# Communities
### and Local Government

# Community engagement
## Some lessons from the New Deal for Communities Programme

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**Some lessons from the New Deal for Communities Programme**

The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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# Acknowledgements

# Glossary

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|---|---|
| BNDfC | Burngreave New Deal for Communities |
| HMRP | Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder |
| IMD | Index of Multiple Deprivation |
| NDC | New Deal for Communities |
| NEM | New East Manchester |
| NRU | Neighbourhood Renewal Unit |
| PCT | Primary Care Trust |
| RSL | Registered Social Landlord |
| URC | Urban Regeneration Company |
| VCS | Voluntary and Community Sector |
| YA | Youth Adviser |

# 1. Purpose of the report

## Why community engagement?

The purpose of this report is to look at the experience of a sample of New Deal for Communities (NDC) partnerships in relation to community engagement. One of the distinctive features of the New Deal for Communities Programme was that communities were to be at the heart of it. This dimension of the programme rests partly on the premise that local people are the real experts about the problems in their communities and about why previous attempted solutions may have failed. It also recognises 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."[1]

Over the last few years, Government has attached greater importance to localism and neighbourhoods and the Local Government White Paper[2] continues this theme. The *Together We Can* Action Plan[3] also stresses the need for citizen engagement. *Citizen Engagement and Public Services*[4] identifies two central and closely interconnected challenges:

- to secure sustainable improvements in public services
- to re-engage citizens with the institutions of government.

This agenda extends the drive for community engagement beyond time-limited regeneration initiatives and makes it integral to service deliverers' ways of working. This means that a far wider range of organisations and mainstream providers need to develop their capacity to embed community engagement in their working practices.

## Case studies

The main sources for this report were case studies of four NDC Partnerships:

- Seven Sisters, Haringey
- Greets Green, Sandwell
- Burngreave, Sheffield
- Beacons, East Manchester

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[1] CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University, (2005) *New Deal for Communities 2001–2005: An Interim Evaluation*, NRU Research Report 17, ODPM.
[2] DCLG October 2006, *Strong and prosperous communities*, The Local Government White Paper.
[3] *Together We Can* Action Plan, (2005) Civil Renewal Unit, Home Office.
[4] ODPM and Home Office (2005) *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter.*

Boxes 1.1–1.4 provide a flavour of these four NDC areas.

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### Box 1.1: The Seven Sisters NDC area

The Bridge NDC is in Haringey in north east London. The NDC area has good transport links to central London, where demand for labour is high, however employment within the NDC area itself is limited. Economic inactivity is comparatively high, as is the level of those in 'lower' grade occupations. Housing is in high demand, but also expensive to buy and rent. There is roughly a 50:50 split between social housing and private ownership. The area is characterised by its ethnic diversity, and relatively high proportion of residents born outside Britain. Over two hundred languages and dialects are used in the area. Nearly half of the population is non-White, and two out five of the population have English as a second language. 12.5% of residents aged 59 or under has a limiting long-term illness. Many local schools underperform when compared to the wider region. In terms of deprivation the NDC area is firmly amongst the 10% most deprived in the country. It is socially and economically disconnected from the more affluent west of the Haringey borough, and the City of London and its prosperity. It is not characterised by inter-ethnic rivalry or substantial racial conflict. There are more similarities than there are differences. Priorities are the same across all communities: better housing; safe streets; economic security; healthcare and better schools.

*The NDC Board has 23 voting members including 12 resident representatives, elected every three years, and the Chair of the Youth Forum. The Chairs of the Older and Bolder Forum and the Community Organisations Forum are non-voting members.*

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### Box 1.2: Greets Green NDC area

The NDC area is located to the south and west of the West Bromwich town centre, within the broader Black Country area. The population is around 11,600 people within around 4,500 households (2001 Census). The tenure mix is equally split between social housing and owner occupation, with housing typically pre-1919. There is a very wide range of ethnicities in the area, including Yemeni, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sikh, Hindu and African-Caribbean communities. Around 63% of the NDC population is White, 29.2% Asian/Asian British, 4.8% Black/Black British, 2.4% Mixed race. There are divisions between different ethnic groups, but no major tensions between the minority ethnic communities. Interviewees suggested that there are however tensions between white tenants and their perception of the amount of support going to minority ethnic groups. The BNP gained considerable support in the last local election. The housing clearance programme is important. It involves around 700 families, with a number being re-housed in the area. The programme initially provoked opposition. This reduced over time but interviewees indicated certain community activists used protestation to advance their own interests.

*The NDC Board of 29 members has 9 neighbourhood representatives, 6 community representatives, 2 representatives of young people and one voluntary sector representative.*

## Box 1.3: Burngreave NDC area

The Burngreave NDC area lies to the north east of the Sheffield city centre. It has a population of just over 8,800 people in around 4000 households. The population has a number of distinctive characteristics. It is relatively young – only 12% of the population are aged 50–64 (Census data). Single households account for 41.1% of all households. It has 12.8% lone parent households, almost double the level in Sheffield. It has a large and mixed ethnic minority population. Just over half the population is White, compared to 91.2% for Sheffield as whole. The Asian/Asian British population is the largest non-White group accounting for 23.2% of the population. 15.7% is Black/Black British. The area has significant Yemeni and Somali communities. The non-White proportion of the population increased from 29.8% in 1991 to 46.6% in 2001. The 2002 Household Survey showed 12% of respondents had applied for refugee status. In the 2001 Census 30% of residents stated they are Muslim. Over 60 different community languages are spoken. The population profile is continuing to change. Following the closure of the steelworks and a lot of demolition, as the area has repopulated, it has developed more of a multicultural mix. The Somali community is growing and the settlement of Eastern European, Burmese and Congolese communities is being driven by local housing allocation policies. Around half of NDC residents live in social rented housing. The area is a Mixed Communities Pathfinder and is in the Transform South Yorkshire HMRP area. There is, as yet, little evidence in relation to the impact of these initiatives on the housing market in Burngreave although anecdotal evidence suggests that there has been an increase in the number of private rented sector dwellings, possibly as a result of landlords investing in property for refugee accommodation and house prices in the area are rising.

*Burngreave has a Board of 26 voting members including 10 resident representatives, 5 VCS ones and 2 youth representatives.*

## Box 1.4: Beacons, East Manchester NDC area

The NDC area comprises two neighbourhoods east of the Manchester city centre, Beswick and Openshaw. The two wards covering the area were the 17th and 22nd most deprived in the country (2000 IMD). It includes the 7th, 8th and 14th most deprived Super Output Areas (2004 IMD). Two arterial roads linking the city centre to Ashton under Lyne cut through the area and it is also crossed by Manchester's main intermediate orbital road. In 1999, there was a mix of housing types: pre-1919 terraces, 1960s and 70s council housing and 1990s private housing. About one quarter were owner occupied. A lot of the housing across tenures was in poor condition. There were many voids, which had also become the focus for vandalism and anti-social behaviour. High turnover, low demand, negative equity and derelict land released by demolitions were inherent problems. Economic changes since the 1960s leaving high levels of worklessness form the background to the housing picture. Other indicators such as educational attainment and crime levels similarly reflected the overall deprivation. In 2003, two significant developments affected housing. First there was a stock transfer of council housing and Eastland Homes was set up in East Manchester. Secondly, the Government introduced the Housing Market Renewal Initiative. East Manchester falls within

the Manchester and Salford Pathfinder area. The NDC initiative was contained within the area covered by an SRB5 project that extended into the neighbouring areas of the rest of Beswick and Clayton and within a larger area covered by the New East Manchester Urban Regeneration Company (URC). The NDC population is approximately 8,400. At the outset, the area was predominantly White (1991 Census: 4% minority ethnic) with a small Chinese/Vietnamese population, but the advent of asylum seekers boosted the minority ethnic population. The 2002 MORI/NOP household survey indicated that 89% of residents were White. Their location within the NDC area reflected the distribution of pre-1919 terraced housing stock. There was a subsequent increase in minority ethnic groups to about 17% but although the demography of the area has changed substantially, the number of groups and their transience has made it difficult to measure the change. There are no major issues currently, but some interviewees suggested that there may have been a rise in low level racism and/or anxieties amongst older residents about the changes that may give the impression of racial prejudice. Quite a high proportion of residents are parts of extended families with longstanding links with the area. These have been critical to the effectiveness of the NDC approach. There is also a sizeable minority of very transient people without roots in or commitment to the area. Then there are people who have been there for a short time and could settle or move on depending upon circumstances.

*The NDC has a total membership of 12, half of whom are residents elected through the Residents' Forum. Another resident, the Voluntary Sector Consortium representative, chairs the Board.*

## Audiences

This report is intended to be of use to various audiences:

- officers and board members of regeneration initiatives
- community representatives
- partners in mainstream agencies.

## Structure of report

- Section 2 defines some key terms
- Section 3 discusses the scope of community engagement
- Section 4 outlines steps towards developing a community engagement strategy
- Sections 5, 6, and 7 describe different approaches: neighbourhood based, focusing on target groups and supporting partner organisations
- Section 8 points to potential pitfalls
- Section 9 discusses benchmarking and evaluation
- Section 10 brings together some key messages
- The appendix lists further resources.

# 2. Definitions

The following tries to clarify some of the distinctions between terms referring to community engagement and related activities. However, it should be noted that some of these terms are often used imprecisely or interchangeably.

**capacity building** is usually used in relation to community and voluntary groups but can also refer to public agencies and the need for them and their staff to be adequately equipped for community engagement.

**community** can refer either to *communities of place* where people have in common that they share a geographical space or to *communities of interest*, (sometimes called *communities of identity*) where people belong to groups that have common concerns, such as environmental groups, or have a shared identity such as their faith or ethnic background.

**community cohesion** describes a situation in which there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities, the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued, where people from different backgrounds have similar life chances and where strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds.

**community development** is work with people in communities to develop their abilities and potential to be able to respond to their shared needs and problems, which is more than capacity building and engagement, though it clearly relates to both of these.

**community empowerment** is used in relation to building the capacity of individuals and groups and developing the necessary infrastructure for the voluntary and community sector to be able to participate effectively in governance structures.

**community engagement** refers to the mechanisms for identifying community views and the channels for undertaking engagement. Developing such mechanisms and channels entails building infrastructure and capacity amongst community groups.

**community participation** narrowly defined is involvement in governance. More widely, it can refer to involvement in a broader range of activities such as volunteering and taking part in voluntary and community organisations.

**governance**[5] any body within a local authority area that has a remit to affect public service planning and/or delivery. (This excludes VCS and private sector organisations but includes partnership bodies in which they may participate.)

**(new) localism** denotes devolving more to local communities – a philosophy of civil renewal – on the assumption that they "are better at dealing with their own problems. They have the networks, knowledge, the sense of what is actually possible, and the

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[5]   This is the definition given by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for the project that produced the report *Community participation – Who benefits*? Paul Skidmore, Kirsten Bound and Hannah Lownsbrough, JRF, November 2006.

ability to make solutions stick. Of course, they cannot do it on their own, without both the resources and the power of government."[6]

**outreach** is an active process of engaging a target community around an issue of concern, through personal relationships, credible information, trusted networks and feedback.[7]

**social capital** is subject to different definitions but usually refers to the concepts of trust and understanding, shared values, networks and behaviours that can enable co-operative action. It can cover *bonding* capital, that is, strong ties between people within a neighbourhood; *bridging* capital, that is, weaker social ties but recognition of shared 'public values' between different ethnic, cultural and faith groups; and *linking* capital enabling communities to connect with the power and resources within formal institutions and governance structures.

[6] Home Office, (2003) *Active Citizens, Strong Communities: Progressing Civil Renewal*, Home Office.
[7] COI, (July 2006) *Communicating with Communities using Outreach: a Good Practice Guide* prepared by Stephane Gray, Christine Roberts, Patricia Macauley and Ross James.

# 3. Scope of community engagement

This section looks at the different dimensions of community engagement:

- first the potential types and levels of participation and what these signify in the extent of power they afford to participants
- second, the different levels of responses that might be expected, underlining that there will be a relatively small proportion of people involved at the high intensity end of the spectrum.

## What does community engagement cover?

Community engagement in NDCs has covered activity to involve people in a range of ways:

- **informing** residents through such means as 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 Urban Regeneration Company 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**
- **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.

## Levels of participation

Figure 3.2 shows an 'engagement spectrum'[8] based upon Sherry Arnstein's ladder of participation[9], categorising the different forms of engagement and showing progression in terms of levels of intensity and numbers involved:

- giving **information** to people for the sake of communicating or to enable them to make more informed decisions, which might be through newsletters, websites, roadshows, etc., and might be targeted on specific groups

- **research** which may be structured (through surveys, interviews or focus groups) or unstructured (such as gathering feedback from service users, for example through suggestion boxes)

- **consultation** through a variety of techniques, such as conferences, workshops, asking for written responses to policies, provision or proposals

- **participation** that may cover, *inter alia*, involvement in partnership structures or representative involvement on boards

- **delegation** of responsibilities, powers, management/ownership or budget holding.



Figure 3.2: The engagement spectrum
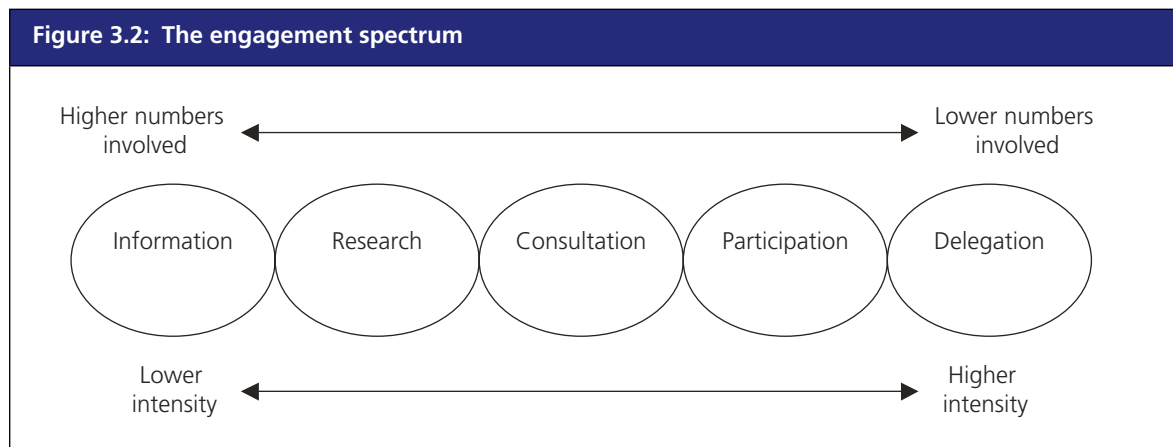
## Levels of response

Just as there are different forms of engagement, so people will respond to different degrees. Only a small percentage of people will want to be very actively involved. Rather more will want to know what is happening and 'have their say', so that they will attend meetings and other events. More again will wish to hear or read about what is happening but will not be active. But at any given time, research suggests that most people will not appear to take any interest – and may well also disclaim any knowledge of what is going on and refute the idea that they were ever given the opportunity to find out.

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[8] Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, (May 2004) Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships, *Community engagement: a briefing note for LSPs*.
[9] Arnstein, Sherry R, 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp 216–224.

# 4. Developing a community engagement strategy

## Preliminary steps

A community engagement strategy cannot simply be taken off the shelf. One size does not fit all. The case studies identified a number of preliminary steps to be taken in developing a community engagement strategy, in particular to consider the nature of the area and measure existing community capacity.

❑   **Area profile**

The nature of the area influences the environment for community participation and the local receptiveness to engagement in terms of a wide range of variables; for example:

- the intensity and persistence of deprivation in relation to the 'dose' that the regeneration can administer and the length of time that recovery is likely to take

- its cohesiveness, which can cover how far it comprises several different neighbourhoods with different concerns, its ethnic composition, any history of warring factions amongst community organisations

- levels of stability or transience

- strength of the local and district economy

- mix of tenure

- previous experience of regeneration.

The profiles of the NDC areas in chapter 1 illustrate how neighbourhoods that all fit under the heading of 'deprived', nevertheless vary in their composition and character in ways that need to be taken into account in efforts to engage them in regeneration or service delivery.

❑   **Community capacity**

Another contextual dimension is the existing strength of the VCS and how far there is past experience of community involvement. A prerequisite of an effective community engagement strategy is to develop a baseline of community capacity in terms of estimating the number and strengths of organisations and the extent of networking and identifying key community leaders and the range of roles undertaken by activists.

❑   **Programme focus**

In addition, the focus and context of the programme or service are significant, affecting for example:

- how far it is necessary to deal with people's very personal concerns, such as whether or not their house is going to be demolished, compared with issues that can be mediated through groups and representatives

- how far decision-making and timetabling activity is dependent upon other players, for example, where Housing Market Renewal or other major physical development schemes are taking place

- whether there is an opportunity to co-locate and/or share engagement structures and mechanisms with other initiatives, for example the links between Beacons NDC and New East Manchester URC.

# Making the right start

Having examined the context, the next steps identified were to:

- clarify the purpose of community engagement

- establish realistic expectations of what might be achieved

- ensure that the organisation has the capacity to develop and implement a strategy and the style of working that will enhance the prospects of success.

## ❑ Clarity of purpose

Some of the rhetoric around issues of neighbourhood governance is not matched by clear objectives and substance. It is vital to be clear about what is desirable and what is feasible. Similarly, there needs to be clarity about the respective roles of community representatives and local councillors – representative versus participative democracy. There can also be confusion around concepts such as community development and community engagement, but also different views can prevail within the same organisation. For example, the management group may want the primary focus to be on the core group of activist insiders, whereas the community engagement team want to undertake wider community development and engagement activities.

## ❑ Realistic expectations

Skidmore *et al*[10] warn that "no matter how hard people try, existing forms of community participation in governance will only ever mobilise a small group of people" and propose that, "rather than fight against 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". This means both mobilising participation (their target is 1%) and embedding this participation in the wider "rhythms and routines of community life".

This cautionary advice about having realistic expectations is echoed in NDC experience:

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[10] Paul Skidmore, Kirsten Bound and Hannah Lownsbrough, (November 2006) *Community participation – who benefits*? JRF.

- First, engagement and empowerment are time-consuming and resource intensive activities

- Second, for a variety of reasons, some people will remain resistant to participating

- Third, it is evident that even where people have been involved, their interest can wane once their immediate problem has been solved.

A consequence of having over-inflated expectations is frustration when the desired breadth and depth of engagement are not achieved. This can mean both that Partnerships persist with 'meet and greet' events at the expense of more in-depth work and/or, paradoxically, that at the higher intensity end of the spectrum they rely even more on a small core group.

## ❑ **Getting the right staff**

It is critical to have a strong team who:

- show commitment to and have an in-depth knowledge of the local area

- can generate a high level of trust and confidence they will take up issues on behalf of the area

- can exercise influence in other decision making arenas.

Interviews in these case studies showed that where residents are complimentary about NDCs, it is as often about the leadership, style and effectiveness of the staff as about the changes on the ground. In relation to community engagement in NDCs, a recurring theme has been the problems created by the late recruitment of appropriate specialist staff, the loss of a key manager or difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. However, it is not enough to have people in place. It is also important that their role and job description are appropriate not only in relation to their activity in the field but also in their links with NDC programme managers so that their work is properly embedded in the wider programme.

Engagement calls for staff with the appropriate skills, time and remit not only to work with residents but also to work towards embedding community engagement in the practices of mainstream agencies.

| **Box 4.1: Range of skills required for community engagement** | |
|---|---|
| • project management | • questionnaire design and analysis |
| • process mapping | • imaginative thinking |
| • facilitation | • communicating with diverse audiences |
| • chairing/managing meetings | • presentation skills |
| • listening skills | • writing skills |
| • working with groups | • creating and using databases |
| • working with individuals | • policy development and review |
| • language skills | |

Box 4.1 indicates the range of skills identified in the case studies that are required by community engagement practitioners. The wide array reflects the variety of activities in which they may be involved. Key amongst them are interpersonal skills for working with both individuals and groups but, in addition, there is a need for communication, organisational and analytic skills. Although no one person could be expected to possess all of these, auditing requirements in advance of appointing staff helps to ensure that overall they are covered within the team.

### ❑ A culture of openness

Effective community engagement requires organisational capacity in terms of values, knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes. This entails structural and cultural changes for organisations as well as appropriately equipped individuals.

The location and accessibility – in all senses – of the office can be important in breaking down barriers between local people and the regeneration professionals: avoiding any feeling of 'being done to' and building instead a sense of this being a collaborative effort. Box 4.2 shows how this has been achieved in East Manchester through a deliberate policy of openness that has entailed appropriate training for staff at all levels, anticipating the needs of community representatives and 'letting them in' to be co-workers.

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**Box 4.2: Welcoming in**

One of the roles of the Beacons Resident Liaison Team has been to resource the NDC offices so that local people can go in to use office equipment and have meeting spaces and resources for their organisations. In addition, team members have an 'open door' policy and the reception staff make a point of being friendly, getting to know residents, trying to respond and, where issues are not NDC business, signposting callers to other services.

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### ❑ Starting early

Timetables during bid and delivery plan preparation are frequently very short, which tends to short circuit community consultation. The argument often put forward for a 'year zero' stems in part from the recognition that many significant decisions have to made early and often in advance of fully engaging partners.

> ### Box 4.3:  Early consultation in East Manchester
>
> The consultation prior to securing NDC funding in November 1999 included:
>
> - visits by residents and staff to successful projects elsewhere in Manchester, England and Amsterdam
> - provision of a wide range of training for residents
> - purchase of a double-decker Information Bus to engage residents in a different way at different locations and use to distribute 1,500 information packs
> - setting up six thematic Task Groups to determine priorities and develop projects with meetings open to all residents
> - three youth consultation events in February 1999 attended by over 500 people
> - four community planning events in May 1999 attended by 350 residents.

Box 4.3 shows the various actions taken in East Manchester prior even to winning NDC status. They fell into four categories:

- information
- consultation
- education and training
- planning.

This approach brought several benefits:

- raising local awareness of potential schemes
- indicating from the outset that this was to be a collaborative undertaking and, to that extent, showing confidence in the local community
- helping towards establishing the community's priorities in regenerating the area
- starting to uncover the different perspectives of different groups and neighbourhoods
- beginning the process of gaining local ownership of the scheme
- enabling some of the key officers and local people to get to know one another and build mutual trust.

## Key questions

The experience of NDCs underlines that there are key questions that need to be addressed when developing (Box 4.4) and implementing (Box 4.5) a community engagement strategy. Box 4.6 identifies important issues on the 'to-do' list.

## Box 4.4:  Key questions when developing the strategy

- Is there a shared understanding of community participation and engagement?
- Is there clarity about the aim of engagement?
- Have the key issues and needs been identified?
- Has a baseline been developed of the current position?
- Is it clear who is to be engaged and why?
- Have key groups and individuals been identified?
- Is it clear what methods will be used in relation to different groups and activities?

## Box 4.5:  Key questions for implementing the strategy

- Has an action plan been agreed setting out the means of engagement and who is responsible?
- Are there capacity building activities/resources in place to support engagement?
- Have any training/guidance materials been produced or learning events been arranged for partners?
- Are there clear accountability structures?
- Are mechanisms in place to review and measure progress?

## Box 4.6:  Important issues on the 'to-do' list

- conduct initial research to find out about the neighbourhood and its interest groups
- identify needs and opportunities as a basis for an engagement strategy
- involve as wide a range of groups as possible
- recognise that it will take time to overcome suspicion and build trust
- tailor your strategy to the target groups/neighbourhood
- recruit the team early.

Box 4.7 gives a possible framework for an action plan in which there would be columns for the list of objectives, the actions/methods for tackling the objectives, who would be responsible for delivering the actions and who else would be involved, the timescale for delivery and how success would be measured.

## Box 4.7:  Action plan framework

| Objective | Action/ method | Lead | Partners | Timescale | Success measures |
|-----------|----------------|------|----------|-----------|------------------|

# An evolving agenda – an engagement lifecycle?

A community engagement strategy has to be a live document that undergoes revision throughout the lifetime of the initiative taking into account factors such as new information about needs, the stage that the programme has reached, the advent of new groups in the area, progress made and future challenges. As the programme gets into its stride, there can be progression to a more evidence based and sophisticated approach, especially when the appropriate staff have been recruited; for example:

- developing a wider range of engagement mechanisms, including the involvement of residents in policy theme areas

- undertaking more intensive targeting of groups or sections of the population

- developing a local infrastructure, such as forums, that enables groups to work together and the emergence of representative and accountable spokespersons and delegates

- using and supporting local infrastructure organisations that can provide ongoing community development and training and support for community groups

- developing projects with residents in the lead in planning and delivery

- working with mainstream agency partners to establish closer links with residents.

Later changes are likely to be directed towards ensuring that community engagement becomes a permanent feature; for example:

- moving from developing new groups and/or supporting fledgling ones to helping them develop business plans for long-term sustainability

- a progressive shift from concentrating on engaging people within the NDC's own structures to enabling them to engage with other mainstream organisations (in the case of NDCs, ones that will still be working in the area after NDC has gone), such as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), local authorities and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

The Bridge NDC in Seven Sisters exemplifies the need to shift the focus over time in order to ensure sustainability: "We have a splendid track record of engaging the community and a lot of our work has been award winning. Our challenge now lies in ensuring that our capacity building programmes in future engage all sections of the community directly into the work of the theme areas and with local agencies delivering services. This will form a critical part of the legacy the NDC leaves behind."[11]

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[11] The Bridge NDC 2006/07 delivery plan.

# 5.  A neighbourhood focus

Residents share an interest in the quality of their local neighbourhoods – whether they feel safe from crime and anti-social behaviour, whether the streets and green spaces are clean, how far they have access to job opportunities and services such as schools, health provision, transport and shops.

## Engaging individuals and communities

Box 5.1 lists approaches to engagement that have been used with varying degrees of success based on the experience of East Manchester NDC.

| Box 5.1:  Engaging individuals and communities | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Approaches often found to be successful** | **Approaches occasionally found to be successful** | **Approaches that sometimes work but are not always successful** |
| • Attending community events<br>• Contact through Day Centres and other venues where people normally meet<br>• Detached/outreach work<br>• Door-to-door<br>• Engaging help of parents to promote services<br>• Face-to-face<br>• Involve service users<br>• Include young people in service planning and development<br>• Learning and adapting from past experiences<br>• Letting the client set the pace<br>• Linking up with other initiatives and agencies and sharing information | • Community notice boards<br>• Consistent contacts<br>• Displays in supermarkets<br>• Drop-ins<br>• Enforcement<br>• Freepost<br>• Group or issue focused events<br>• Home visits<br>• Incentives e.g. leisure passes<br>• Mentoring<br>• Newspaper articles<br>• Offer adult education courses<br>• Online services<br>• Other referrals<br>• Subsidised entry to venues | • Email<br>• Invitation to set events<br>• Leaflet/publicity<br>• Letters<br>• Public meetings<br>• Newsletters<br>• Open days<br>• Posters<br>• Application forms<br>• Questionnaires<br>• Setting up groups<br>• Telephone contact |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| • Offering childcare | • Talks to groups | |
| • Offer incentives such as accredited/free training in the community | • Taster sessions | |
| | • Trips, social activities or events | |
| • Providing expenses, e.g. childcare and travel costs | | |
| • Self referrals | | |
| • Speculative street visits | | |
| • Targeting community leaders | | |
| • Weekend or evening road shows | | |
| • Word of mouth | | |

Source: The East Manchester Social Inclusion Toolkit

'Success' in this context can be of different types, to some extent corresponding to the levels of involvement cited in chapter 3:

- arousing interest amongst a wider range of people and, in particular, involving people that have so far been excluded, overlooked or have excluded themselves

- enabling greater involvement by those who have so far been 'interested onlookers'

- enabling more active engagement with particular groups and building bridges between them and particular agencies/service providers.

The methods that have more often been successful tend to be those that involve face-to-face contact, engage people where they are, are targeted and tailored to needs, take account of where and when it is convenient for people to meet and provide support such as childcare and expenses.

## Reaching out

One of the features of more successful methods is active outreach. Box 5.2 shows how several NDCs have used outreach workers.

## Box 5.2: Engagement and outreach teams

- **Seven Sisters** has a team of outreach workers employed to reach those individuals and groups most at risk of social exclusion, including Turkish, Kurdish and Somali communities and a Youth Outreach Team.

  – *This enabled a tailored approach to engaging hard to reach groups in a culturally sensitive way. It conveyed the message that they were seen as important members of the community whose views should be heard and taken into consideration.*

- **Greets Green** Community Empowerment Team is responsible for engaging and supporting the development of residents, typically working through the nine neighbourhoods in the area that have community representation on the Board. The Neighbourhood Forum structure of the nine areas is the frontline mechanism for consulting residents.

  – *As well as working with individuals, the team supported the infrastructure for engagement spanning the nine neighbourhoods.*

- **Burngreave**'s Community Engagement Team is funded as an NDC project and comprises a team manager, three full-time staff and a driver for the communications vehicle. The purpose of the team is to provide information and support NDC across all themes; to be a first point of contact between residents and NDC; to encourage, engage and support residents to become involved and influence NDC projects. Team members have community development skills though much of their work involves organisation and delivery of events and management of the communications vehicle.

  – *The team have a pivotal role at the interface of the NDC and the community. Their skills enable them to understand the regeneration programme in the context of the local long term community development needs.*

- **Beacons**' Resident Liaison Team works with and supports resident groups and facilitates the Residents' Forum, which comprises representatives from the residents' associations in the area. The Forum elects resident Board members and looks at progress across the programme and within the Task Groups and has presentations from relevant organisations and initiatives active in the area. Its role has evolved over time. Earlier on, there were some open meetings and people would attend to air their concerns. As it has necessarily moved away from individual issues to the bigger picture, attendance has decreased. All those in receipt of funding get support and advice about managing their accounts. Now the Resident Liaison Officer is encouraging groups to forge stronger links with ward councillors and ward co-ordinators in anticipation of the end of NDC.

  – *As a result of the team's work, the number of resident groups has grown from about 13 to 60 at the peak. Some of these may not be active now as the pressing needs that motivated them have been resolved. Others however remain strong and are more sustainable as a result of the team's support.*

The **strengths and outcomes** of outreach approaches include:

- reaching groups for whom the usual materials or mechanisms are unsuitable
- giving scope to build a network of community advocates through investing in strong relationships
- increasing community members' familiarity with and trust in the organisation
- increasing mutual empathy between the organisation and the community
- visible commitment to addressing specific community needs
- opportunity to give and receive more detailed information – to make a stronger impact and draw on real stories
- saving time through highly targeted communication
- scope for a more informal approach and one less tied into showing immediate hard outcomes.

The **limitations** of outreach approaches are that they:

- often rely upon talented individuals and long term personal relationships
- can take a long time to build sufficient trust
- can be hard to set up and maintain without specialist help
- tend to be relatively small scale and resource intensive
- can be hard to measure in terms of effectiveness.

## Communications

In the past, regeneration initiatives have frequently failed to give sufficient attention to communications as a means of engaging the community at least at the lower end of the engagement spectrum. Box 5.3 shows the imaginative approach to information and engagement in East Manchester, which has been wholly developed in-house involving local residents. It illustrates the wide range of functions that can be served through a comprehensive communications strategy, including informing, research, consultation and participation.

## Box 5.3: Information and Participation Project

❑ Although at first Beacons produced newsletters for local residents, this was not seen as an ideal longer term vehicle for imparting information about NDC. At the time, there was no free local paper in the area as local suppliers thought the economy not strong enough to supply enough advertising to make a paper viable. NDC therefore worked with the Guardian Media group, NEM and North Manchester Regeneration Team to create a high quality weekly newspaper covering East and North Manchester. It has dedicated pages for the regeneration programmes as well as ones for neighbourhood news. Funding was supplied initially – tapering off – but the paper became self-funding two years ahead of schedule.

❑ From 2000 onwards this project resourced a range of activities designed not only to be informative but also imaginative enough to capture people's interest in an effort to get beyond the 'usual suspects'. It included:

- door-to-door distribution of *Your Guide* – a directory of local services

- calendars; e.g. (i) designed by local children; (ii) images of local people produced in a photography project

- a diary

- a tea towel with messages from the Annual Report

- DVDs of NDC progress

- a postcard project particularly geared towards older people

- a pocket size Annual Report containing a tea bag.

❑ The same approach to involvement has been adopted at events such as:

- a Big Brother Diary Room format in a video project at Party in the Park events in 2005, the footage from which was made into a DVD and the views expressed analysed.

- a washing line consultation 'Tops or Pants?' at 2006 Parties in the Parks in which people were invited to write what they liked about improvements on a cardboard T-shirt and what still needed tackling on card pants. The results were pegged out on a line as a visual display of views but also analysed to inform future decision making.

❑ Eastserve Project was designed to "bridge the digital divide" and get more local residents online and providing IT training. Set up in 2000 using subsidised PCs (through *Computers Within Reach* and expanded through *Wired Up Communities*), it has also provided basic ICT training, low cost wireless broadband internet access and community support. 95% of the computers with printers were new and cost residents £200; the remainder were recycled and cost £50. The funding packages associated with the provision of PCs increased the membership of the Credit Union and helped to secure its sustainability. www.eastserve.com is a community portal designed after intensive consultation, giving access to online local services,

information and news. It has been a channel of information used by all the initiatives in the area. In addition to paid staff, local volunteers have provided IT support and maintained the website and discussion forums. The training they received has enabled some to progress to further training and/or access IT related employment. Eastserve also has some free public access PCs in its own premises and other community venues that are heavily used. An evaluation based on a telephone survey of 400 users in 2003 showed, *inter alia*, that 74% of participants stated that their children used the PC to do their homework and 58% said that their children used the internet (at home or elsewhere) to do their homework.

❑ In 2003, the NDC held 'East Manchester Presents', a national two-day conference in Manchester Town Hall. Residents helped to:

- plan and organise the event

- deliver interactive workshops with staff and partners to share good practice

- deliver tours of the area.

The East Manchester experience suggested that this sort of communications strategy can help to boost local morale and raise confidence, engage partners and encourage greater collaboration amongst community groups.

## Community events

Community events are a key way of reaching out to the whole community, celebrating community strengths, involving a wide range of agencies and local organisations and linking with different aspects of the regeneration programme, including culture and sport (Box 5.4).

### Box 5.4: Burngreave annual events

The Community Engagement Team organises or supports:

- the *Children and Young People's Festive Party* that is attended by around 800 local children each year. The 2006 event is being planned by the recently established Youth Council for Burngreave and will be the first substantive task for the Youth Council. The event is free of charge and is funded by BNDfC and partners. Tickets are distributed from a central point to try and ensure even distribution. Schools are involved in planning but not used for ticket distribution as many Burngreave children do not attend schools in the area.

- a *Bonfire event* is attended by 3,000–4,000 people each year. As well as a bonfire and fireworks the event promotes BNDfC through project information and stalls and provides an opportunity for projects to market themselves and recruit participants.

- the *Family Fun Day* is held on public ground in the heart of the NDC area and involves entertainments, games, food and information stalls. In 2005 the event was linked to an outdoor public meeting.

- the *Festivals and Events Project* is managed by a local VCS organisation, Green City Action, and delivers four annual events in the Burngreave area: the Abbeyfield Park Multicultural Festival, Carnival of Lights, Theatre in the Park and the Wensley Street Festival.

The events are firmly established fixtures in the local calendar. However, it might be appropriate in future to consider outsourcing the organisation and management of these activities, in order to free up the CET to undertake other engagement work outlined in the strategy.

**Burngreave NDfC Communications Vehicle**

The BNDfC 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 and roadshows. The vehicle is used by BNDfC for community events and is also made available free of charge to Burngreave groups and residents and marketed to those outside the area for use for a fee.

Events such as these can help to promote social cohesion, through bringing different communities together and placing an emphasis on networking. They create a positive, friendly environment in which to engage the community and get a sense of its feelings and needs. For Burngreave, this has proved a successful way of attracting large numbers of NDC residents to engage with NDC sponsored activities, though it is not so far possible to gauge the extent to which attendance at these events has led to participation in public meetings, theme groups or projects. New proposals for tracking participants will, if implemented, enable the Partnership to identify those who have become involved in the NDC as a result of contact made or information received at one of the above events. It may also be possible for the NDC to utilise this information to target and structure events more effectively and to assess the extent to which the NDC is engaging with the priority groups identified in the strategy.

# 6. Target groups and their needs

## Which groups?

There is a wide range of population groups that it may be especially hard to engage and for whom it may be necessary to have targeted activities and specially tailored mechanisms (Box 6.1). Although often called hard-to-reach, looking at it from their point of view, it may be that services and opportunities for involvement are hard-to-access.

| Box 6.1: Potentially hard-to-reach groups | |
| --- | --- |
| • children and young people | • victims of crime |
| • older people | • victims of domestic violence |
| • people with disabilities | • people with literacy problems |
| • ethnic minority groups | • sex workers |
| • unemployed | • homeless people |
| • women | • people whose first language is not English |
| • under-represented males | • asylum seekers and refugees |
| • lone parents | • travellers |
| • people with mental health issues | • transient populations |
| • lesbians and gays | • some faith communities |

## Needs and barriers

East Manchester Social Inclusion Toolkit (Box 6.2) indicates:

- the **range of needs** people may have, which cover general human needs for recognition, acceptance and personal well-being, all of which might be undermined by family, social and financial problems or encountering prejudice or mistreatment

- the **barriers** they may face in accessing a service, which can stem from a variety of personal difficulties and/or from services being inaccessible in terms of location, forms of communication or culture

- the **kinds of approaches** that can meet their needs and overcome the barriers, which revolve around individually tailored support provided by suitably qualified staff and a focus on partnership working to deliver long term solutions.

| Box 6.2: Needs, barriers and how to overcome them | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **What do people need?** | **What barriers might they face when accessing a service?** | **What kinds of approaches help to overcome barriers and meet need?** |
| • A choice<br>• A purpose<br>• A voice<br>• Acceptance<br>• Friends, family and support<br>• Independence<br>• Integration<br>• Money<br>• Peer contact<br>• Positive role models<br>• Reassurance<br>• Recognition<br>• Relaxation and recuperation<br>• Reliable information<br>• Social networks<br>• Stability<br>• To be heard<br>• To be treated as an individual<br>• To be treated with respect | • Communication difficulties<br>• Culturally appropriate services<br>• Do-gooders<br>• Fear of change<br>• Fear of crime<br>• Fear of the service<br>• Isolation<br>• Lack of expertise<br>• Lack of flexibility<br>• Lack of information<br>• Lack of resources/money<br>• Lack of self confidence<br>• Lack of skills/knowledge<br>• Past experience<br>• Poor health<br>• Presumption of knowledge<br>• Relationship with family/ friends<br>• Too broad provision<br>• Too many procedures<br>• Transport and access difficulties | • 'One person, one record'<br>• Being flexible in styles and methods of work<br>• Person-centred<br>• Solution focused<br>• Cross organisational working, co-operation and targets<br>• Identifying needs before providing answers<br>• Intensive support involving family and friends<br>• Longer commitment<br>• Multi-skilled teams<br>• One stop shops<br>• Positive role models<br>• Raising awareness<br>• Service improvement<br>• Trusting the community<br>• Varied consultation methods. |

Source: The East Manchester Social Inclusion Toolkit

# Examples of engagement with specific groups

The processes and mechanisms for engagement need to be suited to local groups and circumstances. There are examples below of the way that NDCs have worked with minority ethnic groups, young people and older people.

❑ **Diversity**

Some NDCs have been particularly active in trying to engage individual minority ethnic groups (Box 6.3) and supplying the necessary capacity building for this to be effective. Another focus has been to promote cohesion and pride in a multi-cultural area (Box 6.4).

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**Box 6.3: Positive action in Greets Green**

In year 5 of the Greets Green NDC there was a decision taken through the Positive Action Steering Group to support infrastructure development and participation in minority ethnic communities, which had not previously received considerable amounts of capacity building. A number of new community workers have been employed to support the Pakistani, Krishna and African-Caribbean community, with the purpose of encouraging local people to become part of their community. This includes the following community workers:

• Krishna development worker (supporting the Krishna Community Forum)

• Male and female Pakistani development workers ('Empowering the Pakistani Community' project)

• African Caribbean Support Worker (supporting the development of the African Caribbean Steering group, managed by DORCAS Housing and Community Services which has the tenure for this project – £47,000 for two years)

These community workers have responsibility for developing their community organisations and supporting the aims and fulfilling the aspirations of communities. They are presently developing consultation mechanisms and working to the NDC's cohesion agenda by promoting collaborative working. Further support has been provided to various groups to ensure they have policies, procedures and action plans in place. Despite the restrictions placed on activities by budget capping, further bridge funding has been provided to two well developed community groups that were able to demonstrate that they have business strategies in place to seek external funding for longer term sustainability.

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**Box 6.4: 'Pride in East Manchester': celebrating the diversity in the area**

Beacons Information and Participation Project with its varied and imaginative ways of communicating and appealing to different age groups has been "all about pride and raising expectations of the area but without people having to go to meetings and fill in questionnaires". The efforts made to use a wide range of communication methods and activities to engage local people and the news that is being conveyed all serve to underline that the NDC area and all its residents are seen as important so that they have helped to strengthen a sense of community identity.

❑    **Young people**

Many regeneration initiatives have found it particularly difficult to engage young people, especially if they have concentrated on involving them in partnership structures and meetings that can seem fairly alien and outside young people's interests. Another potential obstacle occurs if the impression is given in some parts of the programme that young people are the problem not the solution. The examples below illustrate more innovative approaches (Boxes 6.5 and 6.6).

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**Box 6.5:  Young Advisers**

In November 2005, Beacons became one of four NDC pilot areas to deliver the NRU's Young Advisers (YAs) Scheme. The scheme's purpose is to appoint young people aged 15–20 to speak out on behalf of their peers to inform decision makers how services can become more accessible and relevant to young people; in particular to:

• show services how to involve young people

• teach adults how to attract and maintain the interest of young people in planning, managing and reviewing community affairs

• speak out for young people

• work regionally advising others of learning and success.

Six advisers were appointed for East Manchester: one for each area, that is, three across the NDC area. They were all resident in the area they represented. Recruitment was a main challenge because the implementation timescale was so tight. Members of the Youth Inclusion and Participation Network were asked to identify potential people, after which 12 attended a briefing session. As there was more than one from each neighbourhood, the young people attending decided amongst themselves who should do the work. One of the strengths of the team has been the spread of aptitudes. The YAs for Beacons have stayed the same until recently, though one has now left to go away to university. The YAs now interview potential new people with the Beacons Social Regeneration Officer. At first there were five young women and one young man, now there is an equal number of both. The advisers work on a sessional basis of a few hours per week for which they are paid £8 per hour. (There was a need to get work permits for the two 15 year olds and there were restrictions on when they could work which, for example, created some problems in relation to the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) residential meeting.) There is some fluctuation over time, but the average is about 20 hours per month.

The pilot included:

• training by the NRU

• mentoring by people from different organisations working in partnership in East Manchester to champion youth participation. Mentors were all members of the Youth Inclusion Working group

- co-ordination of the work by the advisers themselves, their mentors and ultimately by the Beacons Social Regeneration Officer who provides their support. Potential work opportunities are offered to the Young Advisers in the form of presentations and they collectively decide if a piece of work should be undertaken, who should do it and how they will keep the rest of the group informed.

The Social Regeneration Officer's role has been responsibility for taking the scheme from conception to implementation, administering it, ensuring its continuation and co-ordinating joint projects. He acts as a conduit for ideas in both directions between organisations and the YAs. He gives support alongside the mentors. Having mentors from the voluntary sector, RSLs, Youth Service and Regeneration has been indirectly beneficial to multi-agency working. Early on, it took about 2 days per week of his time for 3 months; after that about 0.5 days per week. However, "they add so much value" to his work that he "gets the days back" because they are like a little team for him.

The YAs have contributed to a range of activities:

- setting up Eastland Homes Youth Forum with about 25 members

- redesigning Eastserve website to make it more accessible to young people by developing a steering group of young people from a Youth Centre

- representing young people at Local Area Partnership meetings and Ward meetings

- working with Riverside Estate on the Mini Movie Maker Project to encourage children to think about regeneration

- production of Beacon's DVD

- hosting an event engaging 40 young people to get their views about the area and its services using drama, writing, dance and spray can painting

- designing and delivering Manchester's first Young People's Ward Meeting in Bradford ward, which resulted in the police launching an undercover operation to challenge drug dealing and prostitution outside a youth club and Manchester Leisure to hold consultations about lighting and security in a local park

- working with the Joint Children's Unit in 'Youth Proofing' the Manchester CYP Engagement Strategy

- training Manchester Young People's Council Development Workers being employed with the same job description as the YAs

- running a steering group for creating a cyber café with the support of the Youth Service

- facilitating young people taking photographs of 'hot spots' in their neighbourhood in the Kids with Cameras project

- presenting their work at five national conferences.

YAs are now charging for their advice as consultants to organisations outside the area looking at the YA model. As well as making a real difference in the

community, this is interesting and dynamic work for the young people and is enhancing their CVs.

With the end of the initial Communities and Local Government funding, additional NDC funding has been secured and the possibility of obtaining more over the longer term from the Children's Fund and similar pots is being explored.

A Youth Advisers' charitable company has now been formed with a view to this taking over the functions that had been done by government: handling enquiries, training, providing peer support for YAs, drawing down match funding, being a repository for good practice. This will have offices in London and Manchester. The Beacons Senior Regeneration Officer is Chair of the Trustees in a personal capacity.

## Box 6.6: Youth Outreach and Inclusion Project

From the beginning, Seven Sisters NDC realised that provision for youth and young people had to be a key objective. Research had shown that the area had:

- A disproportionately large population under the age of 25
- A lack of facilities for young people
- A fear of crime perpetrated by young people.

A project was proposed to try and deal with the issues highlighted. This project became the Youth Outreach and Inclusion programme. The programme had four fundamental aims, to:

- engage young people from all sections of the community
- allow young people to participate in the development and delivery of the programme
- raise education achievement of children, young people and adults
- help fulfil the aspirations of young people.

A first consultation with young people was held in April 2002 from which priorities for young people were identified and the Youth Forum evolved. It found that young people wanted more than just the kind of activities associated with youth clubs. They wanted to be engaged in projects that interested them and were relevant to their lives. For instance young people in the Somali community wanted help with education and business development skills that they could use in the real world. The NDC created a project worker post for the Alhijra Somali community so that these skills could be developed and provided access to the relevant courses that were available via mainstream service providers such as Haringey Adult Learning Services (HALS) and the College of North East London.

Many of the young people they engaged in the area had an interest in sports, music, and the visual arts, so the NDC created projects that could develop that interest. These projects included sports coaching, dance, and video and music production.

The work done by the Youth Outreach Team has received both national and international recognition and they have won a number of awards including a Peace Alliance award for their work bringing rival gangs together. However, mainstream support has been limited. The Youth programme has made numerous attempts to work with Haringey Youth Services, but throughout the life of the programme the borough's Youth Services have been in a state of flux.

❑   **Older people**

Although community representatives in NDCs are frequently older people with the time and commitment to be involved, this does not mean that older people as a group have necessarily engaged. However, it often becomes clear that where major change is happening in an area, older members of the population are not only the most vulnerable but also may feel they are losing their history. Boxes 6.7 and 6.8 indicate examples of NDCs specifically focusing on older people.

### Box 6.7: Older and Bolder in Seven Sisters

Initially older people were the forgotten minority in the area. Engagement with the community in the NDC area had focused on the community as a whole and then later on the youth population. Only 31% of Seven Sister NDC residents over the age of 65 felt that they were part of the community a great deal or a fair amount (MORI survey and baseline information, November 2000). This left an important segment of the community feeling, for the most part, excluded.

The group of projects that came under the banner of Older and Bolder had the following aims, to:

• provide a voice for a minority group and identifying and defining issues that concern them

• involve the older residents of the community more

• help determine priorities for older residents within the NDC community

• explore what older residents can contribute themselves

• enable a consensus to be reached and set goals to be agreed

• form older residents groups and support networks

• provide for greater access to information

• build upon the capacity of older residents to contribute to and shape decisions and implementation

• facilitate greater ownership of the area.

Older people drive the project, enabling networks and associations to be established and cultivated, whilst providing opportunities for all older people, to participate in their neighbourhood. The project also provides the avenue for older people's concerns and views to be heard. The project has three main elements:

- *Older and Bolder Forum*: established in January 2003 and officially launched in March 2003. Forums are held bi-monthly in community venues around the NDC area

- *The Age Well Programme* sets out to bring older residents into activity in their community. It provides opportunities for older residents to be active, establish networks and participate in the social, educational, cultural and economic life of the neighbourhood and a variety of free or low cost activities for older residents aimed at promoting the need for them to keep active

- *Young at Heart* is a quarterly newsletter that covers topical issues of interest to older residents, produced by older people for older people.

Mainstream agency involvement has been limited because Social Services have always been largely disconnected from the programme so that developing links for the Older and Bolder initiatives have also been difficult. However, NDC is supporting older residents to develop their own self sustaining independent organisation.

### Box 6.8: Postcards

A review of the Beacons Resident Liaison Team's work in 2004 looked at areas of weakness and showed that one of the groups that particularly found it hard to engage was older people, especially those living alone who were also likely to be those who would most feel the impact of change. As a result, postcards depicting the area in former times were distributed to them via post offices, neighbourhood wardens, meals-on-wheels, etc. These were designed to evoke their memories as well as be informative by advertising initiatives such as the warden scheme.

# 7. Working alongside others

This section looks at ways in which NDCs have supported community engagement through strengthening the capacity of partners to build engagement into their working practices.

## Engaging residents with other agencies

Some NDCs are working alongside other initiatives that also need to involve residents. It can be confusing for local people to know who is responsible for which activity and understand the complexity of decision making. This points to the need for as seamless an approach as possible across agencies, but this is not always easy or possible if their goals, style of working and the demands of their timetables and budgets impose constraints on the degree of integration that can be achieved (Box 7.1).

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**Box 7.1: Burngreave: making sense of complexity**

In the Spital Hill area of the NDC neighbourhood a multitude of interventions are planned or in place:

- priority bus lanes on Burngreave Road

- transport suggestions by the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Masterplan

- a new parking scheme

- NDC renovations to buildings

- the public realm project also includes transport initiatives

- work going on for a new inner ring road.

This created confusion for residents, who did not understand which agency is doing what. One interviewee commented that, although all agencies make efforts to engage with the community, "people can't differentiate between different officials and can't see how different initiatives are going to reconcile different interests". In the case of the HMRP, the New Deal has utilised its local links to bring together interested parties. The Spital Hill project group tries to bring organisations together, and BNDfC through the Business Forum (and its offshoot the Spital Hill forum) has facilitated meetings between the HMRP and Spital Hill traders whose buildings are to be demolished.

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However, there are also examples where agencies appear to have learned from the NDC approach. In Haringey, the local authority's Youth Forum used the NDC Youth Forum as a model for development. Haringey Better Homes, Parks Department and Children's Services have all used the NDC to run consultation events, and an Estate Compact was developed in a local estate as a direct result of the work carried out by the NDC engagement team.

# Materials for partners

As well as working directly with other organisations, some NDCs have produced materials, guidance or protocols that can be adopted by others (Box 7.2).

| **Box 7.2:  East Manchester Social Inclusion Toolkit** |
|---|
| NDC developed the toolkit with partners from public and voluntary sectors as a framework for making services and projects more accessible to everyone in the community. It is aimed primarily at regeneration practitioners and service providers from the public, community and voluntary sectors. It is designed to inform the development of policies, procedures and practices in relation to inclusion and accessibility. It describes the approach taken to social inclusion prior to the development of the toolkit but indicates that though valuable the activity had tended to develop in a piecemeal way. At first, it was concluded that there should be a Hard-to-Reach Strategy, but as work began on this, it became clear that what was being created was a toolkit that could be a more live and evolving document. The methodology for developing it was to:<br><br>• map who was being reached by projects, programmes, agencies and organisations in the area<br><br>• determine how the groups/individuals were identified<br><br>• examine the kinds of barriers and needs identified<br><br>• look at how these needs were addressed.<br><br>There have been some later updates as a result of getting some groups to do some work around it: lesbians and gays; older people; women; minority ethnic groups.<br><br>The toolkit has now been adopted throughout the Beacons Partnership and by partner organisations in East Manchester. It includes best practice examples of projects supported by NDC that sought to engage particular 'hard-to-reach' groups. The examples are accompanied by 'top tips'. There has also been a pledge introduced associated with the training: "As a result of this training, I am going to . . ." . 75% of the pledges have been delivered within 6 months. |

# Support for the VCS

NDCs recognise that voluntary and community sector partners are key to strengthening community infrastructure in a sustainable way. In Seven Sisters "The voluntary and community sector organisations operating in the NDC area have enjoyed support from the programme in the form of direct grant assistance. The nature of this support now needs to change. In future, the support we provide will take the form of organisational capacity building, social enterprise development and encouraging our mainstream funded partners to commission voluntary sector organisations to provide local services, where appropriate."[12]

[12]  The Bridge NDC 2006/07 delivery plan.

Box 7.3 describes the capacity building infrastructure development programme in East Manchester, the way that it has evolved and the type of support that the NDC has given.

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**Box 7.3: An evolving strategy in East Manchester**

A VCS capacity building programme has been in operation in East Manchester since 1998 and has covered a range of interventions. At first, NDC basically supported what was already there: supporting existing organisations, building on, and continuing funding for, small scale capacity building initiatives which had provided accessible and local training for residents involved in local groups and devolved decision making on local grants to a resident panel. An impact assessment to see how far the five main organisations had benefited showed that, although there had been benefit, there was still on the one hand, overlap and duplication and on the other, an absence of new developments to respond to local needs. After this, NDC's policy switched towards using carrots and sticks to transform organisations and encourage a shift from a grants culture to a commissioning one. This work was done alongside local people on the management committees of the organisations concerned.

The general thrust of the capacity building programme has been to support organisations in developing a more strategic and evidence based approach to planning and delivering their services and to ensure that local residents remain central. NDC has given specific support – training, skill sharing and revenue support – to some key local voluntary groups:

• Manchester University settlement in developing a greater focus on youth

• East Manchester Community Forum to adapt after a cut in their grant support from the City Council

• practical and financial support to Bradford and Beswick Community Group, Clayton Community Association and Joint Openshaw Group to form 4CT (See below).

For a while, there was a Voluntary Sector Consortium ("a hybrid infrastructure organisation") as a mechanism for the sector to feed into the NDC Board and the public sector agencies but this was disbanded in 2005. Beacons supported 4CT and East Manchester Community Forum to set up a new network – Network East – launched in September 2006. The aim is for this to enable skill sharing and give support to smaller organisations as well as provide a mechanism for electing a voluntary sector person to the NDC Board.

**4CT**

4CT works across the area but also has locally focused activities in each of Beswick, Clayton and Openshaw neighbourhoods. It was launched in April 2005 following the merger of the three constituent community organisations, each about ten years old. A resident member of one of these, involved with NDC from the outset, had the idea of the merger. It now has a strategic development plan until 2009. Its vision is to be a key player in developing a new vibrant community in East

Manchester as a high profile advisory, development and support agency that is financially and organisationally sustainable. Its six aims are:

- *Core service provision and impact*: to provide a range of high quality, efficient, effective and co-ordinated services, projects and activities with evidence about the added value
- *Marketing/PR*: to identify where services are most needed and raise its profile in these areas to be able to exploit opportunities
- *New services*: identify, research, select, plan, pilot and implement new service areas to meet unmet needs and generate sources of sustainable income
- *Human resource development*: ensure staffing and volunteer provision is optimised, recognising and developing skills and abilities
- *Financial strategy/funding*: create other and sustainable funding streams through implementing financial development plans
- *Management/governance/partnership*: harness resources to meet agreed mission and objectives and develop longer term plans, partnerships and commissioning opportunities.

There are currently four main projects:

- managing the Grange Centre in Beswick
- Beswick Community Development Project – mainly funded by Manchester City Council
- Clayton Project – children's clubs and after school activities in Clayton Sure Start premises
- co-ordination of projects in Openshaw Youth Centre.

As from May 2007, 4CT will also manage a sports centre in Openshaw. It is largely moving from area-based projects to themed ones, such as Sport and Youth. Connexions have commissioned 4CT to manage (commission and monitor) Positive Activities for Young People city-wide.

Beacons NDC played a key role in relation to the merger and developing the new organisation:

- A Principal Regeneration Officer supported the merger process over 12 months as an honest broker to help those concerned to work through the practicalities, garner the strengths of the pre-existing organisations and jettison their weaknesses
- NDC funded community capacity building in different areas
- NDC funded the marketing and stationery for 4CT
- Since its launch, NDC has helped 4CT to become involved in different forums and raise its profile.

In return, 4CT can supply some capacity building functions for groups supported by NDC. It has employed the Young Advisers. There is resident involvement in 4CT's own decision making with six residents on the Board (two of whom are also on the NDC Board and one served a term as NDC Chair). Most staff live locally. It reaches about 4,000 services users and is currently embarking on 'social auditing' to underline and measure its social role. There is a potential for developing more practical links with other organisations in East Manchester, such as Eastland Homes, but it is already integrating with city-wide organisations, e.g. by being the voluntary sector hub organisation for the NW and NE District for Parenting and Family Support. Overall, 4CT can help to embed community engagement in a way that can continue after NDC finishes.

# 8. Avoiding pitfalls

## Insiders and outsiders

Although community participation policies are designed to open up decision making, other research has found that it can sometimes unintentionally make it "the preserve of a small group of insiders".[13] One risk is that a few residents become too high profile and/or are seen to have too much power with the associated danger that they have privileged access and become distanced from other residents and less accountable. Equally it can be too easy for staff to fall back on trusted and reliable people at the expense of casting the net more widely. Having or being seen to have an inner coterie becomes a vicious circle so that, for example, when Board elections happen, places are uncontested. NDC staff are frequently aware of this and try to take steps to avoid it and create an ever widening pool of involved people.

## Network dynamics

Going beyond just involving the 'usual suspects' requires an understanding of the way that the dynamics of social networks can lead to them being inequitable, exclusive and dependent upon a few people. (Box 8.1)

| Box 8.1: Network dynamics |
|---|
| **Inequity** |
| 1. *Preferential attachment*: the more governance structures a person is involved in, the more attractive s/he will be to others as a potential participant because of the information or influence s/he has. |
| 2. *The rich get richer*: having some linking social capital makes it easier to create more though knowledge and skills about how the system works, a reputation for being a 'good' participant and contacts with people in other governance activities. |
| **Exclusivity** |
| 3. *Closure*: the value of linking social capital often comes from preventing others from accessing it. It suits some public sector partners to work with some community representatives instead of others, and suits representatives to be the community voices that are privileged in decision-making. |
| 4. *Self exclusion*: some potential participants may choose not to because they decide it is not for them, they think their interests are better served in other less formal arenas or being denied a chance to participate can become a rallying point for other forms of collective action. |

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[13] Skidmore *et al op cit.*

> **Dependency**
>
> 5. *Community dependency*: some participants taking on a disproportionate share of governance activities can create a vicious circle, increasing their own burden and dampening others' enthusiasm, so that others assume existing participants will be filling the places and participants assume that if they do not, no-one else will be willing.
>
> 6. *Institutional dependency*: institutions get into the habit of using tried and trusted individuals who know the ropes rather than investing time and resources in unknown quantities.

Source: Skidmore, Bound and Lownsbrough

# A spread of representation

Diversity in an area presents a major challenge, especially when there is a large number of smaller and perhaps recently arrived ethnic groups. It is beyond the scope of this report to deal with this important issue in any detail. However, the experiences of some of these case studies suggest that it has been very difficult for NDCs to know about new arrivals in the area. This has been evident in relation to asylum seekers[14] and more recently migrant workers. Where NDCs do know about them and try to engage with them, longstanding residents can resent the idea of 'their' money going to newcomers. Where there are tensions between groups, rumours and misconceptions can easily arise about some groups getting an unfair share of resources and it can lead to particular population groups disengaging. Another section of the population that has not usually been strongly targeted are people with disabilities.

This is a facet of engagement that needs to be kept under constant review, but it is also necessary to be aware of the need to manage expectations and perceptions, to identify where elements of racism or other types of discrimination are coming in and recognise the implications for community cohesion.

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[14] CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University, CUPS, University of Manchester and EIUA, Liverpool John Moores University, *Seeking Asylum in NDC Areas: A Report on Experiences, Policies and Practices*, NDC National Evaluation, Research Report 18, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University, November 2003.

# 9. Benchmarking and evaluation

This section looks briefly at ways in which the outcomes of community engagement can be benchmarked and then at the sorts of indicators that can be used to evaluate engagement activities. This is primarily based on evidence from previous research.

## Dimensions of community participation

Table 9.1 identifies four dimensions of community participation and from these derives twelve benchmarks (Box 9.2).

It can easily be seen how the examples of NDC activities cited earlier related to these four dimensions of influence, inclusivity, communication and capacity:

- Opportunities for community *influence* come through representation on the board, theme and project groups and through access to that representation.

- *Inclusivity* is expressed in the ways in which NDCs have examined and tried to incorporate – even if not always wholly successfully – the diversity of their local communities through outreach and through equal opportunities and community cohesion policies and through the value accorded to their volunteers together with the training and support for them to maximise their contribution and advance their individual prospects.

- NDCs have focused variously on *communication*, giving out information and getting local feedback about both the programme priorities and the way it is being implemented through the use of various media including roadshows, newsletters and websites and through the use of accessible community venues and events.

- One of the goals of NDCs is to equip their communities for long term participation in the running of their communities and NDCs have sought to build local *capacity* through the training of community activists, creating and supporting local community groups and forums and through developing voluntary and community sector infrastructure. Some have also worked with and/or produced materials for mainstream agencies to develop their understanding of, and capacity for, community engagement.

## Table 9.1: Dimensions of community participation

| **Influence** | **Inclusivity** |
|---|---|
| How partnerships involve communities in the 'shaping' of regeneration plans/activities and in all decision making. | How partnerships ensure all groups and interests in the community can participate, and the ways in which inequality is addressed. |
| **Communication** | **Capacity** |
| How partnerships develop effective ways of sharing information with communities and clear procedures that maximise community participation. | How partnerships provide resources required by communities to participate and support both local people and those from partner agencies to develop their understanding, knowledge and skills. |

Source: Mandy Wilson & Pete Wilde, *Benchmarking community participation*, JRF, 2003

## Table 9.2: The 12 benchmarks of community participation

| **Influence** | **Inclusivity** |
|---|---|
| 1. The community is recognised and valued as an equal partner at all stages of the process.<br><br>2. There is meaningful community representation on all decision-making bodies from initiation.<br><br>3. All community members have the opportunity to participate.<br><br>4. Communities have access to and control over resources.<br><br>5. Evaluation of regeneration partnerships incorporates a community agenda. | 1. The diversity of local communities and interests is reflected at all levels of the regeneration process.<br><br>2. Equal opportunities policies are in place and implemented.<br><br>3. Unpaid workers/volunteers are valued. |
| **Communication** | **Capacity** |
| 1. A two-way information strategy is developed and implemented.<br><br>2. Programme and project procedures are clear and accessible. | 1. Communities are resourced to participate.<br><br>2. Understanding, knowledge and skills are developed to support partnership working. |

Source: Mandy Wilson & Pete Wilde, *Benchmarking community participation*, JRF, 2003

# Indicators

In addition to monitoring their activities in relation to communication, consultation and engagement, NDCs have used questions in the NDC national evaluation household surveys and in local surveys to assess changes in outcomes in respect of perceptions and involvement. Indicators include the following:

- increasing the proportion of people who have heard about NDC
- increasing the level of participation in governance structures
- increasing the proportion of residents engaged in voluntary activity
- increasing the proportion of residents holding offices in local community and voluntary organisations
- increasing the proportion of residents that feel involved in the community
- reducing the proportion not interested in getting involved in the local community
- maintaining or increasing the number of tenant and resident associations
- the number of residents who believe the area is getting better
- reducing the proportion wanting to move out of the area.

Ideally, it is important to derive findings that will provide not just an average for the NDC area but also a fuller picture that shows the significance of variables, such as gender, age, ethnic background, neighbourhood and tenure type, and that will point to ways in which the strategy might be made more effective. Similarly, resident surveys may need to be supplemented by periodic reviews to update the community capacity baseline.

# 10. Key messages

This section summarises some of the main lessons from these NDC case studies, which largely underline the findings of earlier NDC research. It covers the factors that have been found to be helpful; those that have been hindrances; and the key messages.

## Helping factors

❐   **Starting early**

Resident need to be engaged in producing the initial plans and strategies.

❐   **Formal governance roles and clear structures**

Community representatives need to see where they fit within the organisation and be clear about the scope of their powers and responsibilities.

❐   **A range of involvement opportunities**

People should have a choice about how much time they give and have options about the nature of their participation: in the overall governance, theme groups, local forums, project management groups, etc.

❐   **Good promotion and communications**

All forms of communication need to be imaginative, jargon free, timely and informative, deploying a variety of media and containing not just good news stories but also being open about delays and difficulties.

❐   **Dedicated, skilled teams**

Community engagement staff need to have the appropriate knowledge, experience and ability for their role and a sufficient breadth of remit to ensure that community engagement is not compartmentalised.

❐   **Evident change**

Visible results can help to make people think that both the scheme and their involvement in it is worthwhile. For it to appear to be just a talking shop is counterproductive to engagement.

❐   **Quick wins**

Instigating early projects, such as Community Chests, in which community representatives can take a lead and which also reach a wide range of groups in the area can – with some provisos (see below) – help to generate positive messages and encourage involvement.

❏ **A culture of engagement**

Engagement needs to be embedded throughout the organisation's way of working, for example, by making meetings accessible, timing right; comfortable in the nature of the discussion, not overwhelmed by professionals.

❏ **High profile community events** can be important ways of boosting community morale, and provide opportunities for engaging with large numbers of people. However, they 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 the team to focus on other engagement activities.

❏ **Valuing involvement**

Some participants give an enormous amount of voluntary time to their NDCs and are often also very exposed to community feedback – negative as well as positive. Involvement takes its toll and some suffer from burn-out. Showing that the effort is appreciated can help to sustain their morale and enthusiasm. This does not have to be in the form of a cash reward but rather, in the words of one volunteer, "a bit of pampering or respite as a 'thanks for everything' gesture". Various forms of 'thank you' events from Board dinners to community awards can be effective provided that they are not seen as excessive, or a misuse of public money.

❏ **Training**

It is important to provide training for resident representatives and volunteers so that they can benefit individually and enhance their employment prospects as well as be more effective in their NDC role.

## Hindering factors

❏ **Lack of clarity about community participation**

Different understandings can lead to contention. As one case study put it: "Some involved with the partnership feel that the community's role is primarily a consultative one; others feel that the partnership should be owned and driven by the community." But it is also the case that although community engagement is different from community development, the latter needs to be taking place if community engagement is to be effective.

❏ **Unrealistic expectations and shifting ground rules**

Being unclear or having divergent understandings about how much power will be in the hands of the local community can drive a wedge between community representatives and professionals and undermine engagement activities.

❏ **Effective participation requires capacity**

Communities can only lead if time, money and resources are invested beforehand so that they have the capacity and skills to lead. The problem is that this capacity has seldom been developed early enough, which has meant that in some partnership structures, the professionals have normally ended up initially taking the lead, which meant that for some people perceptions of the partnership became skewed very early on.

❏ **Starting too late**

In addition to having to make up for lost time, coming late to developing a community engagement strategy can mean that the approach is reactive and *ad hoc* rather than proactive and comprehensive and stands less chance of becoming properly embedded. Although not all needs can be anticipated from the outset, the strategy needs to establish a framework that encompasses developing the information base for effective targeting and includes periodic reviews.

❏ **A legacy of mistrust**

People often start with a negative view of the public sector based upon past experience or hearsay. Community members who got involved at an early stage were sometimes those already 'active' in the community or voluntary sector, who were more accustomed to taking an adversarial stance than working in partnership.

❏ **An unrepresentative few**

Those with the loudest or most persistent voices may only represent minority views or those of specific interest groups. If given a disproportionately prominent role, they can subvert the whole engagement process. Even if the position is less dramatic, it can be difficult to engage a true cross section perhaps because new ethnic groups have only recently arrived and there is a lack of networks to provide them with a voice or enable engagement with them. But the NDC experience seems to bear out the 'network dynamics' findings cited earlier[15] that established representatives and the Partnership can both behave in ways that 'keep things cosy' and perpetuate existing representation rather than attempting to widen the net.

❏ **In it for the money**

There are tensions between an NDC's governance role and its role as a funder. Some groups can be primarily interested in NDC as a source of funding but they do not share in the wider goals of the programme. This can lead to them challenging the motives of other partners, and as a result both members of the community and some partners becoming disengaged. Having a major source of funding can stimulate the formation of small groups with little prospect of survival and sometimes questionable legitimacy. From the NDCs' side, if funding is used as a means of trying to win over groups, they may find that instead it

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[15]  Skidmore *et al op cit.*

provokes greater inter-group rivalry without necessarily achieving sustained participation or any contribution to the regeneration programme.

❒ **New policy initiatives**

Although other schemes taking place concurrently in the area, such as Housing Market Renewal, may provide an opportunity for synergy and levering in more resources but can also complicate the task enormously where they have different timescales, priorities and styles of working.

## Key messages

Are around the importance of:

- a board/management committed to community engagement
- a strong and appropriate leadership style
- a culture of openness
- developing a core group that can engage effectively
- providing the necessary support to community representatives
- having a dedicated team with the appropriate skills
- recognising that community engagement in general and meeting the needs of diverse communities in particular will be resource intensive and requires a lot of face-to-face activity going far beyond 'second hand' communications
- imaginative publicity and communications
- utilising the strengths of, and working through, other organisations in the area
- defining the distinctive role the organisation can play – co-ordination, brokering, etc
- developing the evidence base for targeting
- developing materials that mainstream organisations can use.

# Appendix 1: Resources

*Active Partners – Benchmarking Community Participation in Regeneration*, Yorkshire Forward 2000

*Community Engagement in Policing Guide*

COI, *Communicating with Communities using Outreach: a Good Practice Guide* prepared by Stephane Gray, Christine Roberts, Patricia Macauley and Ross James, July 2006

The East Manchester Social Inclusion Toolkit, New Deal for East Manchester and Manchester City Council

Hamer, L., *Community engagement for health: A preliminary review of training and development needs and existing provision for public sector organisations and their workers*, National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2005

Involve, *People and Participation: How to put citizens at the heart of decision-making*, Involve/Together we can, Home Office 2005

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Ipsos MORI, *Ingredients for Community Engagement: the Civic Pioneer Experience*, September 2006

Manchester Women's Network, *Looking at gender and community engagement in Manchester*, 2005

Mistry, D., *Community engagement: practical lessons from a pilot project*, Development and Practice Report 48, Home Office 2007

National Neighbourhood Management Network, *Delivering Neighbourhood Management: a practical guide*, NRU, 2005

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Popay, Jenny, *Community Engagement for health improvement: questions of definition, outcomes and evaluation*, a background paper for the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), March 2006

renewal.net, *Community engagement: developing working partnerships with black and minority ethnic communities*, 2005

Scottish Centre for Regeneration, *Community Engagement How to Guide*, Communities Scotland, www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/
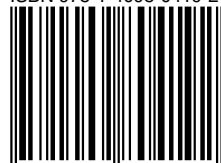
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