Northern Ireland Assembly

PEOPLE AND PLACE
A STRATEGY FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

INTRODUCTION

Lifetime Opportunities is government's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland.[1] The strategy outlines what will be done by the Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office over a period of fourteen years in achieving its overall objectives of working towards:

- the elimination of poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland by 2020;
- halving child poverty by 2010 on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020.

The strategy is structured into four key life stages. Early Years (0-4), Children and Young People (5-16), Working Age Adults and Older Citizens.

The Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion strategy is described as retaining the key principle of New Targeting Social Need which is to direct resources within government programmes at those areas, groups and individuals in greatest objective need.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy forms part of the wider government strategy to address poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland.

PEOPLE AND PLACE – A STRATEGY FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

In June 2003, the Department for Social Development (DSD) launched "*People and Place – A strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*"[2]. The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy is intended to represent a move away from short-term, project-led interventions, which characterised programmes such as *Making Belfast Work*, towards a long-term programme based approach to tackle deprivation and close the quality of life gap. Neighbourhood Renewal has 4 strategic Objectives:

> **Community Renewal** – *to develop confident communities that are able and committed to improving the quality of life in their areas*

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[1] OFMDFM *Lifetime Opportunities - Government's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland* November 2006 http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/index/equality/central-anti-poverty-unit.htm (accessed May 2007)

[2] DSDNI People and Place – *A Strategy for Urban Renewal* June 2003 http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/neighbourhood_renewal.htm (accessed May 2007)

Economic Renewal – *to develop economic activity in the most deprived neighbourhoods and connect them to the wider urban economy*

Social Renewal – *to improve social conditions for the people who live in the most deprived neighbourhoods through better co-ordinated public services and the creation of safer environments*

Physical Renewal – *to help create attractive, safe, sustainable environments in the most deprived neighbourhoods*

The focus of the strategy is on Urban Neighbourhood Renewal Areas which are being targeted because they are within the top 10% of deprived neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland based on the '*New Noble Multiple Deprivation Measure'*. Following consultation, a total of 36 areas have now been targeted for action. Geographically the areas are described by DSD as being split:

- 15 in Belfast,
- 6 in Londonderry and
- 15 in other towns and cities across Northern Ireland.

As *'Neighbourhood Renewal'* is based upon a community planning approach focused on improved public services, a key element of the Strategy is the establishment of Neighbourhood Partnerships in each Neighbourhood Renewal Area. Neighbourhood partnerships are the vehicle for local planning and implementation of the strategy, but are not normally expected to handle money or commit public resources. Instead their focus is on identifying local priorities and working to influence and contribute to the determining of Government spending priorities for their neighbourhoods. They are expected to act as a vehicle for local planning and implementation. To assist Partnerships, the DSD may provide technical assistance funding. This will allow for the employment of staff and/or consultants and where necessary, the channelling of financial resources to support this may be achieved through a "Lead Partner" arrangement. A Lead Partner may be a Local Strategy Partnership, District Council, a Belfast Area Partnership or properly constituted community/voluntary organisation capable of receiving, managing and accounting for public money. Each Neighbourhood Partnership is responsible for:

- Analysing and prioritising the needs of their Neighbourhood Renewal Areas;

- Engaging and consulting with local communities to drive and implement Neighbourhood Renewal;

- Leading the process in the preparation of the Vision Statements and 3 year Neighbourhood Action Plans;

- Overseeing the implementation of the Action Plans;

- Publicising and building awareness of "People and Place" - A Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, across the target areas, with particular regard to informing local communities of progress made;

- Participating in the monitoring and evaluation of Vision Statements and Action Plans including reporting progress against their Action Plan targets as required by Development Offices.

Each Neighbourhood Partnership is required to develop a Vision which covers a 7-10 year period and a rolling three year Neighbourhood Action Plan to implement it. Action Plans should be reviewed and amended as and when required, but at least annually, with the requirement that a new Action Plan is developed every 3 years. DSD provides the following guidance on action plans.

At its simplest, an Action Plan is a list of actions to move the neighbourhood to where the Neighbourhood Partnership wants it be. The Plan will not simply focus on activities to be supported by DSD but must reflect an integrated and co-ordinated approach to the neighbourhood by all statutory, public and community sectors. It should be a broad based document, which is developed and owned by all members of the Neighbourhood Partnership. It should set out realistic actions and targets against which the Partnership can review progress and use to oversee the implementation of Neighbourhood Renewal in the area. The Action Plan is not a one-off, and should be reviewed and developed over time. It should be recognised that the development of an Action Plan in itself is an achievement for the Partnership and the wider community and signifies a milestone in successful joint working.

Most agencies that deliver services in the neighbourhood plan their services and decide how money will be spent well in advance (sometimes a year or two ahead). It is important therefore that Neighbourhood Action Plans are developed with the full involvement of the statutory partners. Statutory partners also need to ensure that each Action Plan is compatible with and is capable of shaping and influencing statutory agencies planning processes at the appropriate stages[3].

Measuring success

The success of the strategy is to be measured at both Neighbourhood Renewal Area and Regional level. In terms of the former, baseline information is being compiled for each area and targets are to be agreed within the context of Neighbourhood Action Plans and set for every Neighbourhood Renewal Area. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is in the process of developing Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to monitor change. The overall impact of strategy at regional level will be measured against a number of high level regional targets.

In the past, weaknesses have been identified in the approaches adopted in Northern Ireland to measure performance in relation to urban regeneration policy. In October 2001, the DSD appointed Cambridge Economic Associates Limited to examine the then existing approaches to the measurement of urban regeneration policy in Northern Ireland and make recommendations for a performance measurement framework for the new urban regeneration strategy. This examination found, amongst other things, that:

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[3] DSD Neighbourhood Renewal Unit - Guidance on the creation of Neighbourhood Action Plans www.**dsd**ni.gov.uk/nrurg_ap_guidance.doc (accessed May 2007)

> *...the existing financial, output and outcome monitoring systems within URCDG (Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group) are fragmented and have a number of fundamental weaknesses. The extent of data collected and relevant statistical back-up is inadequate. As they stand, these systems are not capable of meeting the performance management requirements of the new urban regeneration strategy[4].*

The report also noted that DSD's PSA output/outcome targets were essentially process orientated and need to be refocused. In the short term the report recommended that the targets should reflect a range of output targets, but in the longer term the PSA targets should be more outcomes driven[5].

The current key PSA target which is relevant to the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy states that '*By 2010, in conjunction with other government departments, agencies and public bodies, implement the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, which aims to close the gap between the quality of life for people and marginalized groups in the most deprived neighbourhoods and the quality of life in the rest of Northern Ireland.*'

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

A working paper describing the results of the consultation process that followed publication in 2002 of the Neighbourhood Renewal Consultation Document has been published by DSD[6]. A number of issues under headings used to structure responses in the DSD publication are highlighted below.

Under the heading "What is meant by neighbourhood"
<u>What is meant by neighbourhood</u>

> *It was felt that the nature of neighbourhoods differs between settlement types, especially between cities, large towns and smaller areas, and this gave rise to a concern that smaller communities outside Belfast and Derry/Londonderry could be overlooked by the strategy. There was also a feeling that a gap between areas supported by rural policy and the settlements classified as urban could cause a range of intermediary settlement types to miss out. The need for clear urban and rural definitions as well as complementary urban and rural policies was prioritised in the consultation.* (Para: 2.3)

<u>Prioritising areas and regional balance</u>

> *Attention was also drawn to the needs of areas in decline as well as those that exhibit the highest deprivation indicators. Over time, the distribution of deprivation might change and areas may move up or down the scale of need. Continuous monitoring and analysis should*

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[4] DSD *People and Place: A Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal Working Paper 2 Urban Regeneration in Northern Ireland – Policy Measurement.* (p i) www.dsdni.gov.uk/people_and_place_workingpaper2.pdf (accessed May 2007)

[5] Ibid p ii

[6] DSD *People and Place: A Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal Working Paper 1 Report of the Consultation Process.* www.dsdni.gov.uk/people_and_place_workingpaper1.pdf (accessed May 2007)

be employed to ensure that the strategy can adapt and respond to these changes. (Para: 3.6)

A number of respondents warned against drawing parallels with policy in the rest of the United Kingdom and highlighted the importance of developing a policy that would fit the distinctive Northern Ireland context. The need to look at and learn from examples of regeneration around the world was acknowledged, but it was stressed that we should draw on this experience selectively. (Para: 3.8)

Delivery Structures and Governance Arrangements

Capacity building was regarded as essential to empower local people to make decisions about the future of their areas. It was also felt that although capacity building should be a continuous process of learning and reflection, there would be a clear need for intensive work at the start of the process, especially in areas with a weak tradition of local development. (Para: 4.8)

There was also a call for a strong connection between the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and the Department for Regional Development's Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland and the Regional Transportation Strategy. In particular, it was felt that Neighbourhood Renewal should sit within the spatial frame of the RDS and help to animate key development proposals. (Para: 4.11)

Timing and assessing programme success

It was widely agreed that monitoring and audit need to be built into the Neighbourhood Renewal process. It was emphasised by many that the process of delivery of the strategy must be looked at as well as the outputs and impacts. It was also agreed both long and short-term objectives and the measures used in evaluation should be agreed at the outset with the local community and that in order for these to be monitored effectively, a comprehensive baseline will have to be established. (Para: 5.4)

Priority issues in neighbourhoods

Some consultees suggested that there may be apathy among communities that have already been through a number of initiatives resulting in burn out or fatigue. Energy and interest will need to be developed, especially at the start of the planning process. (Para: 6.7)

Equality and Neighbourhood Renewal

Some of the suggestions for operational ways in which the equality agenda could be reinforced included:

- *Transparent selection processes in the identification of target areas;*
- *Equal access to resources within the target areas identified;*
- *Specifically targeting minority and section 75 groups within local plans; and*

- *Closely monitoring the effects of initiatives on section 75 categories over the life of the programme.* (Para: 7.5)

Understanding neighbourhood decline

> *During the consultation process, particular attention was focused on the process of neighbourhood decline and the need to use resources under the strategy to address the underlying processes that cause spatial disadvantage. Some positive ideas for initiatives and the use of funding were also identified during the consultation.* (Para: 8.1)

JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION RESEARCH

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (the Foundation) is one of the largest social policy research and development charities in the UK. It spends around £10 million a year on a research and development programme that seeks to better understand the causes of social difficulties and explore ways of overcoming them**.** The remit of the Foundation's 'Housing and Neighbourhoods' research programme is to understand the causes of, and seek solutions to, 'place' based deprivation within the UK. Place is broadly defined to include a focus on the home, immediate neighbourhood and the wider locality within which people's homes and daily lives are located[7].

In 2002, the Foundation launched its Neighbourhood Programme to support community groups and organisations in 20 neighbourhoods across GB. This programme has provided the opportunity to test out a 'light touch' approach to supporting groups at neighbourhood level and a recently published report[8] concluded that:

- Sustainable neighbourhood-based organisations are vital to effective community engagement. If the intention to engage communities at neighbourhood level is to become reality, local authorities and the key strategic partnerships in England, Scotland and Wales need to have a community development strategy that maps existing resources and commits local and regional bodies to providing 'light touch' and more intensive support as circumstances require.

- A low level of continuous 'light touch' support can make a real difference to neighbourhood groups. The 'light touch' support provided through the JRF programme illustrates the value of giving neighbourhood organisations access to:

  - a facilitator: someone who is 'on their side' and to whom they can turn for ideas, support and when things go wrong;

  - credit: small amounts of unrestricted money can make a big difference, particularly to smaller community groups and those just starting out;

  - networking opportunities: there is a confidence and status that comes from finding out your experience is shared with others;

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[7] http://www.jrf.org.uk/about/ (May 2007)
[8] Taylor M et al. *Changing neighbourhoods: lessons from the JRF Neighbourhood Programme* (2007) http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/details.asp?pubid=872 (accessed May 2007)

- help with action planning: even the smallest of community groups benefited from support to review local needs and opportunities, map out their future and reflect on past achievements and difficulties;

- a broker who can mediate with other organisations and agencies if necessary and unblock relationships with power-holders such as the local authority.

- More intensive community development support is needed where there is a long history of disadvantage, where there is a fragmented community and where there is a major change at community level e.g. as a result of regeneration programmes. It will also be needed where there are pockets of disadvantage in more affluent areas, which are often hidden from view and where there has been little previous investment.

- The pace and complexity of policy change is demanding for communities that are already stressed.

Planned Citizen Outcomes	SPENDING AREA: URBAN REGENERATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP				
	Public Service Agreement Targets	DSD 2007/08 Business Plan			Budget £m
		Actions		Targets	
Regenerated urban areas and strong communities	6 By 2010, in conjunction with other government departments, agencies and public bodies, implement the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, which aims to close the gap between the quality of life for people and marginalized groups in the most deprived neighbourhoods and the quality of life in the rest of Northern Ireland.	6a	Complete the development and agreement of Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans in all 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.	6a Neighbourhood Action Plans to be in place in all Neighbourhood Renewal Areas by the end of September 2007.	Resource 19.4 Capital 2.0 Total 21.4
		6b	Work with statutory bodies and others to respond to Action Plans and to deliver real change in deprived neighbourhoods.	6b In each of the 36 areas to have taken at least 4 actions to address key priorities by 31 March 2008.	
		6c	Continue to tackle areas of dereliction and under-utilised land in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas through the use of land acquisition and development powers, conferred under the Planning Order 19991/Social Need Order 1986.	6c Throughout the year to have taken forward a programme of land acquisition in targeted Neighbourhood Renewal Areas to bring derelict/underused land back into meaningful use.	