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# **View of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal**

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# **View of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal**

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## **LSE Housing/Social Exclusion Unit Think Tanks held at the National Tenants Resource Centre, Trafford Hall**

June 2000

**Liz Richardson**

## **CASE/ESRC Cities Programme/Social Exclusion Unit Seminar held at the London School of Economics**

June 2000

**John Hills**

In this report, we present feedback from 3 different events on the Social Exclusion Unit's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. It covers the views of residents, practitioners and academics, giving a unique combination of perspectives on how we can best help disadvantaged areas.

## **Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion**

The ESRC Research Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) was established in October 1997 with funding from the Economic and Social Research Council. It is located within the Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines (STICERD) at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and benefits from support from STICERD. It is directed by Howard Glennerster, John Hills, Kathleen Kiernan, Julian Le Grand, Anne Power and Carol Propper.

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# **Think Tanks on the draft National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal LSE Housing**

## **Background**

The Social Exclusion Unit asked LSE Housing to find out what people in low income neighbourhoods thought about the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. We organised two Think Tank events in June 2000 – one primarily for active residents, the other aimed at front line workers. These were closed events by invitation. We invited people we knew were doing positive and practical work to tackle problems in difficult areas and who would therefore have useful experience to contribute to an action plan based on the National Strategy. Many more people wanted to come and have their say than we could accommodate. We selected around 40 participants for each event from a mix of areas, from different services and types of project, aiming to mix ethnicity, age and gender.

The aim of the events was to get peoples' feedback on how the Strategy would work on the ground. We did this by having a mix of presentations from live case study projects, followed by small group discussions facilitated by LSE staff. The discussions were free flowing but focused around a common set of questions. We referred people back to the Strategy wherever possible, but also let participants talk about their own experiences and raise general points and issues of relevance to neighbourhood renewal.

Both events were structured around the four themes – decent public services; reviving communities; economic development; and local leadership and joining it up in the ground. Under reviving communities, we focused on community involvement and community development. Under joining it up, we focused on neighbourhood management.

In this report, we include the key points raised in the presentations and discussion groups.

## **Overall summary**

- 1) Overall, the feedback strongly supported the general thrust and specific ideas of the Strategy. There seemed to be a consensus on what the priority problems were and what needed to be done, and this tallied with the Strategy.
- 2) This was true *even where* participants were not clear that they were supporting the proposals, or what the proposals were. There was confusion about the status of the Strategy document, how it had come about, the timetable for implementation, and the opportunities for consultation after the final Strategy has been launched.

- 3) The first event highlighted the large amount of energy and confidence generated by the wide variety of community projects represented. There were many inspiring positive examples. On the whole, the group was looking forward to the future to build on their achievements.
- 4) The second event highlighted some serious worries over underlying structural problems, such as the economic backdrop, which affect the potential of the Strategy proposals to make an impact on conditions.
- 5) There was a strong neighbourhood focus in both events. The clear message was that action should be taken at the level at which problems affected people, as close to the ground as possible.
- 6) Some participants were concerned about whether the Strategy tied in with other relevant policies and proposals e.g. Housing Green Paper, Best Value, Urban Task Force, the 'Moser' report on basic skills. They were not clear where their energies should go or if they could implement different strategies through the same types of actions. People are taking seriously the agenda to democratise local government, and want to do this alongside their neighbourhood renewal work, but are struggling to articulate the links between the two agendas and link them up in practice.
- 7) There were many detailed suggestions for how to interpret and apply the broad proposals already made. Most of the concerns were about implementation. How sensitively and honestly will the proposals be applied in real life situations? And how much say will ordinary people have?
- 8) Many continued to be wary of the Government's intentions and commitment, especially to 'genuine' community involvement. Their experiences of area renewal make them wary of actual delivery. There was an underlying concern with the difficulties of shifting existing power balances in favour of communities.
- 9) The workers at the second event were more cynical about the possibilities for change, more critical about local experiences, and more problem focused than the residents at our first event. We do not know how typical this is of experience around the country, but it reflects feedback from other Trafford Hall programmes.

## **PUBLIC SERVICES**

### ***Summary of presentations***

#### *Kings Norton New Deal for Communities — Health Action Group.*

- The Health Action Group for the Kings Norton New Deal for Communities is a multi-agency working group that is guiding the work that the New Deal scheme is doing. Kings Norton is made up of three estates on the edge of Birmingham.
- Kings Norton suffers from serious health problems such as above average mortality. However, health issues were not priority in consultation. They are not as open to community consensus as other issues because people experience them more as individuals. Also the structure of health provision is complex — possibly more difficult to understand than other services.
- The action group is getting some 'quick hits' to tackle immediate problems. The first quick hit is the employment of a community health advocate to champion health issues and skill up local people with the aim of employing them as health workers. They are also developing self help groups. The ultimate aim is that the Advocate will establish and co-ordinate links between agencies, and ensure resident involvement in service delivery and evaluation of health services.
- Alongside this work, the New Deal for Communities partnership is supplementing existing provision with a community health team made up of a health visitor, school nurse and behavioural support worker. This is the second quick hit. The longer term vision is to set up a healthy living centre in the area.
- Community involvement — around 60 local people attend action group meetings, many come as a result of individual gripes. There are community representatives on each of 4 issue based action groups — health, housing, childcare, and youth. They have found it difficult to get residents to take on the more active and committed roles — there is a core group of 9 community reps that are working on all the action groups. The aim of involvement is to "avoid delivering more of the same" and fit services to needs.

#### *Birmingham Parent Partnership Project*

- The Project is based in Sparkbrook. It was initiated around 10 years ago by a school liaison officer to help improve educational attainment. The project is funded via a mix of SRB, ESF, TEC, LEA and other money. It has no long term funding at present.
- The Project supports children's learning in schools by training up parents and carers, particularly mums and big sisters, in new and additional skills, such as basic skills, I.T., and childcare. The spin off benefits are adults into training and paid jobs for local people to recruit people into training. The majority of the workers are from ethnic minority backgrounds, all are women and half are local parents.

- Recruitment of parents and carers is via schools — in the playground when parents come to pick up and drop children off, open days in the schools for parents and families. The training takes place in schools.
- The Project's outputs include 2,000 women through training, 50 women into jobs, 7,000 children and 1,000 parents have taken the 'Lifesavers' first aid course. The Project has developed a breakthrough community degree in childhood studies that is accredited by University of the West of England, but teaching happens locally in schools.
- Their work has contributed to community capacity building e.g. parent governors and school community associations.

#### *London Borough of Tower Hamlets Housing Department*

- The local authority's previous responses to anti-social behaviour and crime problems were reactive and slow, with a lack of visible enforcement and tenant access to staff. The local authority's procedures required a complaint by a resident before action was triggered; the subsequent investigations were often stalemated by lack of evidence.
- One estate in particular was suffering extremely high levels of gang violence. To change this, the housing department initially tried pilot neighbourhood patrols on this one estate — these only worked after they did them in partnership with the police. This partnership took some years to develop.
- They now have 11 injunctions on 1 estate against perpetrators and are taking out anti-social behaviour orders. These visible wins have boosted residents' confidence that the local authority can create change. They are trying to develop partnerships with other local authority departments e.g. youth services.
- This is a short term response to tackle immediate problems using a punitive approach. The borough diverted resources to do this. They hope to continue this work with a bid for Home Office neighbourhood wardens funding.
- Alongside this crisis response, the borough is trying to develop a community development approach to provide a longer term preventative strategy. The aim is to get frontline estate workers to be the community development and community rebuilding workers.
- The Borough has closed some local offices as part of this change. It is trying to develop a more visible on-the-spot estate presence in other ways.
- The borough has set up a repair call centre to free up estate officers' time to do this new community building work. The call centre has not been popular initially with tenants or staff. Staff are worried about having to work in a different way with residents as equals rather than just customers. A training programme is already underway to help staff develop these new skills.

#### *Kirklees Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations*

- Tenants' and residents' groups in Kirklees formed the Federation in 1987. It has employed its own workers since 1989. Its membership has increased from 20 to 120 tenants' and residents' groups.



- The workers have clear lines of accountability to the Federation rather than the local authority, even though the Federation is funded by the HRA and general Fund.
- The Federation initiated a consultation on repairs in 1990. 80% of tenants said they received a poor repair service. Tenants wanted small but important changes to improve the service — such as having an appointments system, getting receipts for reporting a repair, estate caretakers doing minor jobs, and better communication about the progress of specific repairs. They gave their recommendations to the local authority, set up a working group to implement these changes, and invited building services to join the group. They have successfully achieved these improvements to the service, as well as a change of culture. Winning these changes was a significant victory for residents and the Federation.
- A more active role for residents has been key to achieving the improvements for residents as consumers e.g. tenant reps helping chose contractors and talking to repair staff.
- Honesty has been the best policy — the local authority has found that if they are straight with tenants then they are more likely to win their support and jointly develop solutions. The local authority has been responsive to the work initiated by the Fed and has been willing to change.
- The Federation also helps local groups develop estate manifestos for each area — these are action plans help the Housing dept. prioritise investment and services.

### ***Summary of Discussion Points***

- We need to change the culture of services and build up human understanding and relationships between service providers and residents. Joint work is best in an atmosphere of constructive criticism rather than blame. This is easier if there are structures where residents and service providers can meet and exchange ideas.
- Frontline staff are both the cause and potential solution of local service delivery problems e.g. staff attitude to residents, ability to think laterally and problem solve. Staff need capacity building as much as residents.
- Services should have more community accountability and monitoring e.g. by getting service providers to report to a local community forum.
- Neighbourhood management is hopefully a way of sorting out individual poorly performing public services as well as joining them up.
- Community accountability and consultation also means tailoring services to local need and conditions. Tailoring to local conditions improves service performance e.g. furnished lets to market difficult to let properties. Effective localised responses are best with budget flexibility across services.

- Locally based officers (whether residents or not) build up better relationships and local knowledge. There would have to be a change in service providers' recruitment policies to do this, accrediting prior experience as equivalent to qualifications.
- Targets are useful as an idea, and we could use the Best Value framework to develop some of this work. But what penalties and enforcement mechanism can we use that hit hard enough but do not penalise residents for service failures? How do we get good quality information on how services are meeting targets?
- The willingness of local authorities and services to be responsive and change is key — how can workers, residents or central government either engender this or make them do it? Again, can Best Value be used? Is there enough in the Strategy on this issue? Some suggested a direct line of communication between communities and central government to be able to challenge bad practice in local government where local people are finding it difficult to get a response from the local authority. This channel would be more than an Ombudsman service.
- Management is easier if it is devolved into smaller chunks. Control over areas is more effective where there is a local revenue budget — but good information on the revenue going into neighbourhoods is VERY difficult to get. Both Hull and Kings Norton have had problems getting figures — Kings Norton have asked the DETR to clarify. A popular model was an estate base, with devolved budgets across services, managed by a partnership of agencies and the community, although few estates had this in practice.
- Additional services are needed to plug gaps e.g. childcare, family support and money advice. Small pots allocated by local forums can support this additional provision.
- More on-the-spot estate management has a double benefit — improving estate conditions and creating jobs, particularly ones that local people can do e.g. refuse collection, caretaking, landscaping and security. At the same time, centralised services e.g. call centres for repairs can free up staff but with varying success. Local people can perform the jobs that also help improve local conditions e.g. neighbourhood wardens and youth workers. This also helps increase local job opportunities.
- Where there is no effective demand in neighbourhoods for private provision of goods and services, businesses in these areas should refocus outwards e.g. inner-city areas providing dry cleaning for city workers.

- In the need for better financial access, credit unions can plug small gaps. Banks should have ethical customer policies and commit to areas. Post offices could provide a wide range of services.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### *Summary of presentations*

#### *Broadwater Farm Estate, London*

- The Chair of the residents group got involved when he was personally affected by burglary. He brought people together using religion as a tool, and played a liaison role between the community and the police.
- Community participation and development has resulted in the setting up and ongoing management of the health centre, community café, community enterprises and many small groups.
- They have pioneered neighbourhood management — this came out of community involvement.
- However, since the estate has improved, the police have started to withdraw their extra input which threatens the sustainability of recovery.

#### *Greatwood and Horseclose Estate, Skipton*

- The Chair of the residents group got involved as a result of a repair, and her concern over lack of facilities and opportunities for involvement for young people. The group now has a successful youth involvement strategy — they start training them as early as 11 years old to make decisions and take responsibility e.g. by answering the phone at the community centre.
- The group has tried different community involvement strategies. Some have been flops, e.g. the tenant compact evening, whereas the repairs night was flooded. They get people involved gradually when they make contact with the community centre's services like the advice service. Residents' first instinct in getting involved is to be of practical use. The group starts people off helping in the community centre before asking them onto committees.
- The community group works because they recognise the strengths of the team — the Chair is the mouthpiece, but the contribution of the quieter administrator is equally valued.
- Community action started with £7.50, 5 young people and a damp flat. They now have a thriving community centre, an estate agreement, estate office and manager and local budget.

#### *1066 Housing Association, Hastings*

- The Association is a housing stock transfer. The new landlord held an open day for residents and got 25 good solid ideas to take forward. They now have several community flats, a year old credit union, and employ residents as caretakers and as survey researchers. Some of the caretaking staff started with only a couple of

hours work a week — this has developed into full time employment for some. Two thirds of the grounds maintenance team are residents. These projects evolved out of continuous dialogue with residents.

- The landlord enlisted wide support for the new initiatives by writing to the statutory authority, voluntary agencies and community groups, asking if their governing bodies were in favour of new project ideas.
- The next step for this community development work is resident service organisations. They are starting with grounds maintenance. The triple aims are to develop community empowerment, improve services and create more intermediate labour market opportunities.

#### *Island Neighbourhood Project, London*

- This community development support project was initiated by the Methodist church 20 years ago. The church was a useful springboard — it used its existing organisational base and infrastructure to raise funds and create the new organisation.
- It started with one worker operating from home and now has an annual income of nearly £120,000. They started by knocking on doors, asking people what they needed. They targeted women and children, and developed small groups and services like mother and toddler groups, youth activities and trips out.
- They use a community action approach — starting small with what residents are keen to do, and developing community leadership of projects. There are currently several successful projects e.g. elders club run by less frail volunteers, a women's group that does a drop in and activities like sewing. The women's group employs 3 local people e.g. crèche worker and sewing tutor. They hold multi-cultural celebration events e.g. Eid. Some groups have failed because they were developed as services for residents rather than community led and run groups.
- The project finds it frustrating to work against a backdrop of area problems. They feel strongly that neighbourhood management would help and be a strategic support for the Project Co-ordinator.

#### *Huyton Community Partnership, Merseyside*

- Huyton Community Partnership is a voluntary community organisation which represents 10 neighbourhoods within the Huyton area, which has a total population of 39,000. It started as a loose network of community groups. It is now the link organisation between services and the community, with representatives from each of 10 neighbourhoods. It has 21 staff and manages a budget of £3.5million. It is responsible for allocating a community development fund from SRB money of £250,000.
- The Partnership runs several projects. They include a narrow boat used to teach people with learning disabilities, a community research team, and training local people to be qualified trainers of other residents. The projects are initiated by

community need. The drug awareness project was started following a survey of parents, young people, residents and professionals.

- The Partnership also has a team that works with the community to develop projects for European funding, eg a health project. A Sure Start project has been developed and delivered.
- The Partnership is developing its work in two ways. It is a partner in a successful New Deal for Communities bid to look at bottom up commissioning of mainstream services. It also wants to develop a network of neighbourhood based resource/economic development satellite centres, linked to a central resource centre which has been chosen as one of the first fast-track centres for the University of Industry Learning Direct. These centres will develop community participation, job advice and training and employer links.

### ***Summary of Discussion Points***

- Housing supply and demand are powerful forces in reviving and/or threatening communities. Housing markets are very localised and fragmented and need very localised responses e.g. marketing social housing in areas of low demand/oversupply.
- Early intervention to prevent serious neighbourhood decline is key — what sorts of early warning systems could help target this work, e.g. communities at risk indicators?
- There is support for the idea of relaxing allocations in social housing, e.g. Balsall Heath are piloting local lettings. There was also strong support for instituting more controls over private landlords e.g. via housing benefit linked to standards. Some areas, for example in Royds in Bradford, are successfully creating mixed communities via mixed tenure.
- The Housing Green paper fills in some of the 'housing' gaps in the Strategy and should be read alongside the Strategy. People felt the links between the Strategy and other relevant legislation and policies, such as Best value, could be made clearer.
- Participants felt that stigma is also a key threat and that the Strategy does not cover this in enough detail. Several neighbourhoods are prioritising marketing and promotion as part of their work e.g. South Kilburn and Skipton.
- Youth work should be central to strategies to tackle anti social behaviour e.g. arts projects, youth bus shelters. The youth workers in particular wanted to see a national strategy for young people.

- Participants felt that drug dealing and substance misuse are live threats in their neighbourhoods and that the Strategy should say more about the range of potential effective local responses to this.
- There is a strong link between work to increase community participation and the work to improve public services, particularly through resident input into local expenditure decisions and service accountability.
- It emerged that there are at least three distinct models for neighbourhood wardens: community care/youth work; crime/police linked; supercaretaker/housing linked. People refer to all three different types of warden, and feel that only one model is 'right'. People can tailor the role of the warden to local need.
- Community representatives and leaders at the events were activated by personal triggers — something that affected them directly. Many participants have generated new community involvement through fun events and celebrations e.g. international day with food from different cultures.
- Recognition and acknowledgement of residents' contribution are the best ways to sustain community involvement, for example, letters of thanks, celebration events, certificates and accreditation. Residents did not raise the issue of payment for their own contributions. Paid staff were more likely to feel that it was unfair that residents put in their time for free.
- Mentoring and sharing experience are good ways to build community capacity. Good community development workers — lively passionate people with a can-do and empowering approach — can be very effective in stimulating and supporting community initiative. Basic resources for community development, such as make shift premises, a phone and computer, are also vital.
- Community action can be unleashed through very small investments like a few hundred pounds. Many of the participants had small community chests in their neighbourhoods, e.g. Hounslow. Some were controlled and allocated by the community as well e.g. Birmingham. There should be more of these 'soft' flexible funding sources.
- Community capacity to do more is often blocked by red tape and bureaucracy, particularly from local authorities. People were blocked when access to funding for community projects was controlled by the local authority. Participants wanted access to funding and advice through channels that are outside of the local authority, either direct from central government, or from an independent organisation. In addition, people want better information about the huge variety of different funding sources, e.g. via a National Funding Information System.

- Small projects have to satisfy a disproportionate set of demands to be accountable. These demands come from above and below i.e. funders and users. Could projects do a trade off, i.e. if they can show good accountability to users/residents then they can do less in terms of other forms of accountability?

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### ***Summary of presentations***

#### *O-Regen, London*

- O-Regen is the community development trust that is taking over many social and community functions from the Waltham Forest HAT. It provides a mix of different types of training for residents, such capacity building for groups like committee skills, training for individuals like administration, and vocational training like construction skills. This training feeds into the HATs local labour policy — 40% of the HAT staff are local people.
- The CDO for O-Regen lives and works on the same estate — many of predicted problems of having staff from the same area have not arisen or have been possible to deal with. She used to be a full time carer at home and got involved in the redevelopment activity which lead to her getting this post.

#### *Bootstrap Enterprises, London*

- Bootstrap Enterprises is a Hackney based voluntary organisation which provides flexible pathways back to employment. Pre-vocational training is one of their services e.g. a 10 week women returners to work course.
- One person who went on this course was initially attracted because there were no exams, there was childcare, provision for travel expenses, and she could get out of the house and meet other women. When she got on the course she liked the confidence building work, the way the trainers developed her hidden strengths, and the non-judgemental attitude of the staff. The training is attractive to people who are out of the job market and not initially looking for work.
- Following this, she went onto other training with a bigger year long commitment and assessment for accreditation. She went on to complete postgraduate study, and now works as an advice worker for LB Enfield. She used the skills from her first Bootstrap course throughout her studies e.g. stress management. Bootstrap has continued to give her support advice and encouragement even after she left them which has helped her continue her path back through higher education and back to work.

#### *East Leeds Family Learning Centre*

- An old shopping centre in Seacroft was due to be demolished, and Tesco planned to build a new store on the site. The Family Learning Centre saw the opportunity to use this development to enhance local employment and training.

- The Centre has persuaded Tesco to give trainees a job guarantee offer before they start training. At the Centre there is a partnership between a number of Further Education Colleges and the City Council's Training Department. As a result training and educational programmes can be developed and delivered which ensure that the person gets the skills they need for the job, and the trainee has an added incentive to learn. One of the most significant developments is the numbers now participating in basic skills training. This skills development work is happening before the store is open.
- The project feels that it is very positive to get people into the retail sector — it is a fast growing sector with lots of opportunities for mobility.
- The scheme works for those who want to get into employment because of the strong employer link, and re-integration of training with employment. Residents' learning can continue after they are back in work because of their link to the college which is a Lifelong Learning Centre.
- Tesco, the Centre, schools and other employers have formed the Seacroft Partnership as a result of this joint work. A number of other employers now want to develop similar job guarantee programmes.
- Over 2,000 local people attend courses at the Centre each week, of which 1,000 are involved in IT training.

#### *Project North East, Newcastle*

- PNE is an enterprise agency set up by two social entrepreneurs in 1980. It now has 90 employees. It promotes business start up and development e.g. via managed workspace, publications for business intermediaries, training and soft loan funds.
- Since its launch, PNE has lent over £1.7m for business startup or expansion, directly helped over 1,600 people to start up new businesses, and another 1,600 businesses to grow.
- They succeed by helping people organise small activities to begin with, by building confidence and minimising risks of going into business for example with easy in and out terms on workspace, or loan funds. They help people look outwards to develop markets e.g. residents doing party clean ups, or selling fresh herbs to restaurants.
- They try and only support people through processes once- not give continual aid.
- PNE has found that people are more easily inspired by role models for entrepreneurs that they can relate to, rather than Richard Branson.

#### *Shout It Out Learning Project, Plymouth*

- The Project promotes awareness of basic skills issues through a play that was written by an adult learner, with help from an adult basic skills tutor, in a community flat in Plymouth. The author of the play performs her work, alongside other residents from her estate.
- Shout It Out highlights the embarrassment and difficulties faced by adult non-readers, particularly in relation to helping in their children's learning. It tells the



story of how one person was able to get help and start to overcome her literacy problems.

- The author was initially persuaded back into learning by an approachable community outreach worker who was recruiting adult learners in the school playground.
- The group performs the play in community venues. Schools are a key venue — they can reach parents easily this way, and always get a response from adult with problems with basic skills. They refer people onto local basic skills providers.
- The Project has now received support from the Basic Skills Agency to expand their work in other areas of the country.

### ***Summary of Discussion Points***

- Business support and support for self employment are very useful, e.g. via business forums, mentors, grants and bridging finance. As with community involvement, mentoring was a popular idea, some areas already use this successfully such as Huyton.
- Many participants are developing and /or running community businesses that deliver local services, improve neighbourhoods and create local jobs. However, some e.g. Balsall Heath have found it difficult to be financially self sufficient, and jobs can be low paid and insecure.
- Many participants are making IT and IT training a priority e.g. Royds gets donated computers from Yorkshire Water for the community sector, and they get sponsorship for Internet access.
- People were very concerned about how to minimise the risks of getting into work and off benefit, and that the Strategy did not go far enough e.g. with benefit tapers. Also the problem of high housing costs especially in the South East — participants were keen to see a link between income from work and housing costs e.g. rent free weeks or clearing arrears. People were still worried that low paid work would not compensate for benefit loss.
- A flexible range of adult skills courses are being developed in most neighbourhoods — the most successful cater for both those people keen to get into work and those who initially want less directed learning. Some residents who get back into work still need support, mentoring and/or ongoing training.
- Employment services work well where there is friendly personal contact with job seekers, and where there are strong employer links. It can be difficult to tailor employment training to local economic demand in advance without good information about business trends and likely local investment. Local authorities can help by using their leverage to impose conditions on businesses, and pass on

information to employment workers. Employers are more interested in finding workers who can perform than in receiving subsidies.

- Residents' lack of formal qualifications and employers' reluctance to credit prior experience are still big issues for getting residents into work, particularly into public sector jobs.
- Local authorities and regeneration agencies should 'walk the talk' and prioritise local employment within their own organisations. Local employment in public services is key to both economic development and improving public services.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT**

### ***Summary of presentations***

#### *The Mount Estate, Somerset*

- This is a small estate of 375 homes, with no special funding. Residents worked with PEP, a community training and consultancy organisation, to look at way to increase resident involvement and control over services in the area. They have developed an inter-agency forum that meets every 6 weeks. All the service providers for the neighbourhood are represented, as is the community association. The forum raises issues with particular services, as well as tackling problems that cut across services such as water pollution. Residents have contact details and backup numbers for the service providers.
- The other key change on the estate is the establishment of a new combined community warden and youth worker post. The worker runs a youth club, supports vulnerable and elderly tenants, helps to deal with neighbour disputes, signposts people to relevant agencies and generally keeps an eye on the estate. A local resident has got this job and he also liaises with the Community Association.
- The estate is now quieter, more people are showing pride in the area and some young people have been seen monitoring each other's behaviour. Involvement with the Community Association has improved. This initial success has led to the extension of the scheme to the whole ward – another 2,000 households.
- The Council have recently appointed a Community Development Worker for the area. He is an important link between the community and officers. His work is devoted to implementing community improvements.
- Western Challenge, the local housing association, have tried to replicate this scheme on another estate in the region, but are finding it difficult at the moment to generate resident interest. This is partly because of a catch 22 problem that residents do not see any future for themselves on the estate. They have established an action group, mostly agency-led, and some small resident groups and hope to win a breakthrough.

### *Royds Community Association, Bradford*

- This area has well established community leadership. The Community Association is the accountable body for the area's SRB scheme covering 4 estates. There are 12 elected Resident Directors on the SRB partnership Board, amongst other agencies and the local authority.
- The CA is now looking at the forward strategy for the area's renewal. They have already developed new ways of working via things like successful community businesses which provide services for the area. They already have social action teams which include youth services, health providers, the police, drugs misuse workers, play workers and home helps. The teams provide a forum for residents and agencies to decide what service the area needs and how they should happen. They want to develop this success via neighbourhood management. They are also looking at stock transfer as a way to protect the improvements and create a sustainable base for future work.
- They are ambitious to expand but cannot do so without agreement from the other proposed transfer estates.

### *Poplar HARCA, London*

- The HARCA is a local housing company set up via housing stock transfer. It had the specific aim of testing out the neighbourhood management model from its inception.
- Each neighbourhood is managed by a Community Area Director. The Director is a senior person in the organisation with three key roles — economic development, community regeneration and area management. They survey the area, consult widely and draw up an action plan for the neighbourhood that is jointly agreed across agencies and the community. Each area has a team of youth workers, community development and employment workers.
- The HARCA also aims to have a resource centre in each neighbourhood that will be the focus for economic development. Some work already underway in one neighbourhood's centre includes employment training, an internet café, other training courses e.g. dance and drama and first aid, and a health project that is talking to the primary care group about issues like Bangladeshi women not approaching male doctors.
- The HARCA model delivers both resident control over services and local employment.
- However, the HARCA would like to see the local authority play a stronger lead role in establishing a shared vision for the Borough.

### **Summary of Discussion Points**

**NOTE.** The discussion on neighbourhood management was brief, and conducted in the plenary session with presentations and a short question and answer session to the presenters in both events.

- The discussion had a strong neighbourhood focus. The neighbourhood was seen as the place where people could most effect change and as the start point for renewal.
- Neighbourhood management came up under all the other themes as a positive solution. People are keen to see it start happening in their areas. The concept seemed to be easily understood and is popular.
- People were unsure about how the neighbourhood manager would be accountable back to the community. But, they felt that this person would be on side to sort out problems, pull services together, challenge bureaucracy and bad practice, especially in local government. The presumption people have is that the manager will have sufficient power to clarify responsibilities of different agencies and make them perform. But this authority assumes senior backing from the local authority and other bodies.
- Some proposed a stronger model for developing neighbourhood management, i.e. Using a RTM model so communities can trigger it. Other suggested neighbourhood management pilots starting with shadow partnership boards at local level.
- Some communities are piloting a smaller scale version with no special funding and without a senior manager, such as the Mount. Instead their tools to implement neighbourhood management are interagency structures/forums and neighbourhood level enforcement through a community warden. However, they are reliant on local authority funding which tends to be short term. This increases the insecurity of their initiative. There is a tension between the funding of innovation in one neighbourhood and helping other areas.
- We did not discuss the concept of LSPs in any depth. Some compared these to the new Lifelong Learning Partnerships and hoped they could be linked — but did not want LSPs to replicate some of the problems with LLPs i.e. an extra layer of bureaucracy channelling resources via the same old failing institutions. Some wanted to see more emphasis on community planning in local authority strategic working.
- While most supported the idea of strategic working, most participants also wanted to see alternative access routes for communities into renewal initiatives, outside of district or regional level structures. Nearly all wanted to see direct channels for communities to access funding and backup to tackle problems from central government or others, and for these channels to deliberately bypass the local authority or other area level structures.

## **Seminar on the draft Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal**

This report summarises key points made by speakers and in discussion at a joint seminar held at LSE on 30 June 2000 to discuss the Social Exclusion Unit's draft *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*. The seminar involved members of CASE, the ESRC Cities Programme, other academics working on the area and members of the SEU.

Those presenting papers were:

Reviving local economies	Professor Brian Robson (Manchester University and ESRC Cities Programme) Paul Gregg (Bristol University and Centre for Economic Performance, LSE)
Reviving Communities	Professor Anne Power (Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, LSE) Ben Jupp (DEMOS) Professor Robina Goodlad (Glasgow University and ESRC Cities Programme)
Decent services	Ruth Lupton (CASE, LSE) Sue Regan (Institute for Public Policy Research) Liza Catan (Trust for the Study of Adolescence and ESRC Youth, Citizenship and Social Change Programme)
Leadership and joint working	Professor Michael Parkinson (Liverpool John Moores University and ESRC Cities Programme) Professor Marilyn Taylor (Brighton University)
Other participants included	Professor John Hills (CASE, LSE; Chair) Liz Richardson (CASE, LSE) Moira Wallace (Director, SEU) Louise Dominian (SEU) Ravi Gurumurthy (SEU) Vanessa Scarborough (SEU) Liz Walton (SEU)

## Reviving local economies

### **Brian Robson**

- The draft SEU document is perhaps more of a shopping list than a strategy. It would be helpful to have more of a steer on priorities.
- Emphasis could be re-balanced to increase the weight on linkage *outside* poor neighbourhoods. Jobs are a wider issue than neighbourhood level. At regional level we know what works: support for business and enterprise and up-skilling. It is more challenging to think how to link the unemployed to jobs in the broader area. There were dangers from too much focus on creating jobs within neighbourhoods. More should be done on *links*: both transport and forums which involved higher/further education as well as employers.
- The spatial architecture of regional governance matters. Different levels of policy intervention had to be linked. Here the local Strategic Partnerships had a key role if they operated at a scale *above* neighbourhoods.
- To get 'bottom up' strategies to work residents needed 'pre-training' and confidence building, both for jobs and for participation in local decision-making. This was most effectively delivered within communities. It was needed both for individuals and for groups.

### **Paul Gregg**

- The smaller the area focussed on, the harder to stop 'leakage' into others.
- We were dealing with very powerful residential sorting mechanisms acting through house prices and rents and through allocation of social housing. These were particularly strong in concentrating deprivation in a tail of 5-10% of neighbourhoods. They had strengthened with rising income inequality and restricted access to social housing.
- Concentrated deprivation both created a geographically focussed need for mainstream public services but also had additional area effects via weak job networks, crime, peer group effects on education, and health and stress. The evidence for this was hard to disentangle from the composition of neighbourhoods. US evidence showed area effects on well-being, health, crime and (probably) education, but not employment and welfare receipt in the short run.
- Implications from this were:
  - The importance of mixed communities and the priority of tackling sorting mechanisms, dissuading the successful from leaving. The draft strategy did not have enough on what drove residential sorting in the first place.
  - Making sure spending on mainstream services gets into deprived neighbourhoods and services are of equal quality.
  - Local communities had to be mobilised to allow them to voice priorities and generate community 'ownership'. Local Strategic Partnerships were too large a scale. Neighbourhood management was a useful idea.

## **Discussion**

- Some participants stressed the potential for more local employment from existing local public and private services, and pointed to the success of some private sector initiatives in achieving this via combined training and employment schemes. Others argued that local enterprises were a drop in the ocean.
- On the spot management of public services and neighbourhood management would help.
- There was more potential for the New Deal. Some local authorities had employed no New Dealers at all.
- Some voluntary sector advisers were giving the wrong messages to young people, not explaining potential receipt of Housing Benefit in work or the long-term benefits from building up an employment record.
- Where local labour is used, e.g. in regeneration schemes, this was often only for the lowest qualification jobs.
- There was a crucial issue around benefit flexibility for people moving in and out of work.
- The move on to the *second rung* of employment had been neglected in past employment policies.

## **Reviving Communities**

### **Anne Power**

- Community empowerment in relation to neighbourhood renewal means:
  - Getting things done
  - Making things work
  - Being heard
  - Being treated as normal
  - Creating/cohesion
- There is a sense of powerlessness because:
  - Normal laws don't apply
  - Normal standards don't apply
  - Normal systems don't work
  - Decisions get 'lost' elsewhere
- So:
  - Things don't change
  - People can't live normal lives
- Getting things done implies:
  - Seeing what's wrong **practically**
  - Having power to change – people with clout; budget; control; responsibility.
  - Having access to – information; resources (small); training; decisions; organisation (inside/outside).
- Targets for action are:
  - Order – behaviour
  - Order – environment

- Order – community integration
- Confronting racial problems and overcoming political fear.
- Neighbourhood “fight-back” is happening
  - Demolition & capital spending must be carefully costed
  - Policing, security, enforcement are priorities
  - Local v. wider scale – links need to be made
- This implies:
  - Heavy dependence on outside world
  - Need to protect local ‘nests’ from ‘elephants’
- Action
  - Additional police – funding is available to recruit 10 extra police for each neighbourhood
  - City Centre recovery – if residents hold on, inner neighbourhoods can recover too
  - Land v. abandonment – hidden subsidies to green field building should be diverted to brown field regeneration
  - Basic skills – Tesco, Bootstrap and other organisations are succeeding in accessing jobs
  - Small, dedicated budgets can help residents tackle local eyesores
  - Tenure mix v. lumps of council estates – Glasgow, Birmingham are transferring whole stock. It could provide community based development.
  - Environment – parks, open spaces, streets – can all be made safe and more attractive
  - Links/local structures – neighbourhood compacts can provide wardens and super-caretakers
  - Neighbourhood learning centres – libraries and other local centres e.g. schools offer under-used resources for education, skill building and local development.

### ***Ben Jupp***

- Don’t lose any of the key ideas from the strategy
- Top three good ideas:
  - Neighbourhood wardens (but call ‘managers’)
  - Endowment funds (but give a *charter* with a sense of democratic control)
  - Small grants and simpler applications forms
- There needs to be more clarity on the purpose of reviving communities. Aims should be to:
  - Revive community infrastructure
  - Increase sense of belonging/pride
  - Build social capital
- Three ideas for how to do this:
  - Public services reaching down. Accessible, *named* contact people are important

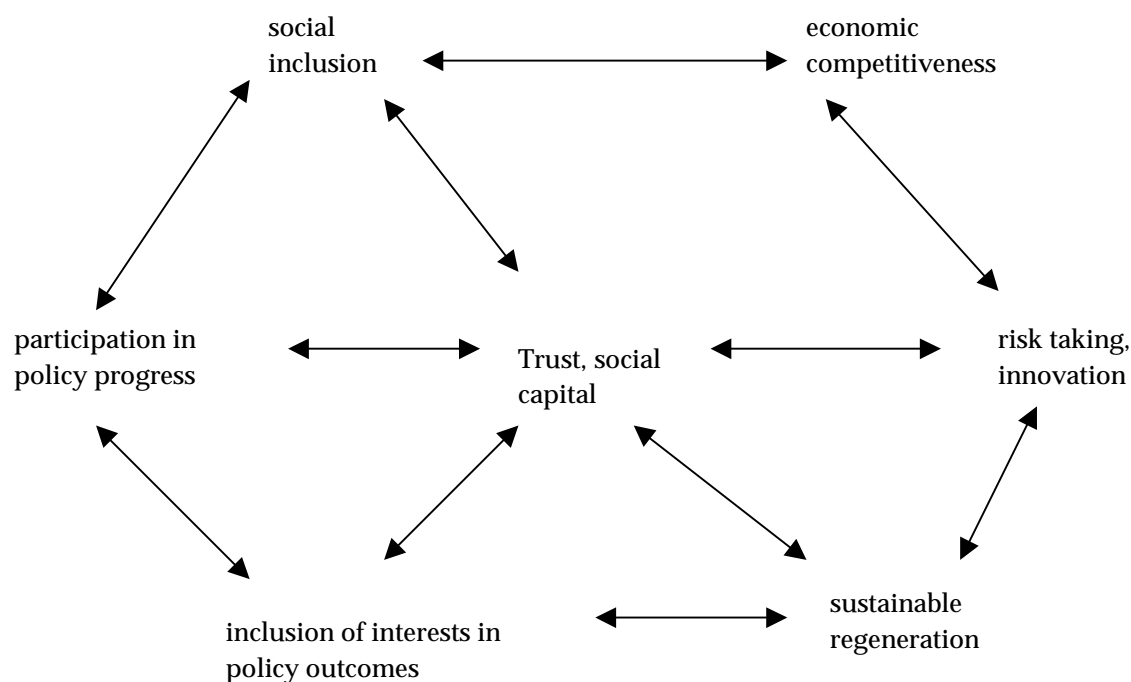


- Sense of pride means action on local spaces; mixed *use* of areas (not necessarily mixed tenure); and festivities
- Social capital does not develop through chance contacts, it needs activities for joint purposes.

### ***Robina Goodlad***

- The strategy is very impressive. Again, don't leave anything out. But with lots of good ideas there was a danger of losing the vision. Could be more on:
  - Capacity building on 'community' for officials
  - Fostering social cohesion through 'neighbourliness'
  - Connecting *socially* with the wider city
  - Advice and advocacy, especially for socially excluded
  - Stress on resources rather than structures right, but structures have key role in *providing* resources.
- Research on neighbourhoods and participation in Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland suggests three conclusions:
  - Need to enhance informal social links between individuals and neighbourhood to outside.
  - Participation runs along a spectrum: only a few take a heavy load, and they need strong support.
  - Even in bad areas *cohesion* is strong; it is trust which is low. This implies starting at the street/close level.
- With a 'non-joining' British culture you cannot get too excited about formal participation, but when it happens it has strong effects of the kind show in Figure 1.
- Trust is not so related to class or tenure. It can be built through initiatives like community housing associations and local neighbourhood services.
- *Physical* renewal seems to be missing from the SEU's strategy.

**Figure 1: A model of political participation**



### **Discussion**

- All three contributors stress the importance of public spaces and physical appearance. This is missing from the strategy.
- Local priorities are important and will *differ*. This should be allowed for.
- The SEU’s aim had been to get the structures right stressing that it was not *just* the physical environment, but as a result the physical issues may have been underplayed.
- It was not clear how Local Strategic Partnerships would involve the community – were they too high level? It also looked as if mainstream budgets for public services would not be devolved, but this was needed.
- You cannot prescribe *mechanisms* centrally, but can give a structure or a ‘toolkit’ for local action (as has been done for youth initiatives)

### **Decent Services**

#### **Ruth Lupton**

- We need to re-think *how* public services operate, as well as what they do. Public services impact more on the lives of poor people than others. Not being able to exercise control over individual and neighbourhood issues is one of the features of social exclusion. We need to:
  - Build the capacity of workers, not just residents
  - Improve mechanisms that build trust, with locally based staff with discretion, and staff who stay in an area.

- We may need different models of service delivery as we are starting from a different place in areas of limited resources, low confidence, mistrust, and low skills. This requires:
  - Familiar, local and *persistent* initiatives
  - Allowing initiatives to wax and wane, without this being ‘failure’
  - Frequent, accessible communication (not newsletters)
- We need to take account of the social context in which public services operate in poor areas, and address those organisational issues in how public services are funded and managed, with issues including:
  - Recruitment and training of staff
  - Staff support and development
  - Job restructuring
  - Funding levels given needs
  - Support from other organisations/inter-agency working
- Services cannot be responsive without *budget flexibility*. Will this be part of neighbourhood management?
- Area initiatives need time to develop. Regeneration should be about sustainable solutions, not short-term projects.

### ***Sue Regan***

- The approach had concentrated on characteristics of bad neighbourhoods. We need to look at those of good neighbourhoods to see what we are aiming at. The ambitious aim should be not to have areas of concentrated deprivation.
- Something seems to have been lost translating the Policy Action Team reports into the strategy. In fact it might not be correct to take a few ideas from each PAT to be the ‘strategy’ when their proposals – e.g. on anti-social behaviour – amount to a strategy themselves.
- Neighbourhoods working are not the same thing as communities working.
- What is said about Local Strategic Partnerships is vague on their roles and powers. If they have executive powers, where does that leave local authorities?
- Housing is not emphasised in the strategy, but must have a central role:
  - The bricks and mortar are an outcome in themselves
  - Good housing helps other outcomes like learning and health
  - Housing providers have a role in wider social and economic development
  - Housing policy has driven some of the key sorting mechanisms
- Social housing needs to be reinvented as a sector with a wide range of options for a wider range of households. Planning policy and local authority strategies should make mixed income and mixed tenure the norm for future developments across all housing.
- Transfer of council housing offers a big one-off opportunity to break-up monopolies and engage individuals in their community.
- As the Housing Green Paper says, we should move towards ‘lettings’ rather than ‘allocations’ of social housing.

- Social landlords could do more through developing mixed income communities, 'housing plus' activities, having a neighbourhood base, and their own (local) employment.

### ***Liza Catan***

- The emphasis on youth/young people as a policy concern was welcome. The PAT 12 report on young people is the first time the UK has had something like a youth policy. The PAT12 and Connexions reports are a real advance.
- There is a tension between the universal approach of these reports and the targeted approach of the neighbourhood strategy. Research shows there are good reasons not just to focus on the group of young people who are 'going nowhere', but also on the wider, but still vulnerable group who are 'getting by'. The National Strategy could end up with youth services only being seen as for deprived areas. It was surprising that there had not been more worry expressed in other parts of the seminar about the negative effects of targeting.
- The emphasis on *prevention* in the PAT12 report which had been carried through into the main report was welcome, as was the emphasis on young people as active citizens.
- Schools Plus (Key idea 17) was better than nothing, but academic educationalists were generally critical of the government's overall strategy. The ideas suggested were relatively peripheral, and would not eliminate the effects of structural pressures on failing schools in deprived areas.
- Support for families (Key idea 18) has welcome emphasis on more systematic support for parenting and families with teenagers, but it is not clear this will be adequately resourced. Schools may be the best place to locate such support given their universal character.
- Ideas for better co-ordination of policy-making and services for young people are welcome as long overdue. But the strategy is less specific about co-ordination at local level.

### ***Discussion***

- The SEU's intention was to improve services for all disadvantaged young people not just those in deprived areas, and to do so in a non-stigmatised way.
- *How* public services are provided matters – this raises professional development issues. Providers do get expensive training but this needs to incorporate more on community focus.
- We need to think what's in it for the providers themselves. 'Best Value' implies that community involvement is required, but what the sanctions? *Communities* should not be punished by withdrawing resources when *providers* fail.
- There are passionate feelings on either side of the debate on whether residents should be paid for their time and effort in community involvement. The important thing is, however, whether people see an *impact* of their involvement.

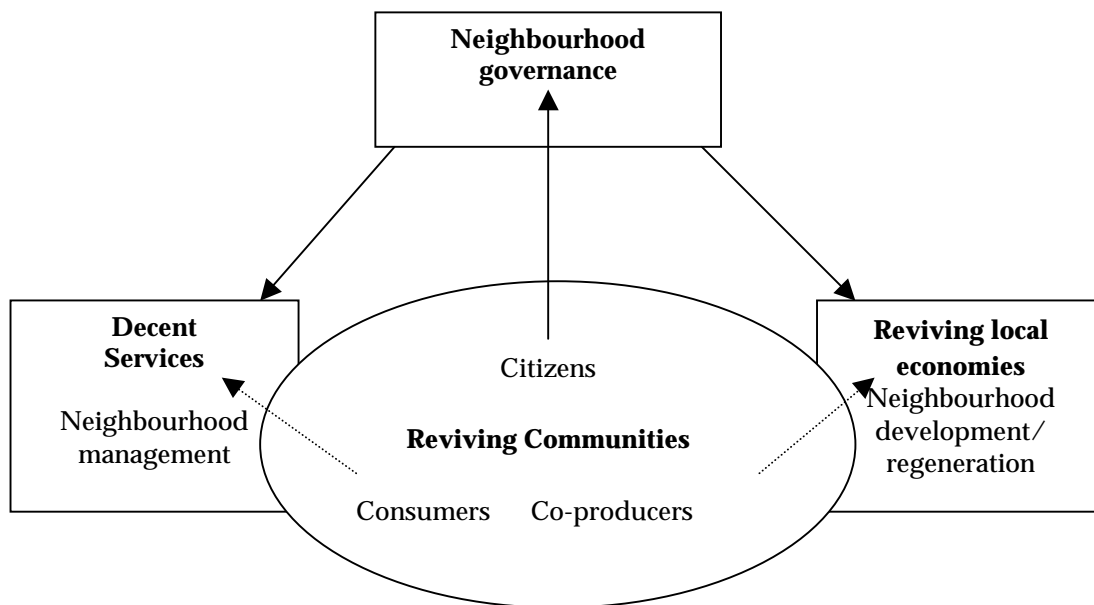
## Leadership and joint working

### **Michael Parkinson**

- The strategy is very good – perhaps too good. It is now time to get on and do something.
- **Coherence** The spatial architecture of government – Regional Development Agencies, Government Offices for the Regions; LSPs – matters. Cabinet Office co-ordination of zones, etc., may not have enough resources.
- **Clarity** The purpose, function and resources of LSPs need clarity. Neighbourhood-focussed but city-wide? What will they actually do?
- **Clout** LSPs are central to delivery, but to do this they will need the ability to revise mainstream budgets – this will be hard.
- **Connections** How does this connect to ideas from the Urban Task Force like Urban Regeneration Companies? If Best Value and community planning ideas work, will we need LSPs? How are these institutional agendas connected?
- **Commitment** Government as a whole has to be behind the agenda for it to work.
- **Cash** Resources are needed for local level *organisations* (e.g. of neighbourhood management) not just for mainstream service provision.
- **Clock** This will be a long haul, not a quick hit. Bit institutions have to change their behaviour.
- **Counting** We need to get the monitoring right.

### **Marilyn Taylor**

- **Local Strategic Partnerships.** The emphasis on these is welcome. Neighbourhood renewal won't work unless neighbourhood action is tied into a wider strategy.
- This makes **leadership** critical. There is a case for some kind of audit of LSPs. Who will do this? Will residents be involved?
- The Benefits and Employment Agencies have not been involved enough in previous partnerships.
- Resident, private and voluntary sector involvement in partnership is fine, but what will they do – it should not just be about ticking boxes and legitimacy.
- The strategy proposes that LSPs identify priority neighbourhoods. This should be a **rolling programme**, moving on from those which are self-starters by putting community development resources into others.
- **At neighbourhood level**, what gives local people ownership? Will LSPs still look like 'them'? Neighbourhood governance should bring together all three of the National Strategy's headings at Neighbourhood level, as shown in the following diagram:



Another issue is the need to provide incentives for middle managers and front line staff as well as senior managers to work in new ways. Being involved in local target-setting and ‘owning’ the local plan may be crucial.

- **Linking up.** ‘Putting someone in charge locally’ will need complex negotiations, and guidance on how to do so will be crucial. It will be important to adopt the principle of *subsidiarity*. The LSP should not do it all if there is someone locally who can. Similarly professionals shouldn’t do it if locals can. LSPs must play an important enabling role in linking residents with experience across neighbourhoods and in linking local enterprises to develop a kind of ‘flexible specialisation’. People have also talked of the need to move from the idea of residents being involved in the work of professionals to professionals being involved in the work of residents. There is a wider role for ‘experienced’ residents’, for instance as ‘barefoot workers’ spreading experience within and across neighbourhoods (as in the work of Trafford Hall). Even if ideas of resident audit of partnerships is not taken up, there is perhaps a case for ‘peer audit’, checking out whether leadership and joint working processes are operating effectively.

## **Discussion**

- Within ‘peer audit’ would residents be paid? – Yes, if others were paid for same activities.
- A problem in partnerships such as local drug and alcohol teams has been that large organisations always send different people to attend meetings, making their involvement in partnerships unreliable.
- There was a potential conflict within central government about different views of LSPs. Within some departments these were seen as simply about bureaucrats meeting each other, not as about the kind of Community control of resources which had been discussed at the seminar. This needed to be resolved.

- Rhetoric stressed 'community', but if the reality involved large lumps of money not much would change. Resources had to match the scale of what people can relate to and control. Locally people have a close view, but they don't have the reach.
- Research is beginning to feed back evidence of schools doing constructive things, and generating positive feed-back from parents in poor areas.

## **Summing Up**

- Different parts of government are using different language around communities and LSPs. Politicians want to have a visible impact on communities. The Treasury should consider how it ended up with the scale of the New Deal for Communities.
- Following on from the consultation some highlights of the strategy would be given in the Spending Review in July. The detail would come in the Autumn – as an action plan, not as an essay. This will include priorities, some with targets for numbers and dates. At the same time the SEU did not want to lose the richness of the individual PAT reports.
- The discussion had not raised some of the gaps in the strategy: how to tailor transport; drugs; and abandonment.
- Neighbourhood Renewal was a big issue – affecting 20-30% of the population.
- Neighbourhood renewal need a language and a disciplinary/professional focus, that went beyond housing renewal.
- There was no mystery about what had gone wrong – vulnerable people put all together with no support and the neighbourhood tips.
- The public sector had to think about its own style: who does it think it is there for?