58	0.2
No. project feasibility studies funded	547	1	47	0.1
No. capacity building initiatives carried out	6,736	18	780	2

6.4   An analysis conducted by the national evaluation team for the value-for-money report[40] shows that this community development activity achieved a high level of additionality: it is unlikely to have happened in without NDC support.

Table 6.3 Estimates of net additional outputs for the NDC Programme: 1999–2000 to 2005–06				
Activity categories and output codes	**Total outputs**		**Minority ethnic outputs**	
	Net additional outputs	**Net additional outputs per 1000 population**	**Net additional outputs**	**Net additional outputs per 1000 population**
Community development outputs				
No. people employed in voluntary work	20,725	55	2,233	6
No. people using new or improved community facilities	72,522	193	7,915	21
No. community/voluntary groups supported	11,264	30	690	2
No. community chest type grants awarded	2,295	6	27	0.1
No. project feasibility studies funded	432	1	39	0.1
No. capacity building initiatives carried out	4,746	13	523	1
No. new or improved community facilities	464	1	N/A	N/A

[40] Communities and Local Government (2005) *National Evaluation of New Deal for Communities: Value for Money strand*
      http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ndc/downloads/reports/NDC%20value%20for%20money%20strand.pdf

6.5   The objectives underlying NDCs' commitment to community engagement included rebuilding social capital, and restoring local pride, cohesion and a sense of influence. This chapter reviews what impact NDCs' community engagement activities has had on the communities themselves. We focus on four key questions:

- To what extent have NDCs made a mark locally?

- Have NDCs contributed to the development of social capital?

- Have NDCs overcome the legacy of mistrust?

- Are NDC residents more engaged?

6.6   To help us answer these questions we have drawn mainly on two sources of evidence. The household survey commissioned every other year in all NDC areas since 2002 includes a standard set of questions broadly measuring a variety of indicators of social capital, including:

- respondents' perceptions of the friendliness of the neighbourhood

- degree of trust in the institutions of governance (including the NDC)

- sense of empowerment

- involvement in voluntary organisations

- awareness of and attitudes towards the NDC

6.7   This provides a rich source of data since it represents the product of some 15,000 interviews in each of the three waves of survey so far, with about a third of the original sample being interviewed again in 2004 and 2006. This group allows us to understand how individual perceptions have changed over the period.

6.8   Secondly our fieldwork enabled us to seek interviewees' (residents and representatives of the agencies alike) perceptions of how NDC interventions have had an impact on the confidence and capacity of local communities. This provides the chance to contextualise the survey data.

To what extent have NDCs made a mark locally?

6.9   The household survey asks a series of questions about the NDC:

- Have you heard of the New Deal for Communities?

- (If yes) are you involved in any of its activities?

- Do you think the NDC has improved the area?

Table 6.4 Have NDCs made a mark locally?								
	a) heard of NDC?			b) [as % of a)] Involved in activities?			c) [as % of a)] Has NDC improved area?		
	2002 %	2006 %	Change %	2002 %	2006 %	Change %	2002 %	2006 %	Change %
Knowsley	33	67	34	17	21	4	37	65	24
Lambeth	76	90	14	14	28	15	29	49	20
Newcastle	38	71	33	21	23	2	30	51	22
Newham	60	64	4	17	28	11	34	57	23
Sheffield	71	85	15	10	27	17	39	65	26
Walsall	64	97	32	13	20	8	19	70	52
All NDCs	63	80	17	16	22	6	33	57	24

6.10   All NDCs sought to engage widely with local people. A critical first step therefore is to ensure that people are aware of its existence.

6.11   There are significant variations in the proportions of respondents who have heard of the NDC (from 64 per cent in Newham to 97 per cent in Walsall), but a rather narrower spread of respondents who have heard of and are involved in NDC activities (20 per cent in Walsall to 28 per cent in Lambeth and Newham). The fact that almost everyone in the neighbourhood has heard of the Walsall NDC is fairly easily explained by the large sign on the NDC building in the centre of the area.

6.12   The table above showed the percentage of those involved in NDC activities[41] expressed as a proportion of the total who had heard of the NDC. The table below shows the percentage involved expressed as a proportion of the whole sample – which perhaps gives a better idea of the real extent of 'involvement with NDC activities'.

Table 6.5 Involved in NDC activities – all respondents	
NDC	%
Knowsley	14
Lambeth	25
Newcastle	16
Newham	18
Sheffield	23
Walsall	19
All NDCs	18

6.13   Across all NDCs less than a fifth of all respondents reported any involvement in NDC activities, with most of the case study NDCs seeing the same or higher levels of involvement. The relatively low level of involvement in Newcastle is consistent with the fragmentation of the NDC area, while

[41] 'involvement' as measured in the household survey, refers to a wide variety of forms of involvement which could range from involvement in fora or planning meetings, to attending a fun day or receiving NDC-funded training.

Knowsley has relied on high and consistent levels of engagement from a relatively small core of activists.

6.14 Although Lambeth has one of the highest proportion of respondents who have heard of the NDC (90 per cent) and the highest proportion of respondents taking part in NDC activities, it has the lowest proportion of respondents who think the NDC has improved the area (49 per cent). Walsall showed the largest increase – having had the lowest proportion of positive responses in 2002 (19 per cent) it now has the highest – 70 per cent.

6.15 There are a number of difficulties unpacking the meaning of these indicators. First, the question about 'numbers involved' tells us nothing about the quality of frequency of involvement: attendance at a carnival supported by the NDC counts alongside membership of the NDC Board. Our fieldwork shows how all the Partnerships have established a variety of mechanisms to involve local people at a variety of levels of engagement. Secondly, by itself the table tells us nothing of the relationship between the different figures.

Have NDCs contributed to the development of social capital?

6.16 As we said at the start of this paper, communities in areas selected for NDCs were typically characterised by low levels of 'social capital', which may be seen as both symptom and cause of social exclusion. NDC objectives for community engagement therefore were designed, among other things, to develop community cohesion and build stronger communities. Engaging local communities in the design and management of programmes was important not simply to ensure their relevance to the communities they are designed to serve; it was also seen as a way of rebuilding trust between demoralised communities and the institutions of governance, thus recreating the civic engagement that the government was perceived to have evaporated.

6.17 There is no space in this paper for a detailed discussion of the notion of social capital and its origins. But since recreating social capital has emerged as at least an implicit objective of the NDC programme a brief summary may be useful. Although he did not originate the phrase, the notion of social capital is most commonly associated with the work of Robert Putnam, whose book Bowling Alone included the following definition:

6.18 *"Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called 'civic virtue.' The difference is that 'social capital' calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital."* [42]

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[42] Putnam, R. D. (2000) Bowling *Alone. The collapse and revival of American community*, New York: Simon and Schuster

6.19   Drawing on the work of others, Putnam distinguished between two principle types of social capital:

- *bonding* social capital, which describes the 'glue' that makes local communities internally cohesive
- *bridging* social capital which refers to the links that connect local communities to their neighbours and society at large

6.20   Drawing on Putnam's work, the benefits of well-stocked reserves of social capital include:

- child development: trust, networks, and 'norms of reciprocity' within a child's family, school, peer group, and larger community have far reaching effects on their opportunities and choices, educational achievement, and hence on their behaviour and development
- cleaner public spaces, friendlier people and safer streets. Places have higher crime rates in large part (Putnam argues) because people don't participate in community organisations, don't supervise younger people, and aren't linked through networks of friends
- more prosperous individuals and firms
- better health. *"As a rough rule of thumb, if you belong to no groups but decide to join one, you cut your risk of dying over the next year in half. If you smoke and belong to no groups, it's a toss-up statistically whether you should stop smoking or start joining"*[43]

6.21   The household survey asks four questions that may be taken as an indicator of bonding social capital.

Table 6.6 Have NDCs increased social capital?						
	Do you feel part of local community?			**Do you think people in the area are friendly?**		
	2002 %	**2006 %**	**Change %**	**2002 %**	**2006 %**	**Change %**
Knowsley	39	47	8	90	88	−2
Lambeth	31	44	13	77	84	7
Newcastle	37	46	9	82	86	3
Newham	38	37	−1	81	78	−3
Sheffield	44	55	11	83	91	8
Walsall	35	48	13	87	92	5
All NDCs	35	42	7	83	85	2

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[43] Putnam (2000)

Table 6.6 Have NDCs increased social capital?						
	Do you know most/many people in the neighbourhood?			Do neighbours look out for each other		
	2002 %	**2006 %**	**Change %**	**2002 %**	**2006 %**	**Change %**
Knowsley	52	60	8	69	67	–2
Lambeth	25	33	8	52	45	–7
Newcastle	36	41	6	54	54	0
Newham	34	25	–8	50	49	–1
Sheffield	52	53	1	62	68	6
Walsall	51	55	4	69	75	6
All NDCs	40	43	3	59	61	2

6.22   At the start of the programme, there was a relatively narrow spread across the six case studies in the proportion of respondents who felt 'part of the community' (31–44), generally below the national average (51 per cent). Between 2002 and 2006 this proportion had gone up by 13 percentage points in Walsall and Lambeth, and by 11 points in Sheffield. The results for Newham showed a marginal drop (though it is important to take care in interpreting measures of change below about 3 per cent.). However, one of the few consistent findings across these four questions concerns Newham: on each there was a *decline* in the social capital indicator (–3 on 'friendly people', –8 on 'know most or many people' and –1 on 'neighbours look out for one another').

6.23   There are increasing signs of transience within the Newham NDC population.[44] In particular anecdotal evidence from the NDC suggests that there is a growing number of recent immigrants from Eastern Europe in the area. Data are now available at a local authority district level showing the national insurance number registrations for non-UK nationals, as a percentage of the working age population. Newham as a whole has the highest percentage of all 39 NDCs (at 19 per cent), and although it is not known how many live in the NDC area the data confirm the NDC's anecdotal impression. While this influx may help to explain the decline in the social capital indicators, the population study assessed Newham NDC as characterised by 'medium' residential mobility (whereas Lambeth and Newcastle were characterised as high'.)

6.24   Walsall, Lambeth and Sheffield showed the largest increase in the proportions of respondents thinking that people in the area are friendly, while Lambeth, along with Knowsley, showed the biggest increase in the proportion of respondents who know many/most people in the neighbourhood. Interestingly, in both 2002 and 2006, in Knowsley (60 per cent in 2006), Walsall (55 per cent) and Sheffield (53 per cent) the proportion

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[44] Communities and Local Government (2008) The moving escalator: Residential mobility and outcomes in NDC areas (CRESR) http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/publications.asp?did=1899

claiming to know many/most people was higher than the national average (47 per cent). This suggests that all three display high levels of what Putnam calls 'bonding' capital.

6.25   High levels of bonding social capital may actually reinforce barriers between disconnected neighbourhoods and the wider society (as opposed to 'linking' social capital). In one of the case studies concerns were expressed that the NDC has created, or reinforced, a dependency culture within the community sector in the Sheffield area. The availability of funding, with relatively few strings attached, has meant that the NDC has been the first option for smaller groups seeking funding, perhaps to the detriment of options which include networking, or working with other agencies. An interviewee commented:

> *"Has NDC created a grant culture? There is a mindset that Sheffield NDC has a wall around it and only projects within that wall can work. It's very frustrating for me and others within the city. There are other voluntary organisations who wanted to do work (in the NDC area) – e.g. Age Concern but they are shunned because they are not a micro-group supporting self-help. Things had to be 'home-grown' and 'home-spun' and that has been reinforced by the 'money on the table'".*

6.26   Small easily accessible grant funds are a common feature of NDCs' community engagement strategies. In Knowsley, the expansion in the community sector is reflected in the 'Small Change Big Difference Grants' scheme database, which now has 128 community groups on it. The scheme has directly helped to set up 37 new community groups. Of these, nine are men only (mainly football teams, which of course still constitute a form of 'engagement'), 10 women only and seven for elderly residents. Nine have been new school groups. Annually it has supported between 30 and 60 groups. Some of these groups have been helped to secure funding from other sources (NRF, Community Chests and small health grants). A member of the grants scheme resident panel said: "*It works because it's the community doing it for the community*." These new groups are (not yet) sufficient to generate additional voluntary sector involvement: according to the household survey there has been no increase in the proportion of residents who are involved with voluntary organisations.

6.27   Interviewees generally agreed that there is greater cohesion between the area's different estates. As one member of the Neighbourhood Network argued: "*For me, the biggest thing that's come out of [the NDC programme] as a positive is seeing six areas of one small part of Huyton actually pulling together.*"

Have NDCs overcome the legacy of mistrust?

6.28   The government's broad objectives for increasing levels of community engagement included a concern to improve the trust generated by public agencies, and particularly within disadvantaged and disaffected communities.

The legacy of mistrust in professionals reported in Knowsley earlier is not unusual in regeneration areas.

6.29   Accordingly the household survey asks respondents if they trust the local council, the police, health services, local schools, and the NDC. As the following table shows, a very mixed picture emerges.

Table 6.7 Trust in public agencies (2002 and 2004)														
NDC	Council			Police			Health service			Schools			NDC		
	02	04	%	02	04	%	02	04	%	02	04	%	02	04	%
Knowsley	47	53	6	63	57	–6	77	80	2	64	57	–7	54	63	9
Lambeth	36	39	2	67	64	–3	69	76	7	47	53	6	40	53	14
Newcastle	53	50	–3	71	72	1	82	76	–6	51	46	–4	42	55	12
Newham	45	52	7	63	71	8	61	64	4	49	47	–2	48	55	7
Sheffield	40	49	8	58	63	5	82	83	1	55	52	–3	42	60	12
Walsall	25	37	12	57	62	5	75	79	4	50	56	5	18	72	54
All NDCs	41	46	4	58	63	5	75	78	3	51	53	2	43	58	15

6.30   In five out of the six there has been an increase in the proportion saying they trust both the council and local health services, (with Newcastle the exception in both cases). In Walsall the proportion that trusts the council increased by 12 percentage points (admittedly from a low base). In 2006 in all but Walsall and Lambeth, trust in the local council was around or even above the national average. Similarly, by 2006 trust in the local health services was close to the national average in all but Newham.

6.31   Levels in trust for the local police in both 2002 and 2006 covered a relatively narrow spread arranged around but not far from the national average (68 per cent in 2006). However changes in the six case studies varied substantially, from an increase of eight percentage points in Newham to a drop of six points in Knowsley.

6.32   Trust in the NDC had increased in all six areas, by 54 per cent in Walsall, although this reflected an unusually low baseline. The responses to the question about trusting the NDC mirror the responses about improving the area – with Walsall highest (72 per cent) and Lambeth lowest (53 per cent). Unsurprisingly, levels of and increases in trust in the NDC appear to be associated with overall improvements in outcomes: the better things get, the more people are likely to trust the NDC.

Are NDC residents more engaged?

6.33   A symptom of the lack of social capital is the sense of isolation that often characterises areas of concentrated disadvantage. This can manifest itself in low levels of political involvement (as measured by election turnout for

example) – itself fuelled by a sense of political impotence – and low levels of association in voluntary groups. The household survey measures changes in both these indicators.

6.34   Respondents were asked if they felt able to influence decisions that affect the area. The results are set out in the table below. Perhaps surprisingly differences between the sense of empowerment experienced by NDC residents and the national average are not large. In 2002, the proportion saying they felt they could influence decisions in Lambeth and Newham was identical to the national average, and within a few percentage points in the other four. By 2006 the gap had increased, but still, the proportion feeling 'empowered' in all but Knowsley and Walsall remained at or close to the national average.

6.35   An analysis by Ipsos-MORI[45] identified the sense of influence as perhaps the critical indicator. They found a very strong relationship between levels of influence and feelings of community. 'Residents who feel they have influence are almost twice as likely to feel part of their local community', and more generally, feelings of influence seem to be more important than actual involvement.

6.36   However perhaps the most important conclusion to emerge from this analysis concerns what happens if people's (perception of) influence starts to decline. The most negative changes in attitudes (across the whole range of satisfaction indicators) are seen among those who feel they've lost influence, and this has an effect on key measures such as satisfaction with the area. The Ipsos-MORI analysis concludes that 'This points to the vital importance of maintaining residents' role in decision-making once it has been developed; it is better not to raise expectations of influence at all than to initiate it then let it dissipate.' We return to this in our discussion of community engagement and succession strategies in the next chapter.

Table 6.8 Can influence decisions that affect area			
	2002 %	2006 %	Change 2002–2006 %
Knowsley	22	20	–3
Lambeth	26	30	4
Newcastle	22	30	8
Newham	26	30	4
Sheffield	25	34	8
Walsall	20	22	2
NDC average	23	25	2
Comparator	22	25	2

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[45] Duffy, B., *et al*, (2008) *Searching for the impact of empowerment*:
   http://www.ipsos-mori.com/_assets/pdfs/searching%20for%20the%20impact%20of%20empowerment%20310708.pdf

6.37   Given the quotation from Putnam earlier, in some respects the most important measure of social capital covered by the survey may be involvement in voluntary activity. It is also the one where the NDCs show the greatest difference from the national average, as the following table shows.

Table 6.9 Involved in local organisation on voluntary basis			
	2002 %	2006 %	Change 2002–2006 %
Knowsley	11	10	−1
Lambeth	12	15	3
Newcastle	12	12	2
Newham	11	11	0
Sheffield	17	20	3
Walsall	11	14	3
NDC average	12	13	1
Comparator	12	12	0
National	21	23	2

6.38   This is of course unsurprising: the 2005 Citizenship Survey[46] found that formal volunteering is more common in affluent areas than in disadvantaged. In 2002, all six except Sheffield had levels of voluntary organisation participation only slightly above half the national average, and in 2006 again with the same exception, the gap remains substantial. Nationally as well as locally change in the levels of participation over the period was modest, especially given the margins of area associated with survey comparisons over time. All NDCs have invested heavily in the development of the VCS, but is does not seem to have fed through into individual behaviour.

6.39   In Sheffield, a number of individual projects have made an impact on capacity within the community. For instance, the community study support project has encouraged parental participation. The individual organisations within the consortium have parents on the management committees. Recently, parents were able to influence the location of the classes within the Reach High project. One interviewee argued that there is a trickle down effect from those who attend study support to those who do not in terms of role models and being able to influence their peers and raise their peers' expectations. Additionally, those employed in the study support team are from the local community and act as role models. This helps to change the culture and learning of young people and helps to give them a voice.

[46] Communities and Local Government (2006) 2005 Citizenship Survey: active communities topic report http://www. communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/2005citizenshipsurveyactive

6.40   There are also perceptions that capacity in the area has improved. One interviewee told us:

> *"I attended an Area Panel meeting two weeks ago. It was well attended and I was struck by what an articulate community it is. The questions asked and the attendance there was impressive. That's not all because of NDC but it's because the community is actively involved in regeneration issues. It's a real bonus that Sheffield has that and NDC is part of that".*

6.41   In Lambeth the NDC programme has had a significant impact in strengthening the voice of the community and its ability to engage with mainstream service providers. One interviewee commented that people are 'now more aware of their rights', and another that residents 'are not afraid to speak out if they aren't happy'. The residents on the Board (and indeed the community more widely) have been equipped with the skills and knowledge to work with mainstream service providers to effect change in the area. In last year's research we were told that the community were now less tolerant of criminal and anti-social behaviour, such as prostitution and drug dealing, and felt empowered to challenge this type of behaviour: "*people's expectations of normality have shifted … they will not stand for these problems and are standing up and reporting issues … they have greater confidence in reporting things*".

6.42   The majority of interviewees were able to point to specific examples of how the NDC's approach and activities had developed community capacity and cohesiveness. The development of a community-led RSL (Lambeth Homes) which emerged from the NDC programme is further evidence of the capacity that has been developed in the local community.

6.43   The experience of Walsall shows how strengthening local communities can lead, indirectly, to real influence over the agencies. Many interviewees were persuaded that NDC initiatives like the Community Involvement Team and the Accorn fund (a small grants scheme aimed at local voluntary groups) had produced a more empowered community. In total around 140 groups have been supported by the fund, without which few would be in existence. (The survey suggests there has been a modest increase in involvement with voluntary organisations). One patch representative cites an important example of what is being achieved through such groups:

> *"We now have a residents association, supported by the NDC which is able to influence local services. It has resulted in parking bays, PCSOs walking the area, and better response times from the Police. These are the things that make a difference to people."*

6.44   But across the NDCs the picture is uneven. In Newcastle the VCS still remains weak despite some improvements in capacity, although the a local evaluation of the Community Regeneration Team summarised their limitations: "*They are organising trips and festivals but not challenging the Area Development Framework about Tesco's*"

Conclusions

6.45   There is a widely shared perception among interviewees (residents, NDC staff and agency representatives) that as a result of NDC interventions communities are stronger and more capable. However, this is not entirely borne out by the survey results where the variations in change over time between the six case studies do not self-evidently relate to differences in the basket of community engagement interventions adopted by each of them.

6.46   Local people do seem to be aware of NDC performance. A composite index of outcomes across all programme areas has been developed as part of the national evaluation.[47] Comparing this with household survey results shows that the greater the improvement in outcomes across the programme (excluding the social capital indicators discussed earlier) then the greater the increase in trust in the NDC, and thinking the NDC has improved the area. This probably has more to do with the improvements in the other themes than NDC investment in community engagement.

6.47   It is more difficult to perceive a clear relationship between any of the social capital indicators and NDC performance in particular themes, with one exception. Partnerships which achieved more change in the composite community theme indicator from 2002–2006 were also more likely to have seen improvements in the housing and physical environment theme. There were no other significant relationships between change in combined community theme and other combined theme scores. More specifically, greater improvements in housing and the physical environment are associated with improvements in the proportions who think the NDC has improved the area or who trust the local NDC which as we saw earlier tend in any case to go hand-in-hand). This correlation should not surprise us:

- interventions in this area are simply more visible

- they are easier to 'badge' as NDC accomplishments than less tangible improvements in say education or health

- most surveys suggest that housing and the local environment have greater salience with local people than other policy themes

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[47] The Composite Index of Relative Change (CIRC). This analytical tool combines standardised change data for six core indicators in each theme of the programme. Therefore it is possible to measure for each theme the extent to which each Partnership has achieved change across a range of indicators relative to the average achieved across the Programme as a whole.

7 A sustainable approach? The implications for forward strategies

Implications for forward strategy

7.1   The lessons from previous short or fixed life initiatives (and in particular the Inner City Task Forces and City Challenge) suggest that it is critical to develop a formal 'forward' or 'succession' strategy. (The original term 'exit strategy' was abandoned as being too brutal.) Typically these have covered arrangements for taking care of funded activities; the creation of successor bodies and establishing mechanisms to provide resources (for example through gifting capital assets); developing processes through which influence over service providers can be maintained; and strengthening the VCS to ensure there continues to be a coherent advocate for the neighbourhood. We review here how NDC proposed arrangements for succession and forward strategy are likely to affect community engagement.

Progress so far

7.2   Elements of succession planning are in place in all six, but as yet none has a formal written strategy, even though two of them (Newcastle and Newham) are Round 1 NDCs, which are grant funded until 2010.

7.3   In Sheffield work has started on a forward strategy, though nothing is in place yet. The Year 7 Action Plan refers to the need to influence city-wide plans for area regeneration Partnerships: 'The function of the Partnership should be about getting and shaping the right resources into the area. The importance of ensuring that real community participation is maintained and strengthened and that the right people are represented at the influencing level was recognised and will be central as we move forward on both models. Consultation with local residents, local organisations and service providers will be carried out'.[48]

7.4   In Lambeth much of the discussion about forward strategy has focused on the nature and role of a successor body. Here as elsewhere, forward strategy discussion appears to have started from the *presumption* of the need for a successor body, with the role of that body being considered later. We return to this issue in our conclusions.

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[48] Sheffield NDfC, *Action Plan 2007–8*

7.5 In Lambeth, the central component in the programme has been the stock transfer. There had been a proposal for the NDC to come under the Metropolitan Housing Partnership structure with Lambeth Homes. Negotiations around this took place but the Board eventually withdrew their support for this model, deciding that the NDC should retain its independence. This was not an easy decision and to some degree was complicated by the fact that some NDC resident Board members also sit on the Lambeth Homes Board and have to wear 'a different hat' depending on which Board meeting they are attending. For example, if you are a member of both Boards it is not necessarily easy to make a decision on an issue which affects both organisations as this did. At this point it has been agreed that the Partnership should seek charitable status by the end of the financial year, with a successor organisation evolving through a new trading arm. This will allow them additional opportunities to fundraise and generate income.

7.6 In addition to this, and irrespective of decisions about the successor body, developing strong social networks is viewed locally as being important in sustaining and embedding the work of the NDC in the long term. With a relatively short period of NDC funding still remaining (three years), ensuring the long term sustainability of community cohesion and capacity is a priority identified by the majority of those we interviewed.

7.7 In Knowsley, the succession strategy is also not finalised yet but looks likely to be based on a resident-led guarantee company with Community Interest Company status as the successor body. Community representation is likely to be in the form of some or all of the NDC's current resident Board directors and representatives from the Neighbourhood Network. Support is likely to be provided by a couple of advisors and a small team made up probably of a general manager and someone responsible for finance and monitoring. The three community buildings will probably each have a buildings manager. This successor body is expected to provide a key link between the community and the agencies through its community building bases.

7.8 At least some of the NDC's community engagement mechanisms are likely to be mainstreamed. The local authority is building the Neighbourhood Network into its community engagement structures (making up one of six networks operating borough-wide as part of the council's 'Improving People's Lives' strategy) and will maintain the community links developed by the NDC's neighbourhood action and support team and the crime and community safety projects through its Knowsley Pride Team. The NDC's health task group will be merged into the PCT's patient and public involvement structures and its education task group into the Knowsley educational collaborative, which has had significant establishment funding from the NDC.

7.9 The Walsall forward strategy is also still in development. The main elements in the proposed sustainability strategy so far include:

- a stakeholder forum overseeing mainstream service delivery for the area
- New Deal: New Horizons Ltd (a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity) continuing as a resident led company and charity,

working with income generated from the asset portfolio and attracting external funding

- New Horizons Enterprises Limited – a wholly owned trading subsidiary, initially with the role of undertaking commercial land transaction with Bellway Homes

- a secretariat providing administrative and communication support for the other strands

7.10   But in addition the NDC is keen to establish continuity of community representation, by ensuring that each patch has some form of community group capable of providing it. Capacity building arrangements are in place to help develop the skills and knowledge to organise, consult and pursue further funding for future sustainability. At present around a third of patches have some type of group, which may be a residents' group, neighbourhood watch group or focus group.

7.11   In Newcastle a detailed action plan has been developed indicating the work that needs to be done in developing the forward strategy.

Newcastle NDC: forward strategy: transitional action plan[49]

Workstream	Objective(s)
Governance development plan	To establish a Neighbourhood Development Organisation to succeed the NDC with the following aims: 'To identify needs and champion solutions for our neighbourhood'
Assets and revenues plan	To assemble a fully evaluated portfolio of assets that can yield an income to fund the Neighbourhood Development Organisation and help achieve its objects
Community development plan	To establish a community network that can hold to account, and be served by, the Neighbourhood Development Organisation
Neighbourhood management plan	To establish a model of neighbourhood management and secure the commitment of partners to support the aims of the Neighbourhood Development Organisation
Housing delivery plan	To establish a programme of housing and physical regeneration and a Partnership vehicle, linked to the Neighbourhood Development Organisation, to oversee delivery
Transition plan	To provide a 'road map' for the Board from now to the end of the NDC programme showing all key decisions and events

7.12   Interviewees here confirmed that there is as yet no clear consensus about the purpose of a successor body, and as with previous examples from earlier regeneration programmes, there is a grave danger that the perceived need to establish a sustainable organisation clouds the reason for doing so in the first place – it becomes about collecting rents and generating income, rather than mainstreaming a regeneration focus. A staff member in Newcastle expressed

49 Newcastle NDC Year 8 Action Plan

concerns about this: "*Resident reps are involved in governance and need an independent body that has a separate function around accountability. Governance responsibilities have the danger of leading into self-serving and self perpetuation for the sake of it*".

7.13   While the Transition Action Plan refers to securing the commitment of partners, there was not a great deal of optimism expressed that the ground had been prepared for this. Further work will be needed on behalf of the NDC to ensure that the mechanisms are in place and the community representatives are skilled up to engage. The lack of clarity about the future structure of the NDC successor body has also discouraged partner engagement.

7.14   In Newham, there is a succession strategy although it has not been formalised in a document. A central element in succession planning involves leaving behind a pool of people who can lead and take things forward – either through direct involvement with the resource centres or by being councillors, school governors, or representatives on other bodies. Two new resource centres have been built, which are intended to provide a focus for community engagement, and retaining agency presence in the neighbourhood. In one there is already a community café which is used as a food training venue. There are staff teams from statutory agencies and the voluntary sector – health, childcare, training, employment, etc. – based in the buildings. The GP surgery which was funded by the NDC in its first year is based in one of them. There is also space for community use and conference facilities which are available for hire.

7.15   Management committees of local residents have been set up to run each of the venues, and detailed training programmes provided. The venues will be run as social enterprises and will be expected to raise income. This is a significant culture shift which some of the committee members are finding hard to come to terms with. The community involvement team will come to an end in March 2008 and with it the grants panel. There may be some funds available for a time to make grants to community groups but it is likely that support will provide help for groups to make grant applications rather than provide the grants themselves. It is too early to say whether the centres will succeed in becoming self-financing, and whether the management committees will survive without CIT support. However, NDC staff believe that residents are very engaged with the exit strategy and are beginning to take responsibility for their own community.

Conclusions

7.16   The experience of previous regeneration programmes suggests that the achievements of short or fixed life regeneration Partnerships can be vulnerable unless (and even if) detailed arrangements for their sustainability are in place early on. One of the lessons from previous studies of succession strategies is that you can never start too early; however, NDCs appear to have remained focused on current delivery rather than succession planning

until comparatively recently.[50] Early succession planning does not seem to have been a feature of the NDC programme. Certainly, there are mixed signs from this study about the prospects in the six case studies.

7.17   In a number of cases interviewees were sceptical about the prospects of the agencies retaining their focus on the NDC areas and community engagement locally once the grant funding period is complete. In part this derives from the fact that it remains the case that agency commitment to regeneration Partnerships is still predominantly individual rather that institutional. But there are real constraints on agencies' capacity to commit – rarely recognised by community representatives – as a result of internal issues of down-sizing, outsourcing and budgetary pressures. For example, in Newham, PCT commitment to renting space in one of the community resource centres had been a major element in the business plan; but a budget crisis forced the PCT to withdraw. Securing real agency commitment is always difficult, because of the complex nature of agency accountability; with a couple of exceptions we have seen little evidence that NDCs have so far been able to use the LAA process to build agency relationships and commitment.

7.18   All the NDCs have recognised the need to build capacity within local communities as part of the forward strategy process, but with varying degrees of urgency and in varying ways. In Knowsley there are encouraging signs that community engagement mechanisms will be mainstreamed; elsewhere concerns were expressed that the capacity building may be too little, too late.

7.19   We commented on the frequency with which the 'successor body' is seen as central to succession strategies, even before its purposes are clear.[51] There are cases where this is stimulated by commercial pressures from companies offering 'off-the-shelf' solutions in the form of company structures. There may be a useful role for a body that survives the NDC, to provide a continued focus for community engagement and contact with agencies, and as a neighbourhood champion. But there are also examples where the bulk of the effort in successor bodies goes on raising the resources simply to keep the organisation in existence. Equally, there are examples where capital asset 'gifts' have proved to be millstones. We have no systematic picture of the survival rate (and more importantly, impact) of successor bodies, since there has been no detailed research (of which we are aware) which revisits short life regeneration Partnerships' legacies for more than 10 years.[52] This may be an appropriate focus for a future Communities and Local Government research project.

7.20   Finally, it is important to emphasise the importance of the conclusion drawn in the Ipsos-MORI about the consequences of the loss of influence. If arrangements established by NDCs for community engagement and

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[50] ODPM (2006) *New Deal for Communities Succession Strategies.* This found that of a sample of 14 selected because of the progress they were thought to be making, only a third – about half-way through their funding – were clear about succession arrangements.

[51] The recent study *Delivering NDC Succession Strategies*, reviewing a different sample of case studies, fond that succession arrangements are now focusing on longer term neighbourhood management, and on maintaining influence over the agencies.

[52] Probably not since Fordham, G (1995) *Made to last?* (JRF, York)

providing local communities with the sense that they have influence do not survive, then there are likely to be implications for broader levels of satisfaction with the area. This could affect a local authority's and Local Strategic Partnership's performance on two of the national indicator set that are emerging as critical:

• NI 4 per cent of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality

• NI 5 Overall/general satisfaction with local area

8   Lessons

8.1   For policy makers

Building community engagement

- community engagement has to occur from the bottom up (even more so than other NDC thematic areas) because to really succeed, trust has to be developed and it is difficult for mainstream agencies to create and develop the required level of trust, this has to be developed through the community

- ensure that appropriately supported citizen engagement is built into regeneration programmes early in the development stage using a range of participatory techniques

- be realistic about the scale of community engagement objectives and be sensitive to the participation pyramid. Don't make community engagement a numbers game

- being aware of the engagement spectrum also emphasises the importance of having a range of engagement structures that allow individuals to engage at the levels at which they feel most comfortable and can be more effective. This emphasis would also include, for example, appropriate engagement structures for young people. Youth forums are one means of achieving this, Young Advisors are another

- be clear and consistent on expectations at the outset: are regeneration programmes expected to be resident-led or resident-*focused*? (Confusion between these different emphases appears to have bedevilled the NDC programme as a whole)

- citizen engagement needs to be resourced not just in relation to the travel, subsistence, equipment and child-care expenses incurred by volunteers but also in the provision of supportive training and development programmes

- deploy Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors to act as independent mediators between residents and professionals in contexts where high levels of mistrust exist between them. The building of trust is the foundation stone for regeneration in these circumstances

Maintaining community engagement

- NDC funding has been key in enabling innovative approaches to be developed – it has provided a resource that enables new (and often successful) approaches to be tested; it is not clear how these approaches will be sustained once NDC funding comes to an end

- there is very limited evidence that mainstream agencies are changing the way they engage with local communities on the basis of the lessons drawn from the NDC. NDCs appear to have taken a co-ordination role and have facilitated and supported agencies in engaging local communities.

A cause for concern could be that mainstream agencies are over reliant on the NDC performing this co-ordination role, and may lack the ability to continue the approach once the NDC programme is over

- support community-chest type funding initiatives for community capacity building (like the Cabinet Office's 'Grassroots Grants scheme) – run, wherever possible, by local volunteers – especially where existing community groups are stretched financially and there is limited organised voluntary sector activity

- as proposed in the *Action Plan for Community Empowerment*, invest in local community anchor organisations to help secure their sustainability

- priorities of delivery and spend are often inconsistent with community involvement and empowerment. Promoting the importance of delivery, spend and achieving targets can force local professionals to downgrade the long term process of community empowerment

- diverse and changing populations present particular challenges in terms of community engagement. Where this is the case, face to face contact and an 'on the ground' presence through door knocking and workshops have been most effective in liaising with 'hard to reach' groups. However, these methods are resource intensive. Additionally, an approach which targets small geographical areas (natural neighbourhoods within the NDC area) can help to capture the different needs and issues associated with different communities, cultures and ethnicities

8.2   For NDCs

- it is important that projects stop supporting/building capacity at the right time – too early and capacity has not been developed enough but too late and then capacity never fully develops as the community are always relying on additional support

- maintaining the balance in supporting local groups is difficult. Funding through community chest etc. can make groups dependent. It is important that any funding goes hand in hand with support to develop skills to become sustainable

- schools are a good means of engaging the wider community (across all social and ethnic groups): "*If you can engage children you can engage their parents and wider family*"

- away days are a very useful means of bringing residents, agency partners and NDC officers together. They can be a really useful tool in developing strong relationships between residents, agencies and the officer team

- as an NDC is focusing on its forward strategy, it may need to consider bringing new Board members that can support the next phase of its work

- develop, where possible, community assets as part of the succession strategy but be careful to ensure that community groups have realistic

expectations in relation to the long-term management and financial sustainability of these assets

- the early development of community engagement strategies would help to embed community engagement activities throughout the work of NR organisations. A community engagement 'champion', at senior management or Board level would also be beneficial in helping to raise and maintain the profile of community engagement and managing expectations in relation to what can be achieved

- high profile community events can be important boosters to community morale, and provide opportunities for engaging with large numbers of people. However, these need to be supplemented by more targeted and direct work if engagement is to be sustained. Once events are established it might be appropriate to outsource their management to allow for focus on other engagement activities

- document and share learning, and good practice in community engagement, with other neighbourhood renewal practitioners and contribute to the learning programmes for local authorities proposed in the *Action Plan for Community Empowerment*. Community activists involved in NDC community engagement structures should be involved in the roundtable discussions that are also proposed in the 'Action Plan'

- in areas where a large number of languages are spoken, the production of literature in a limited number of key languages but linking in to other VCS agencies for language and translation support has proved an effective method of ensuring engagement with all communities

- it is important to have community ownership of projects and communication with the agencies and officers responsible for their delivery. Communities need to have the capacity to be able to get involved, influence and monitor the progress of projects

- a key element of succession should be to develop the capacity of community groups to act for and on behalf of their communities. This requires their empowerment through the capacity to recruit and organise residents, run constituted groups, bid for funding and, in time, deliver projects

8.3   For other neighbourhood renewal practitioners

- when working with the community in deprived areas a careful balance needs to be struck between what the mainstream agencies think is 'best' for the area and what the community think is 'best'. The danger is that the mainstream agencies adopt a 'we know best' approach which does not help with engaging residents; whereas the community does not always understand mainstream agencies' processes and therefore they get increasingly frustrated at the slow pace of change

- there can be a tendency for the 'same old faces' to become involved in community activity and neighbourhood renewal. However, this can be

crucial for ensuring continuity, and a further benefit is that a core group of residents develop expertise and knowledge over time

- if holding meetings/groups when evenings are dark it can be difficult to coax vulnerable groups to attend if they don't feel they can get to and from meetings safely. Thus, transport can be an issue with community engagement

- build in time for community engagement and capacity building before programme spend begins in earnest. If a programme is to be genuinely resident led and focussed then you need to fully understand their needs before you develop projects

- build on existing community activity but seek to develop this to bring in new and/or excluded groups to widen participation and avoid the negative network dynamics of closed groups. Mapping of different levels of participation is important for identifying gaps

- in situations where major housing and environmental redevelopment programmes are being proposed, consider a 'one-stop' intensive neighbourhood management initiative. Be prepared to fund exceptional environmental and community safety services for major redevelopment programmes and be clear on the distinction between exceptional/ extraordinary service provision driven by the requirements of the redevelopment programme and mainstream service provision

- deploy a mix of public consultation techniques spanning community-wide consultation and individual household-level discussions – and resource the programme accordingly. Train community activists and staff in these consultation techniques

- communication with residents is essential – through a variety of media. Newsletters, resident group meetings, Resident Board Directors, Theme Groups and one-to-one communication Monitor how the information is understood and be prepared to challenge misunderstanding: "*You can pass information on but it's how people understand it that's important … you need to avoid Chinese whispers … and you need time to quash these*"

- have dedicated community engagement teams that work across themes working alongside theme commissioning officers sharing the community engagement ethos and way of working 'out in the community'

- the purpose of community empowerment should not just be about developing the capacity of residents to influence projects, but should facilitate their role in scrutinising and holding service providers to account

- it is important that all practitioners understand that community work is very different to many other regeneration themes, in that it works at the individual's pace. Community engagement and empowerment should therefore be considered a process, as a pathway of development, not an event

- empowerment is about demonstrating to residents that their actions can bring about change. An intrinsic feature of this is convincing residents that such changes take time, and that they have to often work at the pace and through the regulations governing local agencies. Furthermore, it is

important to not raise aspirations above what you can achieve and be open and honest with residents

- distinguish between community development, capacity building and community engagement. Make sure that there is a clear strategy for community engagement with the appropriate outcomes, underpinned by capacity building and community development

- locate front line provision at a local level to increase access to respond to local needs and increase access to services

Appendix 1: research methodology

Four key research tasks were undertaken in the six case study NDCs during 07/08 to inform community engagement outputs:

    i. project reviews

    ii. data analysis

    iii. interviews

    iv. focus groups

Project Reviews

Thirty-five project reviews were undertaken across the Case Studies. Common workbooks were use to address issues around project planning and development, funding, community and agency engagement and outcomes.

Data analysis

CRESR pulled together available quantitative evidence into a 'community engagement data package' for all six case studies. This provided data on questions such as:

- What do we know of case study area social capital indicators?

- Are there any observable changes (positive or negative) in these indicators?

- Is there any evidence of trends over time?

- in principle we would like to explore whether there is any correlation between different levels of community engagement in the design and development of interventions (as identified in interviews and project reviews) and outcomes, and if so does this vary between themes

- How is the NDC performing in relation to local and national benchmarks and other NDCs?

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were informed by data and topic guides tailored to reflect the particular circumstances in each case study NDC. Interviews were used to explore what lies behind changes and variations in community engagement outcomes and to build up explanations for how these outcomes have been achieved.

Approximately 8–10 interviews were held in each Case Study NDC: typically to include the community engagement theme leader, Board rep(s) involved in theme groups, representatives of relevant agencies, Partnerships and projects and other key local activists.

Topic Guide

Interviewee's role

- What is the interviewee's role? What is the role in relation to the NDC? How long has s/he been associated with it?

The mechanisms and processes for community engagement

- How has the Partnership approached the whole issue of community engagement:

  - Community engagement strategy? If so please include a copy with the case study report. What do the various constituencies (NDC staff, community reps, agencies) see as the objectives of community engagement – press for specific details

  - community Board representation: who (age, gender, ethnicity), how appointed/elected, length of appointment, rate of turnover, duration of service in practice, remit

  - theme group representation: who, (age, gender, ethnicity if possible) how appointed/elected, length of appointment, rate of turnover, duration of service in practice, remit

  - community events: which, how often, objectives, turnout

  - outreach staff

  - communications media

  - other

  We need details of how each of these function – for example, election turnout, difficulties in recruitment, Board and theme group management

- Are some sections of the community harder to engage than others – and are these the groups conventionally thought of as 'hard to reach'? Prompt for young people, women, minority ethnic groups (and if so which communities), business, but other groups? Why is this? What effect does that have?

- What training, induction or other forms of support have community reps received? How effective has this been, in the eyes of the various constituencies?

- for the community reps, explore their experiences of attending meetings and the extent to which they feel that they are able to influence both agenda and decisions. What aspects intimidated, what encouraged? What else, with hindsight might have helped?

- Why have community representatives decided to take part? Is this their first experience of community representation? What have been the positive/negative features of the experience? How equipped *did* they feel to undertake the role, and how equipped do they feel now? What if anything do they do to report back to or seek the views of those they 'represent'? Would they consider another role like this in the future?

- How do the 'professionals' view community involvement – what do they see as the positive/negative features?

- What have been the costs associated with community engagement – identify indirect costs as well as direct, even if the indirect costs cannot be accurately quantified.

The nature of community influence

For this section it is important to distinguish the comments and views of the three groups of interviewees (staff, Community reps, agencies): we need to understand whether community reps' views of their effectiveness and impact differ from those of the 'professionals'.

- How influential have community representatives been:
  - on the Board
  - in theme groups
  - on appraisal panels
  - in other fora and if so which
  - through other mechanisms – please specify.

  We need hard detail here if possible: which projects, strategies, interventions were influenced and in what ways – is there any suggestion that the NDC either did different things or did things differently *as a result of community representation and involvement?* **This will be particularly important in the context of the three substantive projects in the sample: how were these affected by community involvement, in theme groups, appraisal panels and so on?** Is the community role mainly to identify *problems* or is there the expectation (by any constituency) that their role is also to identify *solutions*?

- Are there issues where the views of community representatives and those of professionals have differed? For example, in the crime case study there was the suggestion from some areas that community reps were more likely to favour Bobbies on the beat than professionals – but are there other examples? Which, how and why? How were differences resolved? What was the outcome? How do the various parties explain the reasons for these differences?

- Do the various constituencies think the influence has been sufficient/ too little/ too much? Is it seen as largely beneficial, and by all groups?

Impacts

- Is there any evidence (even anecdotal) that community involvement has influenced actual *outcomes?* If so which and how?

- Can the NDC's community engagement interventions explain any changes in the social capital indicators identified in the Ipsos-MORI surveys? If so which and how? Are there differences of view about this between the various constituencies? Specific dimensions of this will need to be explored, using simple language, with all three groups but especially community representatives.

- Have any of the agencies changed their own approach to community engagement as a result of their NDC experience and if so how? And with what consequences?

- How would the NDC have been different in the absence of community representation, in relation to operating methods, priorities, and outcomes?

Sustainability

- Does the Partnership have an exit or forward strategy in place? What specifically does it propose in relation to community engagement?

- Is there an asset-based element? How will local communities manage any assets that remain?

- What capacity building measures is the NDC undertaking? How do community representatives view these measures – are they seen as adequate and if not what more is needed?

- How do the agencies propose to maintain community links once the NDC has finished?

- How does each of the constituencies regard the prospects for continued community engagement once the NDC has finished?

Conclusions and key lessons

- What have been the main factors helping and hindering effective community engagement?

- Which elements of the NDC's approach have most contributed to community influence, and which hindered it?

- What are the key messages to emerge from the case study, and in particular in relation to the new policy agenda:

  – for government

  – for NDCs

  – for the agencies

  – for local communities

Experience in other programmes

As we indicated at the start, the issue of involving communities in policy making now runs across government. We therefore supplemented the NDC-based work with a very brief review of other programmes' experience. We had hoped to include telephone interviews with key officials in other government departments but it proved impossible to find an appropriate list of contacts. However we located a useful range of other evaluation materials covering community engagement and its impact on all key policy themes.

Outputs

At present a single output in the form of this report is proposed.

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