Communities
and Local Government

Improving attainment?

Interventions in education by the New Deal for Communities Programme

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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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Summary

Introduction

The New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme was announced in 1998 and designed to reduce gaps between some of the most deprived areas in England and the rest of the country. Thirty-nine NDC partnerships have been established in areas accommodating on average 9,800 people. Each partnership is implementing an approved 10 year delivery plan which has attracted an average of £50m of Government investment.

This report presents the findings of one element of the second phase of the evaluation of the NDC Programme: research in four case study NDC partnerships focusing on interventions and outcomes under the theme of education. The four are Birmingham Aston, Liverpool, Newcastle and Southwark.

Improving educational outcomes at the neighbourhood level

Spatial concentrations of disadvantage demonstrate themselves in a variety of ways but arguably education is the most important, since educational attainment is a good predictor of a wide range of adult outcomes. Additionally, the evidence suggests that the UK demonstrates one of the highest levels of inequality in educational outcomes among the industrial nations.[1] Moreover inequality is not just a function of performance at school: the gap in attainment between the children of affluent and less well-off parents emerges early – long before school.

Various factors affect educational attainment, including neighbourhood, household income, parental socio-economic status and educational background, gender and ethnicity. On all these indicators, gaps have closed in recent years, yet remain substantial. A wide range of factors contributes to these inequalities, with different factors affecting different groups, and operating at different stages in students' educational careers. However, the evidence suggests that a school's performance is a relatively minor contributor to low attainment, according a literature review for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) as little as 14 per cent of the variation.[2] Of all these various influencing factors, the evidence suggests that family background and household income are key.

The evidence suggests that there is a variety of strands that are critical to strategies to promote greater equality of educational outcome. Given the importance of family background, early identification and intervention are important, as well as support for parents. The evidence suggests there is also an important contribution to be made

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[1]   OECD (2001) *Knowledge and Skills for Life, first results from PISA 2000*. Paris: OECD.
[2]   Cassen, R. and Kingdon, G. (2007) *Tackling low educational achievement*. York: JRF.

by activities outside the schools system. And finally, while schools may account for a smaller proportion of variations in educational attainment than individual, home and background factors, they are nevertheless important: there are a variety of school and classroom characteristics that appear to make a difference.

NDC approaches to improving educational outcomes

Of all the indicators of spatial disadvantage, education may be the most important; but it may also be among the most difficult to tackle. The case study NDC partnerships share some broadly common characteristics including low aspirations and parents' poor experience of school, both feeding through into low attainment – and of course, poverty, inextricably linked to low attainment. In addition, on average, to reach 80 per cent of its school age population, each NDC has to deal with 10 primary and 10 secondary schools. With pupils so geographically dispersed, designing schools-based interventions that genuinely reach significant numbers of NDC residents becomes problematic. There is also a high level of mobility among children in NDC areas.

Despite similarities in relation to the issues they face, the four NDCs have adopted varying priorities, and devoted varying proportions of their overall budget to educational activity. Latest available figures suggest that expenditure in the four case studies varies between 11 per cent and 16 per cent (which is also the programme average). All four case study partnerships have been involved with a wide range of interventions, for example, 25 under the education theme in Newcastle. All the interventions are in some way designed to reduce the gaps in educational attainment, but their diversity across the four means that it is not always easy to discern a clear 'theory of change'. Within this diversity, a number of common themes emerge.

All the NDC partnerships have supported capital improvements, provided additional equipment and resources for local schools, helped support families and parents, funded a variety of interventions supporting early years, promoted improved attendance, and encouraged access to further and higher education.

Although there were difficulties in some areas to begin with, all four NDCs have established productive relationships with local schools, often establishing a forum bringing together local heads for the first time. Representatives of parents and local communities have been involved in the development and monitoring of educational interventions. In some cases there were tensions, with community representatives insisting that NDC resources should not be used to fund what was perceived to be the responsibility of the local authority.

Change in educational outcomes in NDC areas

The 39 NDC areas started from very different positions and faced different challenges in relation to educational attainment. Since 2002, there have been improvements across all the main indicators and in all 39 NDC areas, in some cases to a very substantial extent. In all the cases, improvements across the Programme as a whole

have outstripped improvements at the national level, and in some cases the gap between NDC areas and their parent local authority has also closed.

However, there have also been improvements over the period, across all the indicators, for a series of comparator areas, outside the NDC programme but selected for their similarity. In fact, educational performance has improved faster than the national average for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and in deprived areas generally, including non-NDC areas. What this means is that for the NDC Programme as a whole, there is no evidence that the presence of the NDC partnerships has made a decisive difference: other disadvantaged areas did broadly just as well.

Detailed statistical analysis of educational attainment data has been undertaken to attempt to establish clearer causal links.[3] The central question explored was: 'has the educational attainment of children living in the NDC partnerships improved relative to what would have happened in the absence of the NDC Programme?' The research team found little statistically significant variation in outcomes for the whole cohort between NDC and comparator areas, even after controlling for the differences between these areas and NDC areas. However, three groups of children appeared to have fared better in NDC areas than in the comparators: those with relatively low prior attainment at Key Stage 2; those from the lowest income areas; and children from black Caribbean, other black and Bangladeshi ethnic groups – generally regarded as (along with white boys) among the lowest achieving sub-groups.

A sustainable approach? The implications for forwards strategies

Although there have been significant improvements in standards of educational achievement in NDC areas, there remains a long way to go before gaps between NDC areas and elsewhere are completely closed. It is important therefore to understand whether the processes of change are likely to be continued.

As the NDC Programme approaches its final years, partnerships are increasingly drawing up formal succession strategies, setting out plans to preserve their legacies and in some cases their institutions. This study suggests that plans for sustainability are now often routinely built into the design of interventions. However, there are inevitable uncertainties, especially where sustainability plans depend on mainstream resources, since these are now likely to be scarce.

Conclusions: the implications of the research

While educational attainment has improved in all NDC areas, in some cases substantially, the evidence strongly suggests that other factors, beyond any NDC intervention, played a major part and indeed may have been decisive. Improved standards in NDC areas owe at least as much to changes in the national policy

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[3]   CLG (2010) *Narrowing the Gap? Analysing the impact of the New Deal for Communities Programme on educational attainment*. London: CLG.

framework as they do to interventions by the NDCs. What then are the implications for NDCs and any similar area-focused intervention that may follow them?

For most NDCs, the evidence presented in this report suggests that supporting *school-based* interventions is not necessarily the most efficient means of improving educational attainment for children who are residents of the area. Two areas where NDCs can add value are firstly, supporting increased and enhanced parental involvement in their children's education, and particularly when it encourages support for learning in the home.

Secondly, NDCs could focus a greater share of resources on out-of-school activities, which evidence suggests are vital for children's learning. From an NDC perspective, the great advantage of investment in out-of-school activities is that it allows rather more precise targeting of benefit than schools-based investment. To suggest that for many NDCs, a strategy that focuses investment *outside* the school system may be counter-intuitive; however, given the impact of national policy, and the difficulty of targeting NDC resident children through schools-based approaches, this is what the evidence indicates.

1. Introduction

1.1.   The New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme was announced in 1998 and was designed to reduce gaps between some of the most deprived areas in England and the rest of the country. Thirty-nine NDC partnerships were established, each implementing an approved 10 year delivery plan which has attracted an average of £50m of Government investment.

1.2.   This report presents the findings of one element of the second phase of the National Evaluation of NDC: research in four case study NDC partnerships focusing on interventions and outcomes designed to improve educational attainment. The research was carried out between May and August 2009. A full description of research methods is included in Appendix 1.

1.3.   The first phase of the NDC evaluation involved detailed research in each of the 39 partnerships, focusing on the processes of partnership building, the development of baselines and an analysis of the problems facing local regeneration partnerships.[4] In this second phase, the evaluation is focusing on understanding how and why change has occurred in NDC neighbourhoods. This has been undertaken by using administrative and household survey data to identify outcome change and through detailed locality-based research to explore relationships between change and interventions thus identifying, if possible, what has worked in effecting positive change in NDC neighbourhoods. Research has been undertaken on crime and community safety, housing, health and the impact of community involvement.[5]

1.4.   This phase of the evaluation is not resourced to carry out detailed work in all 39 NDC partnerships. For this study, four case study NDC partnerships have been identified to illustrate the nature and impacts of NDC interventions to improve educational attainment. The four represent a regional spread, and are selected from the NDCs which appear to demonstrate the greatest change in a range of education indicators over the life of the programme.[6] The four are:

- Birmingham (Aston)
- Liverpool
- Newcastle
- Southwark.

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4   This phase culminated in the interim evaluation, NRU Research Report 17 NDC Evaluation 2001–05
www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/publications.asp?did=1623
5   These reports are available at the New Deal for Communities national evaluation website:
http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ndc/ndc_reports_02.htm
6   As we discuss in more detail later in this report, apparent changes in indicators of educational attainment at the neighbourhood level can occur for a variety of reasons, including demographic change.

1.5.   Table 1.1 contains a brief outline of each of the NDC case study areas.

Table 1.1: Case study NDCs	
Case Study NDC	**Area description**
Birmingham Aston	The Aston Pride NDC area is on the northwest side of Birmingham city centre. There is a mixture of residential and industrial areas with a large number of older pre-1914 terraced housing as well as more recent council housing. The area has an ethnic majority population and a relatively high proportion of young people.
Liverpool	The NDC is in a largely residential inner suburb developed in the Victorian era and has traditionally been a predominantly white, working class, neighbourhood. There has also historically been a small, but long-standing black and minority ethnic (BME) population, which has recently become more diverse. The NDC has a major housing programme and indeed sits within a Housing Market Renewal Partnership (HMRP) area. Overall the population has declined by about 20 per cent during the NDC lifetime, which has led to falling rolls. There is a strong Catholic presence locally, with two of the five primary schools connected to the Catholic church, and an Academy which is jointly sponsored by the Catholic and Church of England dioceses.
Newcastle	The NDC is situated in a predominantly residential area west of the city centre. The area consists of homes of various types and tenures in the Arthur's Hill, Cruddas Park, Elswick and Rye Hill areas. The NDC area has a relatively high proportion of black and minority ethnic communities, which are spatially concentrated towards the north of the area. It is also in a HMRP area. There are six primary schools in the NDC area; of these two are Roman Catholic and one is Church of England voluntary aided.
Southwark	Aylesbury estate is home for 10,000 people in the most deprived ward in Southwark (8th most deprived in England). The NDC area consists of an estate of about 2,800 dwellings, largely built in the 1960s and a mix of high and low rise concrete buildings in deteriorating condition. Communal open space is limited and unattractive, and there are few shops or facilities on the estate itself. It is characterised by a high proportion of social housing, black and minority ethnic communities and worklessness.

1.6.   The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 reviews data on educational outcomes in deprived areas, and examines the evidence on the factors influencing educational performance at neighbourhood level
- Chapter 3 looks at NDC approaches to improving educational outcomes
- Chapter 4 considers the way education outcomes have changed across the NDC programme
- Chapter 5 examines how far the NDC approaches are sustainable, and discusses the implications for forward strategies
- Chapter 6 discusses the implications of the study, and summarises the lessons for central government and local regeneration partnerships
- Appendix 1 details the research approach
- Appendix 2 provides references to literature drawn on for the study
- Appendix 3 provides a glossary of acronyms used in the report.

2. Improving educational outcomes in deprived neighbourhoods

Introduction

2.1.   Spatial concentrations of disadvantage demonstrate themselves in various ways across different policy outcomes; but arguably education is the most important, since educational attainment is a good predictor of a wide range of adult outcomes. The evidence suggests that this is a particular problem for the UK, which has one of the highest levels of inequality in educational outcomes among the industrial nations.[7] In a summary of evidence for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), Donald Hirsch concludes that 'Children from disadvantaged backgrounds do worse than those from advantaged backgrounds by a greater amount than elsewhere'.[8]

2.2.   While the gap has been closing in recent years, the links between educational attainment and poverty are unarguable. Moreover, inequality is not just a function of performance at school: the gap in attainment between the children of affluent and less well-off parents emerges early – long before school. One study found '… differences between children from different socio-economic groups at 22 and 42 months'.[9]

2.3.   This chapter provides a brief summary of the evidence on deprivation and educational outcomes. Specifically it:

- describes the scale of inequalities in educational outcomes, between different neighbourhoods and different groups within the community

- discusses the range of factors that account for the inequalities

- outlines what is understood about the effectiveness of measures to reduce these inequalities

- discusses the relationship between educational outcomes and neighbourhood composition – residential sorting.

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[7]   OECD (2001) *Knowledge and Skills for Life, first results from PISA 2000*. Paris: OECD.
[8]   Hirsch, D. (2007) *Experiences of poverty and educational disadvantage (summary)*.York: JRF.
[9]   Reported in DCSF (2009a) *Deprivation and Education: The evidence on pupils in England, Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4*. London: DCSF.

Inequality of education outcomes

2.4.   Inequalities in educational attainment can be measured according to a variety of variables, reflecting various dimensions of inequality. On a number of these indicators, gaps have reduced in the last decade, but they nevertheless remain substantial.

2.5.   There continue to be differences in educational outcomes based on residence. In 2007, DCSF reported: 'At the Foundation Stage in 2007, only 35 per cent of pupils in the most deprived areas reached the expected level of attainment, compared to 51 per cent of pupils in other areas'.[10] Another study found that: '… a child brought up in a neighbourhood ranked at the bottom of the educational hierarchy would need parents educated to something like degree level to give him or her the same educational opportunities as another child from an average background'.[11]

2.6.   Much of the work on the relationship between disadvantage and educational attainment uses eligibility for free school meals (FSM) as a proxy for poverty. There are significant overlaps between household income (the criterion determining FSM eligibility) and neighbourhood of residence, but they are distinct. The evidence suggests that both indicators, operating independently, are associated with educational disadvantage. A DCSF study[12] explains the relationship between FSM and educational attainment: '… an FSM child has around three times worse odds of achieving good school outcomes than a non-FSM child at every critical point in their education after age five.'[13]

2.7.   There are also inequalities of outcome based on gender, though this is not unique to the UK. According to one study,[14] 'Girls outperform boys not just in England but also in most other countries', and the gender gap is increasing. About 60 per cent of the 'low achievers' group identified in this study were boys; and the gap widens between primary and secondary school.

2.8.   Although variations partly reflect socio-economic status and gender, there are also differences in educational attainment based on ethnicity, with white boys performing particularly badly. An Ofsted report confirmed that: 'eligibility for free school meals is strongly associated with low achievement,' but went on to say that this is '… significantly more so for white British pupils than for other ethnic groups'.[15] Crudely, Chinese and Indian pupils do best, white boys, African-Caribbeans, black Africans and Bangladeshis do worst. However, once socio-economic status and residence are taken into account, the apparent *ethnic* differences either diminish or even disappear. Within each ethnic group examined in Cassen's study, '… the lower the

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10   ibid.
11   Gibbons, S. (2002) *Neighbourhood Effects on Educational Achievement: Evidence from the Census and National Child Development Study*. London: Centre for the Economics of Education.
12   DCSF (2009a) *Deprivation and Education: The evidence on pupils in England, Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4*. London: DCSF.
13   DCSF (2009b) *Breaking the link between disadvantage and low attainment – everyone's business*. London: DCSF.
14   Cassen, R. and Kingdon, G. (2007) *Tackling low educational achie*vement. York: JRF.
15   Ofsted (2008) *White boys from low-income backgrounds: good practice in schools*. London: Ofsted.

social class, the lower the proportion of students gaining five A*–C (GCSE) grades'.[16]

2.9. The 2009 report from DCSF, *Breaking the link between disadvantage and low attainment*,[17] shows how inequalities in educational outcomes have reduced in recent years. Nationally, average standards have gone up, and the most deprived areas and the most deprived schools have made the most progress. The proportion of children entitled to FSM – roughly the poorest 15 per cent – who get five or more good GCSEs including English and maths has risen from under 15 per cent in 2002 to 23.5 per cent in 2008. Similarly 'the performance of the major census groups black, Asian and mixed has improved faster than the cohort average at both primary and secondary levels over the past five years'. However, FSM children are still less than half as likely to get good GCSE grades as children who are not entitled to FSM, and children eligible for FSM are less likely to gain entry to grammar schools.[18]

2.10. Finally, evidence suggests that while each of the dimensions briefly explored here exerts a distinctive influence on educational performance, taken together the effects are cumulative. DCSF reports that: '… on average, being eligible for FSM depresses average point score at Key Stage 4 by around 22 points, even after controlling for prior attainment and a range of other pupil characteristics. Living in an area of high deprivation as measured by IDACI[19] depresses average point score by a further 10 points'.[20]

What explains the gap?

2.11. A wide range of factors contribute to these inequalities, with different factors affecting different groups, and different factors operating at different stages in students' educational careers: the causes of low attainment in early years are not the same as the causes of low attainment at KS4. If the shorthand suggests a link between disadvantage and low attainment, in practice 'disadvantage' includes a variety of reinforcing yet distinct elements, including material deprivation, indirect effects such as parental education, or the quality of parenting. However, 'Of particular importance is the provision of a stimulating home learning environment, which is found less often in deprived contexts', and '… children from lower socio-economic groups may have different background knowledge, skills and interests which are not reflected in the school curriculum; and are less likely to have the kinds of social connections which offer inspiration and opportunities'.[21]

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[16] Cassen, R. and Kingdon, G. (2007) *Tackling low educational achie*vement. York: JRF.
[17] DCSF (2009b) *Breaking the link between disadvantage and low attainment – everyone's business*. London: DCSF.
[18] According to DCSF, '… between 1997 and 2007 there was a greater proportionate decrease in the FSM rate for grammar schools than for all schools: a 39.6 per cent reduction compared with 20.9 per cent. Over the past decade, therefore, grammar schools have become more unrepresentative of the national population in terms of FSM.'
[19] IDACI is the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index, which shows the percentage of children in each SOA that live in families that are income deprived.
[20] DCSF (2009a) *Deprivation and Education: The evidence on pupils in England, Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4*. London: DCSF.
[21] ibid.

2.12. So, the literature suggests that low attainment derives from some mix of individual family circumstances, the impact of poor neighbourhoods, and the quality of schools and schooling. But can we disentangle this mix with any greater precision?

2.13. A major thrust of policy has long focused on schools performance. More than 40 years ago, a number of 'Educational Priority Areas' was launched, to tackle 'educational handicaps [which] are reinforced by social handicaps'. The contribution of poverty and deprivation to educational standards was acknowledged, the response was '… additional resources [for primary schools] and innovative educational developments'.[22] Yet the evidence suggests that schools' performance is a *relatively* minor contributor to low attainment. A recent study suggested that only '… 14 per cent of variation in achievement is attributable to … school quality. The much greater amount of variation explained by other factors underlines the need to look at the range of children's experiences, inside and outside school, when seeking to raise achievement among those who perform least well'.[23]

2.14. This is not to underestimate the importance of schools' contribution. There is 'evidence to suggest schools are independently important for deprived pupils' outcomes', and 'the quality of teaching experienced by deprived pupils has been shown to be poorer on average than that experienced by others'.[24] Nevertheless, the impact schools make on attainment must be seen in the context of neighbourhood, household and individual impacts.

2.15. Lupton[25] identifies three sets of impacts through which neighbourhoods affect educational attainment.

- the impact of neighbourhood on individuals – on motivations and opportunities to learn, considering place effects and people effects

- the impact of schools on individuals: for those students who are educated locally, the school is a principal mechanism by which their neighbourhood might affect them

- neighbourhood effects on schools: the extent to which schools do not just exist within neighbourhoods, but are constituted by them: their pupil composition or for their resources, curriculum or pedagogies.

2.16. The direct effects of living in a poor neighbourhood for young people's educational experiences can include low aspirations, alternatives to formal education (such as drug dealing, paid labour or crime), and parental isolation and low social capital influencing, among other things, childcare, school and university choices. But the nature of the neighbourhoods has implications for schools. 'It is now well established that disadvantaged neighbourhoods tend to have schools that are of lower quality than those in rich

22 Smith, G., Smith, T., and Smith, T. (2007) Whatever Happened to EPAs? Part 2: Educational Priority Areas – 40 years on. *FORUM*, 49 (1 & 2), pp.141–56.

23 Cassen, R. and Kingdon, G. (2007) *Tackling low educational achie*vement. York: JRF.

24 DCSF (2009a) *Deprivation and Education: The evidence on pupils in England, Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4*. London: DCSF.

25 Lupton, R. (2006) How does place affect education? In S. Delorenzi, ed. (2006). *Going places: neighbourhood, ethnicity and social mobility*. London: IPPR.

neighbourhoods'.[26] But the evidence suggests that neighbourhood impacts are largely indirect: '… neighbourhoods do influence outcomes, regardless of family resources, but…neighbourhoods determine only a small proportion of the variation in individual outcomes, and that family background matters more'.[27]

2.17.   As before, while each of these ingredients may exercise a separate and independent effect, they tend to be mutually reinforcing and combine to create a cumulative effect. The disadvantages that accrue from membership of low-income families and residence in deprived neighbourhoods are compounded by education experiences that are inferior to those enjoyed by their more affluent peers. 'Pupils from deprived backgrounds typically have less access to a good, broad curriculum and related extension activities, and may find their curriculum irrelevant to their future and/or unchallenging and unengaging … Teachers' attitudes, assumptions and behaviours may be influenced by pupils' socioeconomic background, and this may disadvantage pupils from deprived backgrounds'.[28]

Promoting greater equality of outcome

2.18.   From all the evidence we have reviewed for this study, a number of themes emerge as critical. Given the importance of family background, early identification and intervention are vital, and along with that, support for parents. The evidence suggests there is also an important contribution to be made by activities outside the schools system. And finally, while schools may account for a smaller proportion of variations in educational attainment than individual, home and background factors, they are important: 'More than 20 years of school effectiveness studies have established that quality of schooling does make a difference'.[29] There are a variety of school and classroom characteristics that appear to make a difference.

Early intervention

2.19.   As highlighted earlier, differences in child development that will later manifest themselves as differences in educational attainment are in evidence at less than two years of age. A report in 2008 from the Centre for Social Justice and the Smith Institute reported that 'a child's development score at 22 months can serve as an accurate predictor of educational outcomes at 26 years'.[30] The value of prior attainment as a predictor of subsequent performance and achievement carries on up the school system. A head teacher, interviewed for a study of NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) children in London said: 'we are able to tell almost as soon as they

26   Ibid.
27   Gibbons, S. (2002) *Neighbourhood Effects on Educational Achievement: Evidence from the Census and National Child Development Study*. London: Centre for the Economics of Education.
28   DCSF (2009a) *Deprivation and Education: The evidence on pupils in England, Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4*. London: DCSF.
29   Lupton, R. (2006) How does place affect education? In S. Delorenzi, ed. (2006). *Going places: neighbourhood, ethnicity and social mobility*. London: IPPR.
30   Duncan Smith, I. and Allen, G. (2008), *Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids Better Citizens*. London: Centre for Social Justice and The Smith Institute.

come into the school those children at risk of becoming NEET later on.'[31] The value of early identification is not universally accepted however.

Parental support

2.20.   There is also widespread recognition that parental support for children's learning has a major impact on attainment, a recognition that has been shared by a number of New Deal for Communities (NDC) partnerships.[32] DCSF (and its predecessors) have been arguing that 'when parents are involved in their children's education, they tend to enjoy school more, go to their lessons regularly, get better academic results, and have fewer problems with their behaviour'.[33] However, research also suggests that the importance of parental support diminishes over time: 'in the primary age range the impact caused by different levels of parental involvement is much bigger than differences associated with variations in the quality of schools'.[34] Unsurprisingly, in the context of this paper, the same research also indicates that: 'the extent and form of parental involvement is strongly influenced by family social class, maternal level of education, material deprivation'. A recent study for DCSF confirmed that this is still the case: 'parental engagement is heavily linked to socio-economic status, as well as parental experience of education.'[35]

2.21.   A recent DCSF research summary distinguishes between different aspects of parenting and concludes that the critical element is the quality of 'at-home' parenting, rather than formal involvement at school, important though that may be: '… there is consistent evidence of the educational benefits of involving parents in their child's learning at home'.[36] Harris and Goodall present similar evidence: 'parents have the greatest influence on the achievement of young people through supporting their learning in the home rather than supporting activities in the school.'[37]

Support outside the school system

2.22.   Children's experiences outside the schools system exert a powerful influence on educational outcomes. The relationship between educational attainment and the other dimensions of children's well-being is a fundamental principle of *Every Child Matters* (ECM).[38] An Ofsted review of services for disadvantaged children concluded that '… reducing inequalities across all outcomes and for all groups remains a significant challenge for children's services'.[39] The key here is the phrase 'for *children's services*' and not just the schools.

31   Greater London Authority (2007) *What works in preventing and re-engaging young people NEET in London*. London: Greater London Authority.
32   CRESR (2004), *Research Report 31: Parental Involvement in Education*. Sheffield: CRESR.
33   DfES (2007), *Every Parent Matters*. London: DfES.
34   Desforges, C. (2003) *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: A Literature Review*. London: DfES.
35   Harris, A. and Goodall, J. (2007) *Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement – Do Parents Know They Matter?* London: DCSF.
36   DCSF (2007) *The impact of parental involvement on children's education*. London: DCSF.
37   Harris, A. and Goodall, J. (2007) *Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement – Do Parents Know They Matter?* London: DCSF.
38   The ECM white paper was published in 2003, setting out proposals for a national framework of integrated support for children, with five outcomes that are most important to children and young people: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; achieve economic well-being.
39   Ofsted (2007) *Narrowing the gap: the inspection of children's services*. London: Ofsted.

2.23.   A study of children's educational relationships outside the school system.[40] confirmed the importance of out-of-school activities to knowledge and skills acquisition, and to the development of confidence in their relationships with adults. Adults in out-of-school activities play roles as both supervisors and role models. Their importance lies in the fact that children view them very differently from teachers, even though they may impose equally strict discipline. This research also revealed that extra-curricular activity is another area where wealth based discrepancies emerged: 'the diversity and number of spontaneous activities reported was similar for both the free school meal and the more affluent groups but the list of organised activities revealed substantive differences between the type and quality of activities experienced.'[41]

School and classroom characteristics

2.24.   Even if influences outside the school have greater impact, what goes on in schools does matter. An Ofsted review of 'successful' secondary schools concluded '… that they all have in common well-distributed leadership and outstanding teaching. They also tend to have stable staffing, being successful at attracting, recruiting and retaining staff'.[42] An early study of regeneration partnerships' involvement in education (focusing largely on the experience of City Challenge[43]) identified among interviewees '… a growing acceptance of the need to improve delivery and management of provision', for example through strong and effective leadership within schools, and classroom management practice and teaching styles which are challenging.'[44]

2.25.   As mentioned earlier, white boys from disadvantaged families tend to display particularly low levels of educational attainment. A study by Ofsted in 2008[45] examined schools which raised the attainment of white boys from low income backgrounds, and concluded they demonstrated (among other things):

- an ethos demonstrating commitment to every individual

- consistent support to develop organisational skills

- rigorous monitoring of realistic but challenging targets

- tailored, flexible intervention programmes and frequent reviews of performance against targets

- a curriculum structured around individual needs and linked to support programmes that seek to raise aspirations

- creative and flexible strategies to engage parents and carers

- flexible and committed key adults, who know the boys well and are sensitive to any difficulties which might arise in their home

[40] Wikeley, F. et al. (2007) *Educational relationships outside school: Why access is important*. York: JRF.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ofsted (2009) *Twelve outstanding secondary schools*. London: Ofsted.
[43] The City Challenge programme was a regeneration initiative that ran from 1992–1998. A total of £37.5m each was allocated to 31 area-based partnerships launched in two waves.
[44] GFA Consulting (1997) *Education Initiatives and Regeneration Strategies: A Guide to Good Practice*. London: DETR.
[45] Ofsted (2008) *White boys from low-income backgrounds: good practice in schools*. London:Ofsted.

- strong partnerships with a wide range of agencies.

2.26.   While these features emerged from a study of a specific group experiencing disadvantage, other evidence suggests they are more widely applicable.[46]

Educational attainment, school choice and neighbourhood composition

2.27.   Despite the evidence presented here, the belief that the quality of school is critical is tenaciously held. Parents of all classes and educational backgrounds strive to identify and secure admission to what they perceive to be the 'best' schools. However, the evidence suggests that identifying the 'best' school for a particular child is not always straightforward. It is entirely understandable that parents living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods served by apparently poorly-performing schools should aspire to something 'better' for their children. However, the Social Disadvantage Research Centre (SDRC) at Oxford University, in a study for the NDC national evaluation, concluded that: 'NDC children tend to do better at key stage 4 when they attend schools with children who come from areas with similar levels of income deprivation'.[47]

2.28.   Gibbons and his colleagues examined neighbourhood effects on education.[48] They concluded that it is '… well known, for example, that the average pupil attainment in a school declines rapidly as the proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds increases'. However, they also concluded that this is largely explained by family backgrounds. 'Children from poorer family backgrounds have, on average, lower attainments. But these children begin with lower attainments and end up with lower attainments, and there is only fragile evidence that school "context" … really matters much for that child's progress'.

2.29.   They compared the starting performance at KS1, and progress to KS2, of children entitled to FSM with those not entitled, and both starting rate and progress were predictably lower. However, they also showed that the mix of FSM in a cohort made little difference to a child: children from relatively advantaged backgrounds fare no worse (nor better) when they are in classes with large numbers of children from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds.

2.30.   Of course, part of the problem in identifying a 'good' school is the circularity of the evidence. A school acquires a good reputation, thus increasing the competition for places; relatively affluent families move into the catchment area, and the attainment of their affluent children confirms and enhances the school reputation. Part of the rationale for mixed communities was the expectation that changing the socio-economic characteristics of a school's

[46] Ofsted (2009) Twelve outstanding secondary schools. London: Ofsted.
[47] CLG (2010) *Narrowing the Gap? Analysing the impact of the New Deal for Communities Programme on educational attainment*. London: CLG.
[48] Gibbons, S. et al (2006) Is Britain pulling apart? Area disparities in employment, education and crime. In S. Delorenzi, ed. (2006). *Going places: neighbourhood, ethnicity and social mobility*. London: IPPR.

intake would improve its outcomes. A review of the evidence on mixed communities was unable to find any '… UK studies which have been able to specify what beneficial effect is at work: the higher and better articulated expectations of parents in private tenures, or changes in the composition of the pupil body, or improvements to the learning environment'.[49]

2.31.   Yet schools are still widely believed to matter. Writers like Lupton and Gibbons who emphasise the contribution of non-school factors to educational attainment can nevertheless identify relatively poor schooling as an additional barrier to achievement facing children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Although there are variations locally, apart from faith schools, school choice for most families is primarily based on residence. The consequence is that '… this type of admissions policy leads to higher house prices nearer better, more popular schools, particularly at primary school … Access to good schools is one of a number of ways that the affluent use their financial clout to advantage their offspring and this in part drives spatial segregation'.[50] A selection system designed to promote equality of opportunity in practice underpins the reinforcement of wealth-based advantage.

Conclusions

2.32.   The evidence then is clear: children from deprived backgrounds start school at a disadvantage compared with their more affluent peers, and these disadvantages are compounded by every subsequent experience in their educational careers: the quality of the schools they are likely to attend, the educational aspirations and achievements of their peers, and even the quality of their out-of-school activities. In the next section we examine how NDC partnerships have been trying to tackle this combination of disadvantage.

[49]   Tunstall, R. and Fenton, A. (2006), *In the mix: A review of research on mixed income, mixed tenure and mixed communities*. York: JRF.
[50]   Gibbons, S. et al (2006) Is Britain pulling apart? Area disparities in employment, education and crime. In S. Delorenzi, ed. (2006). *Going places: neighbourhood, ethnicity and social mobility*. London: IPPR.

3. NDC approaches to improving educational outcomes

Introduction

3.1. We said at the start of the last chapter that of all the indicators of spatially concentrated disadvantage, education may be the most important because of its longer term consequences. It may also be among the most difficult to tackle. In one of the case study New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas for instance, the Aylesbury estate in Southwark, more than half the pupils in the area attend the four main primary schools and one secondary school serving the estate. However, there are 35 other junior schools taking pupils from Aylesbury, 11 other secondary schools, and five special schools.

3.2. The problems of Southwark are not unique. In a recent report[51] for the NDC national evaluation, Whitworth and his colleagues at the SDRC explored the numbers of schools attended by children resident in NDC areas. They found that: 'almost all NDC partnerships can achieve coverage of approximately 80 per cent of their pupil populations of both primary and secondary school age through targeting around 10 primary schools and 10 secondary schools in each NDC area'. In itself, targeting 20 schools is demanding. But they also found that '… the remaining 20 per cent or so of pupils in each NDC area are spread across a much larger number of schools', in the case of Hackney NDC at the extreme a total of 171. With these levels of pupil distribution, designing *schools-based* interventions that genuinely reach significant numbers of NDC residents becomes problematic.

3.3. The SDRC team also found that there is a high degree of mobility among children in NDC areas. Only between 50 per cent and 70 per cent of the 2002 primary and secondary school cohorts were still living in the NDC area in 2006. Added to the degree of turnover, in many areas NDC areas (and more importantly the children living in their areas) have had to cope with consequences of schools closures: in Sheffield NDC half the key primary schools in 2002 had closed by 2007. Designing interventions to improve educational attainment in neighbourhoods of endemically low achievement was always going to be difficult, but has often been compounded by the multiplicity of schools, student turnover and school closures.

3.4. This chapter examines:

- some of the specific issues arising in the four case study NDC areas

- the priorities and outcomes chosen in the four

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51 CLG (2009) *Raising educational attainment in deprived areas: the challenges of geography and residential mobility for area-based initiatives*. London: CLG.

- how education strategies were developed, their focus, and how spending allocations were determined
- each partnership's main interventions
- partnerships' relationships with schools
- partnership work with parents
- how local communities were involved
- relationships between NDC approaches and wider strategies.

Education problems in NDC areas

3.5.   Although each of the case study NDCs varies in the detail of the issues they face in raising educational attainment, they share some broadly common characteristics (as almost certainly do the other 35 areas): low aspirations, parents' poor experience of school, both feeding through into low attainment – and of course, poverty, which the last chapter demonstrated to be inextricably linked to low attainment. In most of the studies discussed in the previous chapter, eligibility for free school meals (FSM) is used as a proxy measure for low income. Table 3.1 shows the incidence of FSM in the four case study NDCs, along with values for the NDC Programme as a whole, the comparator areas and the country. It confirms, unsurprisingly, that households in NDC areas are more likely to display low incomes than the country at large; but also, that the case study NDCs have slightly lower levels of FSM entitlement than the Programme average, and the comparator areas slightly lower still.

Table 3.1: Percentage of Household survey respondents whose household is in receipt of free school meals 2002–2008			
	2002	2008	Change 2002 to 2008
Birmingham Aston	6	5	−1
Southwark	6	5	−1
Liverpool	9	5	−4
Newcastle upon Tyne	5	5	0
NDC	6	6	−1
Comparator	5	4	−1
National	2	1	−1

3.6.   Most often measured by performance at Key Stages and in GCSE examinations, low attainment is often evident on entry to the school system. In Birmingham Aston NDC, for example educational attainment at entry age (Foundation Stage) is generally lower than both the Birmingham and national averages. This presents a significant challenge to raising attainment and 'closing the gaps'.

3.7. In many NDC areas, additional challenges are presented by the varying and often rapidly changing ethnic composition of the school population. Specifically these challenges include:

- in Birmingham Aston 80 per cent of children speak English as a second language

- at one school in Southwark, around nine out of ten have first languages other than English, most commonly Yoruba and Spanish

- in Southwark South American (Columbian/Bolivian) families may have entered illegally, which makes it hard to plan for their presence in the school system – as a result overcrowding is a big issue.

3.8. Schools' ability to provide effective learning environments is further impeded by widespread disaffection with the education system. All four areas display low levels of parental involvement, which compounds schools' problems in tackling attendance issues. The Liverpool NDC area has high rates of unauthorised absence from school. In Newcastle, the partnership area shows truancy rates higher than national and city rates, and exclusion rates higher than the national average.

3.9. The turnover in school populations described in Section 3.3 for the Programme as a whole is to be observed in these case study NDC areas. In the Birmingham Aston area, there is on average a 20 per cent annual turnover of pupils in primary schools. A similar pattern is reported in Newcastle, where one Head estimates that only 75 per cent of each year group stays within the school for a full academic year. In Liverpool, schools have faced particular problems with parents presenting children at the start of the September school term, without previous registration. School numbers fluctuate due to the highly transient nature of the population, which an NDC officer argued could affect the educational attainment figures year on year as each cohort travels through school.

3.10. On the evidence of these four case studies, NDCs have been operating in an inadequate institutional environment. For example, in the Liverpool NDC area before the NDC there was an almost total lack of pre-school provision, and no secondary school. In the Newcastle NDC area, facilities are poor (particularly in primary schools), which among other things creates difficulties developing extended schools.

NDC priorities, outcomes and spend

3.11. Despite similarities in relation to the issues they face, the four NDCs have adopted varying priorities, and devoted varying proportions of their overall budget to educational activity.

Birmingham Aston

3.12.   The initial programme for the education theme was redesigned and has only been properly implemented over the past four years or so. The aim is to increase education attainment and aspirations so that when current students leave school they are able to go on to higher education or to get well paid and fulfilling employment. Although this was principally to be achieved through schools, community members on the Board were keen that adults should also be part of the programme. The result is a programme that uses schools as its driver to directly target children but is designed also to reach parents and other adults in the community.

3.13.   Projects within this theme are designed to link with all the other theme areas. For example, the ICT project uses health, environment and community leadership materials for teaching English. The English Language Learning Project includes integrated English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and employment or citizenship programmes. The Pupil Guarantee Scheme includes sports and arts activities.

3.14.   Children's interventions concentrate on KS2 and KS4 and all projects are aimed at improving English and maths in some way. Adult projects concentrate on improving English and employability skills.

Liverpool

3.15.   The Liverpool NDC adopted three Lifelong Learning outcomes for the area, to:

- improve average attainment levels to national rates
- cut rates of unauthorised absence to national rates
- increase numbers of adults undertaking training.

3.16.   The 2003 Lifelong Learning, Employment and Enterprise strategy provided the framework for the NDC's approach to achieving these outcomes. Interventions were developed under these headings:

- early years – an integrated approach to early education, childcare and health, and family support services
- schools attainment – involving close working with EXCITE Education Action Zone and the Excellence in Liverpool programme, and the local Academy
- out-of-school activities to promote engagement with the educational process, improve attainment and reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour
- Family and Learning Support – providing a focus for lifelong learning in the area through a new Family and Lifelong Learning Centre
- Adult Learning – working with partners and community bodies to support practical steps to promote a culture of learning.

3.17. In the early years of the programme, most activity was directed towards primary schools. However, according to the 2008–10 Delivery Plan, '… the remaining two years of the NDC programme will see greater priority being given to supporting Kensington residents in achieving higher level qualifications and enhancing employability'.

Newcastle

3.18. Priorities for the education theme were determined early in the programme:

- increase attainment of all age groups at school

- increase school attendance and staying on rates

- promote and encourage greater parental involvement in children's education

- increase participation and attainment in lifelong learning

- enhance viability of schools and learning facilities in West Gate.

3.19. With the exception of early capital improvements in primary schools, projects have been overwhelmingly revenue based. Particular emphasis has been placed on family support and attainment, in response to community priorities identified in the original delivery plan. These were:

- a curriculum that tackles racism, helps children access education, provides relationship education and better choices for all children

- supporting children from an early age to prevent exclusion and increase attendance

- extra curricular activity and sport after school and during the holidays

- easier access to adult education

- special provision for under achievers and high achievers and specific groups who are disadvantaged

- smaller classes and more funds to allow (the community) to take part in learning activities.

Southwark

3.20. In the 10-year Delivery Plan the strategy set out to be both focussed and integrated in its response – addressing both symptoms and underlying causes. One theme linked improved attainment to helping people into employment and economic inclusion – key to raising household income and deprivation. But all the other themes (such as empowerment and sustainability) have explicit links to education. The approach was to engage and motivate not only pupils, young people and parents, but also the wider community by making education an important aspect of life on the estate.

3.21. Anticipated outcomes were to improve educational attainment levels by increasing KS2 results to the national average and increasing KS3, GSCE results, and staying on rates at 16 to the Southwark average – aiming

eventually for the national average. Thus the focus initially was mainly on those aged 16 and under.

3.22.   The NDC also has had to deal with many schools outside the area which serve the neighbourhood (particularly at secondary level), and has tackled this mainly through working outside the school day. The NDC has sought to:

- invest creatively in schools

- encourage 8–25s in positive activities outside school, and outside the school day, through structured activities, working with partners such as Kickstart, Sport Action Zone, London active, etc

- have a strong commissioning approach, but one which listens to children and parents, and one which strongly encourages an ethos of collaboration among providers.

Spend

3.23.   Percentage differences in the amount spent on education learning themes by the four case study NDCs do not vary by much, as Table 3.2 shows. However, by 2007, only Birmingham Aston had spent at the Programme-wide average level. The other three were below, by up to five percentage points. The figures need to be interpreted with care however, as there are some important caveats:

- NDCs classify project expenditure in various ways, so that in some cases interventions which in one NDC may be counted under the education heading, in another may be classified under employment or community engagement (and vice versa); this is particularly the case with capital works

- NDCs may have adopted different phasing for different spheres of activity, with some opting to focus on education at the start, going for 'early wins', while others may have concentrated initially on capital programmes.

Table 3.2: Education expenditure in case study NDCs: 1999–00 to 2006–07			
NDC	Education and Learning Total (£)	As a proportion of total spend (per cent)	As a proportion of total spend (excl. Management and Admin) (per cent)
Birmingham (Aston)	3,322,487	16	18
Liverpool	5,545,839	14	16
Newcastle	4,937,035	13	13
Southwark	2,098,935	11	14
Programme average	**208,749,508**	**16**	**18**

The main interventions

3.24. The four case study partnerships have been involved with a wide range of interventions, all, directly or indirectly, in pursuit of a common objective: raising attainment and closing the gap. Each of the four has supported an extensive range of projects: for example, 25 under the education theme in Newcastle, and in Southwark, 23 'supporting educational attainment'. The diversity of the interventions means that it is not always easy to discern a clear 'theory of change'. Yet within this diversity, a number of common themes emerge.

Improving attainment

3.25. Some interventions have very directly addressed low attainment. In Birmingham Aston for example, in 2007 maths results dipped. Research and analysis, along with teachers' views, suggested that the reason was that many children could not speak English well enough to verbalise logic. A conference at the start of the year provided training for the maths lead from each school. Those schools achieving high SAT results worked with those doing less well. The methodology was successful in raising results and was then transferred to support all children.

3.26. In Southwark, the NDC has supported interventions with a direct focus on improving attainment from the start. One of its earliest projects was 'Gifted and Talented', providing extra activities designed to foster higher achievement. More recently, the NDC has supported 'The Aylesbury Push', an academic and study skills support service to GCSE pupils living on the estate.

Box 3.1: Southwark: The Aylesbury Push

This project provides support to students who are disengaged in school and/or not supported at home. It offers an environment where there are no inhibiting factors to hinder students' progress. Tutors are available to help with English literature and language, science and maths, sometimes on a one-to-one basis. Study guides, books and IT facilities are available and young people have been able to bring any difficulties with their coursework to the group for advice.

There are agreed areas of focus. For example, in one term the priorities were:

• English: vocabulary, ensuring the young people have an understanding of the vocabulary they will need to tackle their GCSE exams and identifying those young people who need additional help in English to improve their overall attainment in all subjects

• Maths: putting the foundations in place, ensuring the young people have an understanding of the concepts that underpin mathematics

> • Science: coursework, ensuring the young people have completed their coursework to a standard that will make them demonstrate understanding and originality and allow them to move on from their coursework, feeling confident and ready to tackle their exams.
>
> Since the project began, GCSE results for participants have been excellent. 76 students improved their performance, with 40 obtaining five or more GCSEs at A*–C. One young person achieved a grade A in science 'suitability test' coursework as a result of attending the Aylesbury Push homework club. In Year 9 of the NDC, for a second year, the students of the Aylesbury Push exceeded their predicted grades and all went on to college.

Capital improvements to school facilities

3.27.   One of the major contributions made by NDCs to local education provision is through capital investment, ranging from helping develop a new facility to supporting sometimes minor physical improvements to existing stock. Earlier work by the national evaluation team suggests that capital improvements can also be seen as improved working conditions for teachers, thus helping reduce teacher turnover.

3.28.   The capital improvements supported by the case study partnerships include:

- Liverpool: contribution towards rebuilding a local primary school, a new nursery, security and environmental upgrades to existing premises, and the Kensington Community Learning Centre
- Newcastle: capital improvements for all six primary schools in the NDC area, a crèche, outdoor play facilities and a new wing for a primary school
- Southwark: capital funding towards development of a nursery for 3–5s.

Additional equipment and resources

3.29.   NDCs have also provided both small scale capital equipment and revenue resources for local schools. This can take the form of support for the development of extra classroom assistants (as in Newcastle) or the provision of laptops, whiteboards and play equipment, (as in Liverpool). But what the evaluation reveals is the *diversity* of uses to which flexible NDC funding can be put – as is illustrated by support for one primary school in Liverpool.

Box 3.2: NDC support to one primary school in Liverpool	
• financial support each Christmas to stage a drama production, and provide party with entertainment and a gift. Art and craft materials so every child can make Christmas decorations and cards • a new book for each child to take home for Christmas, to be returned and put into class libraries • art, drama and music specialists to deliver work in every area of the arts • equipment for quiet room supporting vulnerable children • outdoor learning equipment for Foundation children • Saturday morning music workshops which enabled children to learn drumming and about sound techniques and recording • costumes for African, Indian and Chinese dance groups to enable them to perform at functions organised for the local community • art competitions • sports days • wardens coming in to school to deliver workshops on road safety and stranger danger, local issues etc.	• English as an Additional Language books in many languages to support EAL children • staff training on Irish, African, Chinese, Arabic and Polish culture • bought costumes and equipment for productions, microphones, sound equipment, lighting, background materials • coaches for outings for every class in the school with subsidised entrance fees where necessary • centenary calendar • musical equipment • ICT equipment – laptops, computers and technical support • financed numerous art projects in different cultures • five weeks philosophy course for year five children • a classroom assistant in school • first response member of staff • clean team.

Family support and access to family learning

3.30.   NDCs have provided family support in variety of ways. In Liverpool the NDC is providing a focus for lifelong learning in the area through a new Family and Lifelong Learning Centre. In Newcastle, the NDC has been building a local infrastructure for family support and lifelong learning through investment in third sector organisations. One particularly innovative project has developed local residents to become Family Link Workers.

Box 3.3: Support for Families Project in Newcastle

The Support for Families project, developed in response to consultation with parents at local schools, targets families of children attending four participating primary schools. NDC residents have been employed as Family Link Workers, by local schools to engage and support families in a responsive and proactive way.

The project provides:

- ongoing contact and support to parents and families of children at the four participating schools
- signposting to other support/services that are available
- work and personal development opportunities for local residents
- support networks providing long lasting local support mechanisms

Through these activities the project aims to:

- improve family life by increasing access to available support
- improve and strengthen relationships between families and schools so that the needs of the children can be better met
- increase parents' understanding of their importance in their children's education
- increase parents' willingness and ability to support their children's learning
- increase parents' aspirations and confidence in their own and their children's learning
- improve children's confidence and academic performance
- support the impact of other NDC education projects, specifically those related to increasing attainment and improving attendance and behaviour
- increase the number of parents involved in learning opportunities
- increase parental involvement in school decision making processes
- establish support for families that is sustainable after the end of the project
- build community capacity through increasing the knowledge and skill base of a large number of families.

External evaluation has identified the key impacts of the project, including:

- encouraging parents to participate in training and personal development in some cases resulting in progression to further learning and employment
- the creation of job opportunities for local residents (employed as Link Workers)
- positive views of parents in relation to the support and information provided, and access to training and development opportunities.

Link workers considered the main achievements of the project to be:

- seeing parents and children progress
- raising children's attendance

- addressing problems before they become bigger issues

- breaking down barriers between parents and schools

- getting parents into education and training; building the confidence of parents, improving their skills and resulting in them being better equipped to help their children with homework.

Early years strategies

3.31.   These case study NDCs have all identified early years as a crucial stage for intervention. Birmingham Aston has supported a SureStart children and parents' centre, offering childcare and early learning experience for young children, training volunteering and job opportunities for local parents. Liverpool NDC is working with Sure Start and The Early Years Development Partnership programmes to implement a package of measures as part of an integrated approach to early education, childcare and health and family support services. Newcastle's early years strategy involves a joint programme with SureStart providing family support, early years development and enhanced childcare.

3.32.   In Southwark the initial focus was on provision for children from birth to the age of 11 and as one head teacher said, there was recognition that resourcing primary schools is the biggest lever to bring about social change. Subsequent interventions have included:

- a SureStart childminding centre

- an out of home resource for childminders, also offering training

- family support and events such as relaxation days for mothers and new babies

- Surrey Square Infants nursery school: a new extended day care.

Improving attendance interventions

3.33.   Absences from school, often apparently condoned by parents, are reported by interviewees to be a problem in all the case study NDCs. In Newcastle, the NDC has supported a variety of interventions to try to improve school attendance, including:

- breakfast clubs in all local schools, nurseries and early years programmes

- a primary school behaviour project (working with children, parents and schools to target and address disruptive behaviour)

- a primary school attendance project (resources for rewarding good attendance, funding for Education Welfare Officer and two assistants to address attendance issues)

- Skills for Life Planet 13–25 and Planet Plus (run by Newcastle Literacy Trust and helping young people reintegrate into education through one to one and group support)

- school Inclusion (supporting attendance, behaviour and transition from primary to secondary school)

- in Liverpool the 'Christmas in the Curriculum' activities financed by the NDC were designed to encourage attendance at Christmas, a time when many children had been absent.

3.34.   Southwark NDC has also supported breakfast clubs (which are now mainstreamed), not only to improve attendance, but also to ensure a healthy breakfast, and to allow children to get to school early in order to take part in learning activities. The NDC has also supported the School Home Support project at Walworth Academy – helping families outside the statutory education system to break cycles of truancy and other negative behaviours that prevent learning.

Access to wider learning opportunities and out-of-school activities

3.35.   All the case study NDCs have recognised the importance of learning opportunities outside the school gate. Birmingham Aston established a Pupil Guarantee Scheme, based on the principle that all children should have access to the same kind of curriculum opportunities open to more affluent children. This might include arts and performing arts, extended learning, physical and experiential learning and technological learning with an overarching guarantee to all pupils. The scheme is being delivered in 11 of the 12 schools in the NDC area.

Box 3.4: Birmingham Aston: Pupil Guarantee scheme

The project began in 2005. The latest phase, approved in May 2008, builds on previous experience. Schools still decide for themselves what they wish to do with their funding but activities have to be chosen from an agreed menu:

- Arts and performance

- Extended learning

- Physical

- Technological including ICT

- Access to an extended guarantee

Some of the activities that have taken place under this phase include:

- Aston Pride Olympians – in partnership with Aston University and all eight primary schools, friendly competition gave children the opportunity to try out new sports activities, including athletics, volleyball and water polo, to be supervised by students and to become familiar with the university site

- professional coaching with Birchfield Harriers for children from Aston Manor and Broadway schools

- booster classes for children sitting their KS2 and KS4 assessments

- partnership with the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists who worked with the secondary schools to guide students through a range of arts and crafts experiences exploring ideas, concepts and cultures relevant to their community. The experience culminated in an exhibition of their work at the RBSA Gallery in the Jewellery Quarter and the students went on to pass on their expertise to children in primary schools. Students chosen for the activity all showed an aptitude for art.

An example of how the project has been used by individual schools can be found at Aston Manor. The project has supported music tuition and group music. The school has a good reputation in the arts, especially music, but there was no funding before the scheme to develop this. There are now a series of ensembles playing regularly, including a steel band.

3.36.   Liverpool NDC has also supported a variety of non-school based activities, to promote engagement with the educational process, improve attainment and reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour. These have included a range of outings and trips; and in particular, the Music for Life project. This was an innovative approach to music education delivered in partnership between the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (RLPO), the NDC and primary schools in the NDC area. Each school has had its own RLPO musician who has delivered a weekly music lesson to pupils. The children perform at Philharmonic Hall once a year, as well as giving performances in school and to local groups.

3.37.   In Southwark, the Young People's Project provides arts, recreation and sports initially for 8–18 year-olds (later extended to 25 year olds). This reflected a recognition that young people's time outside school was just as important as that spent in school, and that people needed regular fun, exercise, music and creative time.

Access to Higher and Further Education

3.38.   In some cases NDCs have provided direct assistance to help local students progress to higher or further education. For example, Liverpool NDC ran a bursary scheme of £1,250 per year for first year degree students. The scheme operated on a reciprocal arrangement; in return for the bursary, students were expected to undertake 30 hours voluntary work in the local community. In total, 248 bursaries have been awarded, approximately one third of which were awarded to BME students.

3.39.   In Birmingham Aston, local community representatives argued for the establishment of an award scheme, as a memorial to two local girls who were killed in a drive-by shooting in 2005.

Box 3.5: Birmingham Aston: The Letisha and Charlene Education Awards

Letisha Shakespeare and Charlene Ellis were friends in their late teens who were victims of a drive-by shooting on the edge of the NDC area in 2005. The local community were shocked and angered at the incident.

Community Board members wanted to have a memorial of some kind to the two girls. After lengthy discussions and consultation with the families, it was decided to create a living memorial to the girls, to show young people in the area that they do have choices and that they do not need to be members of gangs to succeed.

The project encourages local residents to participate in higher education and celebrate learning achievements. Residents can apply for a grant of up to £2000 to support themselves in some way. They are interviewed by the project steering group and the grants are awarded by them.

Following the success of the pilot in 2007, with six people receiving bursaries, the project has been extended as more partners have contributed to the awards and it is hoped it will be extended further in the coming years. In 2008, 16 young people received bursaries.

The key partner has been the local newspaper, the Birmingham Mail. The NDC successfully recruited the Mail to champion the project. This was a vital link. The publicity the newspaper has consistently given to the scheme has probably ensured its future sustainability.

It is difficult to isolate the main achievements of this project. In terms of money, it is a small project but in terms of impact on the local community and on local organisations it has been big. Recruiting the Birmingham Mail in the first instance was key.

There has also been an impact on the local community. The families and the media consistently give out the message to young people about having a successful future and the community support the message and the project by celebrating the achievements of the successful applicants.

Adult learning

3.40. The case study NDC partnerships have all promoted some form of adult learning, although not particularly intensively, and often late in the NDC lifetime. This late recognition is partly a reflection of prioritisation: early years and school-age interventions were thought to be more important. But in at least some cases it reflected a concern that insufficient progress had been made on adult skills development. Birmingham Aston has established an Adult Learning Network – a forum for voluntary organisations, colleges and other partners to come together to plan and develop learning opportunities. As part of the NDC succession strategy, a resource is being developed to support practitioners and will include capacity building and training.

3.41.   In Liverpool adult learning programmes supported by the NDC thus far have consisted of what was described by an NDC officer as "breakthrough courses" such as local history and cake decorating courses. Although non-accredited, they were thought to have been of merit in re-engaging the community in learning. Accredited learning has also been part of the programme with NVQ levels 1–4 being offered. However, lack of progress in relation to adult learning has led to this being identified as a priority for the remainder of the programme.

3.42.   In Southwark too, the focus has started to shift towards adult learning, mainly because the targets set for school attainment and early years have been achieved. Now, particularly through the NDC's investment in Michael Faraday school community learning facilities and the development of the Walworth Academy over the last two years, the focus has broadened to cover more adult and family learning, addressing the low levels of qualifications among adults.

Birmingham Aston's distinctive approach

3.43.   Although as we have described, Birmingham Aston has supported a broad range of education projects, as have the other case studies, theirs is a distinctive approach. The bulk of the NDC programme – and not just in relation to education – has focused on the introduction of a neighbourhood based ICT programme – Computers in the Home.

3.44.   The main aim of the project, which began life under the earlier City Challenge programme, is to encourage the widespread use of computers throughout the family, and especially, access to the Internet. The programme is delivered via the school population. Families receive a computer on loan, together with broadband internet access, a safe filtered environment service through the Birmingham Grid for Learning, technical support from a dedicated team, a raft of educational software, and training for adults alongside the child. It is not a hardware delivery model but a learning package.

3.45.   A training package was specifically designed to support the development of ICT skills for family members and pupils. Children are encouraged to help family members learn to use the facilities. A comic based book (Keeping IT in the Family) was produced to help families use the software – rather than an instruction manual.

3.46.   Parents pay £10 per month for internet access, critical both because families feel it is a valuable resource, and because it provides the funding that allows the project to be sustainable. The computers are given to families after three years' contributions. The project pulls together all themes and strands and is constantly growing. For example, appointments at the health centre can be made on line, there is two way interaction for local intelligence on community safety, and there is a link with CCTV. Residents can communicate with agencies and vice versa.

3.47.   A pilot project in one school started with 15 computers. It has now been extended to six schools and the programme is continuing. There are currently about 1,000 computers in homes with a target of 2,500.

3.48.   There is a Service Level Agreement with all the schools taking part. The common purpose of the partnership with schools is to use ICT to raise attainment and support achievement at KS 2/3 and to use pupil skills and expertise in ICT to support the learning of parents and other adult family members. Schools in the project offer ICT training to parents so that they can support their children.

3.49.   In 2005, only one in 10 households had access to the internet: this is now one in five and an average of 12 people use each computer. The project has helped to deliver the curriculum and contribute to ECM objectives. There have been improved results in schools, and there is a strong conviction that the ICT project has helped with this. Ofsted inspections at two local schools noted 'the positive contribution to attainment' made by the project.

Relationships with schools

3.50.   All four case study partnerships have now established productive relationships with local schools, (at least at primary level), though in some cases, it took time for these relationships to develop. One NDC officer in Liverpool said that working with schools proved to be a 'greater challenge than originally anticipated'. Early promises made to schools had been over-ambitious and it had been necessary to 'get the heads round the table again'. Successful partnership has been a gradual process but the emphasis has been on delivery – 'how can the NDC help you in what you do?'

3.51.   In Newcastle, although partnership working with primary schools has been good, the NDC partnership has been unable to establish successful relationships with the secondary school and subsequent Academy, with the result that only two projects (Breakfast Club and School Sweatshirts) have been delivered to all secondary age pupils. Whilst problems in relation to the former secondary were associated with a previous head, interviewees also commented that the lack of accountability of the Academy (to either the NDC partnership or the local authority) had been a disincentive to collaboration. In Southwark it has not been easy to get all schools on board initially (and as one head said, there has been no central incentive for schools to collaborate), but once they did become involved relationships have been largely positive.

3.52.   In Birmingham Aston, Liverpool and Newcastle, the NDC partnerships have been instrumental in bringing local head teachers together – previously, there had been little formal contact, as the heads appeared to regard other local schools as competition. In Liverpool, a Heads Together Group consisting of all the primary school heads in the area meets every six weeks. This group is key to the NDC partnership's approach: 'we haven't done anything without

the approval of head teachers'. Ideas developed by this group are taken to Lifelong Learning Committee for approval.

3.53.	In Birmingham Aston, one of the successes of the programme has been the way that schools have supported each other and developed the programme independently. Most of the schools used by Aston Pride residents have fully embraced the project. The two main state comprehensives have been fully involved and nearly all the primary schools too. King Edward VI, the boys' grammar school, has taken part in enrichment activities, inviting pupils from local primary schools in for extra tuition and to use the school's sports and recreation facilities. All of the schools are part of APEG (the local name for the Aston Pride Head Teachers' Group), the meeting of head teachers facilitated by the NDC partnership. Working with the Islamic girls' school has been more of a challenge. There was little contact between the school and others in the area, and they showed little interest in joining with the other schools. However, the school has recently agreed to join APEG.

Working with parents

3.54.	All four case study partnerships have involved parents in the development and implementation of their education programmes, in a variety of ways. In both Liverpool and Newcastle, family support has been a key element of the NDC partnerships' approach. In Liverpool, this has involved keeping schools open in the holidays, and providing facilities for residential breaks for families from the NDC community. In Newcastle, as discussed earlier,[52] much of this has been delivered through the Support for Families project, which was itself developed as a result of consultation with parents and which helped to identify support needs. The Family Link Workers were instrumental in identifying the need for the Toy Library and outdoor clothing to enable children to participate fully in the curriculum. The project has also encouraged parents to develop relationships with their children's schools and to attend training projects. Although heads and the project evaluation report were positive about the impacts that this project had on children's learning, evidence is still impressionistic.

3.55.	According to interviewees, Birmingham Aston has succeeded in bringing parents closer to schools. The NDC partnership and the schools have gained parents' confidence as they have seen something tangible happening with the computers and courses offered. Parents are taking up training both in schools and electronically at home. The head teacher at one school reports a wide variety of parents coming in for training, from those with no IT skills through to those who are proficient but want to understand more about what their children are doing. Teachers know now that everyone has digital access so they can include it in the curriculum and in homework.

3.56.	In Southwark, the NDC partnership has involved parents in the Education Working Group and through a variety of consultations and action

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[52] See paragraph 3.30

research. Schools (primary in particular) have made more effort to listen to their parents and pupils. Parents have become involved in out of hours programmes, in the Big Read and Kickstart. One primary head said her school offers parents placements, and there are courses where parents and children work together. There will further opportunities to develop this kind of collaboration when the Community Learning centre is complete: the NVQs to be offered include childcare, fitness, IT, and cookery for example.

Involving local communities

3.57.   In all four case studies, the NDC partnerships involved local communities in the development of education strategies and interventions, through the usual mechanisms for community engagement. For example in:

- Birmingham Aston, local communities have been involved in shaping much of the programme; in all cases, there was research with local people before projects were designed and there has been continuing involvement in the development of projects through the Education Theme Group and the Board

- Liverpool, the Life Long Learning and Education committee consists of nine members the majority of whom are community representatives

- Newcastle, the NDC partnership's approach has been developed as a response to community consultation carried out to inform the development of the original delivery plan, and through continuing consultation with parents and practitioners. There is also community representation on the Education Focus Group

- Southwark, community representatives have been involved in the Education Working Group.

3.58.   But there have been difficulties, particularly in the early days. In Liverpool there were tensions as community representatives on the NDC Board insisted that NDC funding should not be used as "backfill" for mainstream LEA spend. In Newcastle, there was evidence of mistrust between community representatives (some of whom were parents) and practitioners, and disagreement in relation to the appropriate use of NDC resources – with resident representatives, as in Liverpool, refusing to fund what they perceived to be the responsibility of the local authority. But there were wider culture clashes.

3.59.   On the one hand, schools were driven by the requirements of the National Curriculum and the standards agenda and the associated loss of autonomy felt by teaching staff, who were used to operating in isolation and competition and where heads had become accustomed to having final say in the use of resources; and, on the other hand the NDC partnership which was seeking a collective response to area-based issues, was interested in the legacy of its investment and 'did not wish to put all its eggs in one basket'.

Heads were resistant to what they perceived as 'another bunch of targets' being imposed by the NDC partnership.

NDC approaches and wider strategies

3.60.   All four case study NDCs partnerships have sought, at least latterly, to align their educational programmes with wider strategies:

- in Birmingham Aston, the Education Theme projects have all been set up with sustainability in mind. The NDC partnership has tried to ensure that projects are transformational and therefore have a continuing impact or that they are built into the activities and structures of other bodies who can continue the legacy after NDC funding ceases

- in Liverpool the NDC partnership has been keen to capture the opportunities of the Extended Schools and Every Child Matters (ECM) agendas, and has developed its strategy post-2006 in that context. It has also tried to build its approach into the city's strategies and priorities: the principal driver is the LEA Education Development Plan 2011. Targets for the remainder of the programme are aligned to those of the LAA

- in Newcastle the NDC partnership's approach has been designed in the context of city-wide approaches and strategies, including the Newcastle Education Plan. However, the city has been in a state of flux with several restructuring processes taking place. Hence, the local authority has not been well placed to offer substantive support for the NDC partnership, although there is positive dialogue taking place, particularly in relation to the long term sustainability of approaches

- Southwark NDC partnership is clearly aware of the requirements of ECM – and that it is important to ensure initiatives are in consistent with wider policies if national funding is to be secured. The NDC partnership's strategy aims to match projects with wider local and national strategies, and to ensure that NDC-supported interventions complement activities by other service providers.

Conclusions

3.61.   The four case study NDC areas have attempted to address a wide range of educational issues, all of them supporting a wide variety of projects covering all age ranges from early years to adult. In each case, interventions have supported or involved parents, and provided for activities beyond the school curriculum. Local perceptions from local stakeholders have been invariably positive. But what difference has all this made? In the next chapter we examine the evidence about NDC partnerships' impact on educational outcomes.

4. Change in education outcomes in New Deal for Communities areas

Introduction

4.1.   As we have seen, New Deal for Communities (NDC) partnerships were expected to close the gap between their neighbourhoods and the rest of the country, across a range of policy outcomes. For most NDC partnerships, education was seen as particularly important in this respect because of the consequences of educational attainment for subsequent employment, earnings and life chances. All NDC partnerships included within their lifetime targets aspirations to close the gap in their residents' levels of educational attainment, usually expressed as a comparison with levels of achievement within their parent local authority district (which of course varied substantially across the 39 NDC areas).

4.2.   This chapter examines how far indicators of educational attainment have changed in NDC areas. Specifically the chapter:

- reviews change across the Programme as a whole
- considers the extent of change at the partnership level, focusing on the four case study partnerships
- explores the critical question of how far the outcome change may be attributable to the NDC Programme
- offers some conclusions about assessing educational outcomes and linking change to Programme interventions.

Programme-wide change

4.3.   There were substantial variations in levels of educational attainment, across NDC areas and their parent local authorities, at the start of the Programme. In 2002,[53] the percentage of pupils gaining five GCSEs at grades A*–C ranged from 46 per cent (in the Newham NDC area) to under 5 per cent (in the Coventry NDC area). Variations within parent local authority districts were less marked, but nevertheless ranged between 30 per cent (in Kingston-upon-Hull) and more than 48 per cent (in Brent).

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[53]   Even though the NDC Programme began prior to 2002, 2002 is the first year for which attainment data is available by NDC partnership.

4.4. A similar picture emerges from a comparison of SAT scores. In 2002, just over 40 per cent of children achieved level 4 in KS2 English in the Sheffield NDC area, compared with more than 80 per cent in the Hammersmith and Fulham NDC. At local authority district level, the percentages ranged from 62.4 per cent in Nottingham to 75 per cent in Hammersmith and Fulham. Generally, across all the educational indicators, NDC areas lagged behind their parent local authority, although there were exceptions, as the Hammersmith and Fulham example shows: at KS2 English, the NDC area outperformed the borough as a whole.

Table 4.1: Change in educational attainment, 2002–2008: NDC partnerships, comparator areas, parent local authorities, England			
	2002 %	2008 %	Percentage points difference
KS2: English level 4			
• NDC average	57	68	11
• Comparator average	59	73	14
• LAD average	62	78	16
• England	74	81	7
KS2: Maths level 4			
• NDC average	59	67	8
• Comparator average	61	69	8
• LAD average	68	76	8
• England	73	79	6
KS2 Science level 4			
• NDC average	76	79	3
• Comparator average	77	83	6
• LAD average	83	86	3
• England	86	88	2
KS3 English level 5			
• NDC average	46	58	12
• Comparator average	47	59	12
• LAD average	59	68	9
• England	67	74	7
KS3 Maths level 5			
• NDC average	44	61	17
• Comparator average	48	63	15
• LAD average	58	77	19
• England	67	77	10
KS3 Science level 5			
• NDC average	40	51	11
• Comparator average	44	54	10
• LAD average	56	64	8
• England	67	72	5
GCSE: 5 A*–C			
• NDC average	26	48	22
• Comparator average	28	53	25
• LAD average	40	60	20
• England	49	64	15

4.5. These figures demonstrate very clearly how the 39 NDC areas started from very different positions and faced different challenges. Since 2002, there have been improvements across all indicators and in all 39 NDC areas, in some cases to a very substantial extent. Table 4.1 shows outcome change across the NDC Programme as a whole, for KS2 and KS3 SAT scores, and for the proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A*–C, compared with comparator area averages,[54] average scores for the 38 parent local authorities,[55] and England as a whole.

4.6. Between 2002 and 2008 scores in NDC areas went up, for English, maths and science SAT scores at both Levels 2 and 3, and for the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C (Table 4.1). In every case, improvements across the NDC Programme as a whole have outstripped improvements at the national level. Although there have been variations *between* partnerships, for the Programme as a whole, the gap has closed to some extent between educational standards in NDC areas and the national average.

4.7. At the Programme level, the gap between NDC areas and their parent local authority has also closed, if modestly, for some indicators: of the seven indicators covering the Key Stages and GCSE attainment, three show improvements in NDC areas that have been greater than in their local authorities, for two the gap between the NDC area and its parent authority has remained the same, and for two, improvements have been greater in the local authority districts: in other words, the gap has widened.

4.8. However, there have also been improvements over the period, across all the indicators, in the comparator areas as well. In fact, as discussed in the summary of the evidence review, educational performance has improved faster than the national average for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and in deprived areas generally, including non-NDC areas.[56] Across these seven indicators, performance improvement was more rapid in the comparator areas for three, there was no difference for two, and in only two cases were improvements faster in the NDC areas (Table 4.1). In all cases differences were modest, but the most important conclusion in the current context is that for the NDC Programme as a whole, *there is no evidence that the presence of the NDC partnerships has made a decisive difference:* other disadvantaged areas did broadly just as well.

4.9. Just as there were variations in baseline levels across the 39 areas, there have been variations in the rate of change between them, which tend to be obscured by Programme-wide averages. In the next section we review outcome change at the level of the individual NDC area, focusing mainly on the four case study NDC areas.

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[54] Special comparator areas have been constructed for the National Evaluation. Each NDC area has a comparator area, selected for their similarity to the partnership areas on various indicators including the extent of deprivation (as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004) and the population size. All comparator areas are within the same local authority as their respective NDC partnership.
[55] There are two NDCs in Birmingham: Aston and Kings Norton.
[56] See para. 2.13

Change at the partnership level: the case studies

4.10.   There are wide variations in the rate of outcome change across NDC areas. For example, at the extremes, between 2002 and 2005 the proportion of pupils achieving level 4 at KS2 English increased by 30 percentage points in Plymouth NDC area, while the proportion *dropped* in Tower Hamlets NDC area, by more than nine percentage points. Similarly, in Sandwell, the proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSEs at grades A*–C increased by 53 percentage points between 2002 and 2005, while in Southampton the increase was just three points. In some cases the rate of change is a function of the baseline: in 2002, Plymouth had the second lowest proportion of pupils achieving level 4 at KS2 English of all the 39 partnerships – which may help explain the rapid improvement. But this is not always the case: in 2002, Sandwell and Southampton had virtually the same proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSEs at grades A*–C (27 per cent and 30 per cent respectively), but then displayed, over the next six years, the highest and lowest rates of improvement across the NDC Programme.

4.11.   The next three tables show changes in performance over time in the four case study partnerships, in relation to English at KS2 and KS3, and the proportion of students gaining at least five good GCSEs.

Table 4.2: Key stage 2 English: Proportion reaching Level 4								
	2002 per cent	2003 per cent	2004 per cent	2005 per cent	2006 per cent	2007 per cent	2008 per cent	Change: 2002–2008
Birmingham (Aston)	49	50	65	68	67	67	58	9
Liverpool	55	46	56	55	62	66	57	2
Newcastle	46	47	58	57	53	66	65	20
Southwark	60	70	68	75	71	73	78	18
NDC average	57	57	63	63	66	67	68	11
Comparator	59	60	65	66	66	69	73	13
National	74	75	77	79	79	80	81	7

Source: SDRC

Table 4.3: Key stage 3 English: Proportion reaching Level 5								
	2002 per cent	2003 per cent	2004 per cent	2005 per cent	2006 per cent	2007 per cent	2008 per cent	Change: 2002–2008
Birmingham (Aston)	46	46	56	51	59	64	67	21
Liverpool	50	52	53	58	52	50	47	−3
Newcastle	36	34	36	39	36	46	45	9
Southwark	57	50	70	73	72	66	64	7
NDC average	46	46	51	54	52	55	58	12
Comparator	47	50	54	57	57	58	59	12
National	67	69	71	74	73	74	74	7

Source: SDRC

Table 4.4: Key stage 4: Proportion achieving 5 A*–C GCSEs or equivalents								
	2002 per cent	2003 per cent	2004 per cent	2005 per cent	2006 per cent	2007 per cent	2008 per cent	Change: 2002–2008
Birmingham (Aston)	34	39	37	46	43	47	56	22
Liverpool	25	19	31	36	40	38	47	22
Newcastle	8	22	29	26	40	44	58	50
Southwark	32	29	41	37	54	54	62	30
NDC average	26	28	31	37	40	43	48	22
Comparator	28	33	33	39	43	47	53	24
National	49	51	52	54	57	60	64	15

Source: SDRC

4.12.   A number of observations flow from these three tables and the earlier discussion of the scale of variations in the rate of improvement across NDC areas:

- in most cases (Liverpool's performance in relation to KS3 English being the sole exception), the case study NDC partnerships demonstrate improvements over the period on these three indicators; but improvements have not been even; in every case, even where there has been substantial improvement over the period as a whole (as is the case with Newcastle and good GCSEs), performance in some years has declined

- in a number of cases there have been examples of extraordinary year-on-year improvements: between 2003 and 2004, the proportion of pupils in the Southwark NDC area achieving level five at KS3 English rose by 20 percentage points

- we described earlier (3.5–3.9) issues associated with population turnover in the case study areas: it is likely that some of these fluctuations (and indeed the broader trends) reflect the scale and character of population change

- NDC areas do not necessarily see consistent change across all indicators; a high rate of improvement at KS3 is no guarantee of a high rate of improvement at KS4; nevertheless much of the rationale for early years, Foundation and KS2 interventions presumes that improved performance at these stages will eventually be reflected in improved performance at KS4 and beyond

- although the case study partnerships have supported interventions across most if not all school years, there are variations in the degree of priority accorded by different partnerships to different age groups, and the timing of specific interventions; these differences *may* be reflected in different rates of improvement in different indicators

- all the data reported in this section relate to the *total* population in the NDC area, irrespective of where they go to school; as discussed in the next section, there are limits to how many children resident in any NDC area likely to be touched by, and in turn benefit from, NDC interventions.

4.13.   These last two points raise the question of whether and how far the consequences of NDC interventions can be observed in data illustrating outcome change. So far in this chapter we have described outcome change, across the NDC Programme as a whole, and in selected partnerships. This exploration has already shown that in many respects there appears to be little difference between change in NDC areas and in the comparators. In the next section we explore how far observed change may be attributable to the NDCs.

The NDC impact

4.14.   The data analysis presented above has shown that partnerships areas are making progress on a variety of educational indicators, and, in some cases appear to have closed the gap with their local authorities and the rest of the country. However, analysis also shows that there have been improvements in other deprived areas. It is not clear therefore whether improvements seen in the NDC areas can be attributed to the NDC Programme.

4.15.   A report from the SDRC[57] for the national evaluation undertook a detailed statistical analysis to attempt to establish clearer causal links. The central question they explored was: 'has the educational attainment of children living in the NDC partnerships improved relative to what would have happened in the absence of the NDC Programme?'

4.16.   The team focused principally on results at KS4. In part this was because KS4 has been NDC partnerships' most frequently selected outcome: 26 of the 39 partnerships have chosen KS4 attainment among their target outcomes – essentially the proportion of pupils gaining at least five good GCSEs. But the authors also argue that in some ways this is the most important school-based indicator, as it measures attainment at the end of compulsory education, and has implications for access to higher and further education and subsequent career prospects.

4.17.   The analysis was conducted in stages.

• first, the team analysed scores and results achieved by all children living in NDC areas for the relevant test or exams, and compared them with results achieved by similar cohorts in the comparator areas

• as already discussed (3.1–3.2), children living in NDC areas are likely to attend a variety of schools, not all of which will have benefited from NDC support. To isolate the possible impact of NDC interventions, the team identified the three secondary schools serving NDC areas, with the greatest concentrations of NDC-resident children; by dividing NDC areas into three categories, based on high, medium and low concentrations, a second analysis sought to identify whether educational attainment varied according to the geographical patterns of school attendance.

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57   CLG (2010) *Narrowing the Gap? Analysing the impact of the New Deal for Communities Programme on educational attainment*. London: CLG.

- the team then explored variations between NDC areas, to identify possible differences in impact across NDC areas

- finally, to explore the possible impact of NDC interventions on specific groups of students, a series of analyses were undertaken with sub-groups including those defined by gender, income deprivation, prior attainment (measured by scores at KS2), and ethnicity.

4.18.   In summary, the team found little statistically significant variation in outcomes between NDC and control areas from an analysis of the whole cohort: 'even after controlling for the differences between the NDC and comparator areas there is little evidence of a statistically significant Programme-wide impact. The exception is KS3 science which remains significant after controlling for differences between the NDC partnerships and comparator areas.'

Attainment by geographical patterns of attendance

4.19.   Drawing on an earlier study,[58] the SDRC team analysed patterns of school attendance across the NDC partnerships, identifying the three main secondary schools catering for the highest percentage of children resident in the NDC area. There are substantial variations: at the extremes, more than 92 per cent of secondary school age children in Rochdale attend just three schools; in Lambeth the figure is 28 per cent. For the four case study NDCs,[59] the proportions are:

- Birmingham Aston – 67.3 per cent

- Newcastle upon Tyne – 68.3 per cent

- Liverpool – 56.3 per cent

- Southwark – 42.6 per cent.

4.20.   An analysis of KS3 and KS4 outcomes for the three levels of concentration did not show any relationship between the geographical patterns of school attendance and the impact of the NDC Programme on outcomes. So, the team did not observe larger impacts '… in NDC partnerships where children can be more easily targeted due to the fact that a high proportion of NDC children are concentrated in a small number of schools.'

Attainment by individual areas

4.22.   The SDRC report also examines the performance of individual NDC areas, relative to their comparator area. Across seven indicators at KS3 and 4, there were statistically significant differences in only 19 of the 39 cases. Three of these were case study partnerships; in:

- Birmingham Aston, there was a statistically significant difference in relation to KS3 maths

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[58]   CLG (2009) *Raising educational attainment in deprived areas: the challenges of geography and residential mobility for area-based initiatives*. London: CLG.
[59]   Liverpool and Southwark are in the low concentration group, Birmingham Aston and Newcastle in the medium concentration group.

- Newcastle there was a statistically significant difference in relation to KS3 science, and in average points scores across KS3

- Southwark there was a statistically significant difference in relation to KS3 maths, and in average points scores across KS3.

Attainment by sub-groups

4.22.   Finally, the team analysed the data to determine whether there has been an impact on particular groups of children. This analysis revealed some interesting findings. For instance:

- at KS3 significant improvements were observed for children from black Caribbean, other black and Bangladeshi ethnic groups; however, analysis also shows that white British and Indian children in NDC partnerships do significantly less well in KS3 English than their comparator area counterparts

- the improvement in KS3 science reported earlier[60] is mainly explained by improvements in the performance of boys living in NDC areas; no significant improvement in this measure was observed for girls

- NDC and comparator area children were grouped according to the level of income deprivation in the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)[61] in which they lived; the largest improvements in the percentage of children achieving a level five in KS3 maths and the percentage of children obtaining five or more A*–C grades at GCSE occurred for children living in the most income-deprived areas; to put it differently, '… the probability that a child living in a neighbourhood in the most income-deprived quartile within the NDC partnership areas would achieve five or more A*–C grades increased by 4.03 percentage points between 2002–03 and 2006–07 compared to a child living in a similarly income-deprived neighbourhood in a comparator area'

- those with low achievement at KS2 and KS3 in NDC partnerships are performing significantly better than similar children in the comparator areas at KS4; for both the 'low KS3 attainment' group and the 'low KS2 attainment' group there is an improvement in the 'best of 8' points score of more than 12 points: this represents an improvement in one GCSE subject of approximately two grades; similarly, children in the 'low KS2 attainment' group are significantly more likely to achieve five or more A*–C grades.

Conclusions

4.23.   Analyses outlined in this chapter present a mixed picture of the impact of NDC partnerships on educational attainment. For the Programme as a whole, and indeed most partnerships within it, gaps between local levels of

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[60]   See paragraph 4.16
[61]   LSOAs are designed to be roughly homogenous areas of approximately equal population size. The average LSOA population was 1,500 in 2001. There are 32,482 LSOAs in England.

attainment and the surrounding local authority (as well as the nation) have closed. However, that is also the case for other deprived areas outside the NDC Programme.

4.24.   As the national evaluation team has had occasion to say in numerous previous reports,[62] it is notoriously difficult to attribute observed change in NDC areas to specific NDC interventions. In the case of education, there are at least three particular factors complicating the process.

4.25.   First, as we have described earlier, patterns of school attendance vary between partnerships, but in general, children in NDC areas attend a large number of schools – or to put it differently, NDC partnerships have had to deal with (and invest in) a large number of schools if they are to have any hope of influencing outcomes for children living in their areas. In practice, Wilkinson concluded that 'the patterns of school attendance found in NDC partnerships meant that it was generally only realistic for around 50 to 80 per cent of the school-age population to be targeted through school-based initiatives'.[63]

4.26.   Second, pupil turnover rates are high in most NDC partnerships. The percentage of children living in an NDC area in 2002 who were still in the area in 2006 is between 50 and 70 per cent. However, in some partnerships there had been a much higher level of turnover, with more than half of the children resident in the area in 2002 having moved out by 2006. As we discussed earlier, the issue may not just be one of scale: population churn can exert major changes on the demographic profile of a neighbourhood, but either way, there are implications for the extent to which NDC partnerships can successfully tackle educational deprivation.[64]

4.27.   Third, many of the children resident in the NDC areas and comparator areas attend schools which have been involved in the Excellence in Cities or other programmes designed to improve attainment generally. Disentangling the impacts of the relatively modest expenditure incurred by NDC partnerships is not easy.

4.28.   It should be recorded that interviewees in the case study partnerships were clear that the NDC partnership had made a difference. In Birmingham Aston for example, there was unanimous agreement that the value that has been added by the NDC partnership has had an effect on results, a view shared by Board members, agencies, schools and parents. Although there was invariably recognition that NDC support was not the sole cause of improved educational attainment, in all four case studies, interviewees were clear that NDC partnerships' impact on local schools and educational attainment has been great.

[62] For example CRESR (2008) *New Deal for Communities: A Synthesis of New Programme Wide Evidence: 2006–07 NDC National Evaluation Phase 2 (Research Report 39)*. Sheffield: CRESR.

[63] CLG (2010) *Narrowing the Gap? Analysing the impact of the New Deal for Communities Programme on educational attainment*. London: CLG.

[64] CRESR (2007) *The Moving Escalator? Patterns of Residential Mobility in New Deal for Communities areas Research Report 32*. Sheffield: CRESR.

4.29.   Finally, this analysis has pointed to some specific and perhaps surprising (and even unintended) consequences of NDC interventions. The SDRC analysis reported above suggested that three groups of children in particular appeared to have fared better in NDC areas than in the comparators: those with relatively low prior attainment at KS2; those from the lowest income areas; and children from black Caribbean, other black and Bangladeshi ethnic groups – generally regarded as (along with white boys) among the lowest achieving sub-groups. Generally throughout the evaluation, the team has found that those starting form the lowest point have made the fastest progress – which may explain why these groups appear to have done so well. Alternatively, perhaps their performance suggests that at least some NDC interventions have been highly targeted.

5. A sustainable approach? The implications for forward strategies

Introduction

5.1. As we have shown throughout this report, there have been significant improvements in standards of educational achievement in New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas, even if it is not always clear how far these may be attributable to NDC strategies and interventions. However, in most cases there remains a long way to go before gaps between NDC areas and elsewhere are completely closed. It is important therefore to understand whether the processes of change are likely to be continued. Are NDC achievements likely to be sustained?

5.2. There are a number of dimensions to 'sustainability' in the context of short life area-based initiatives.

- will the institutional framework established by the NDC partnership – including the partnership itself – survive?

- can projects and interventions funded through NDC survive once NDC funding comes to an end?

- has the NDC partnership sufficiently influenced the mainstream to the point where mainstream agencies are willing to assume responsibility for NDC innovations?

- how far do NDC priorities match those of wider strategies, crucially in the present policy framework, the Local Area Agreement (LAA)?

- in some ways most importantly, will cultural changes in attitudes and behaviour, developed during the Programme, continue once NDC partnerships have withdrawn, or at least their funding ceased?

5.3. We review these questions in the remainder of this section.

Succession strategies

5.4. As the NDC Programme approaches its final years, partnerships are increasingly drawing up formal succession strategies,[65] setting out plans to preserve their legacies and in some cases their institutions (though not all have yet done so).

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[65] CLG (2008) *Delivering Succession Strategies; Some lessons from the New Deal for Communities Programme*. London: CLG.

5.5.   In Birmingham Aston for example, a formal succession strategy has been agreed in principle by the Board but is not yet finalised. The strategy will take into consideration the current work of individual themes and the success so far in mainstreaming activities and ensure '… that changes are sustainable and will contribute to transforming the area beyond 2011'.

5.6.   In Liverpool the NDC partnership's succession strategy outlines priorities for future activity in the Lifelong Learning theme, as the box below shows.

Box 5.1: Liverpool NDC Partnership: Succession strategy and education

- Priority A2: To continue activities that improve the engagement of young people with the education system. LAA target contribution: NI117[66] 16–18yr olds who are NEET; Educational attainment at KS2–4

- Priority A3: To reduce the proportion of residents lacking skills. LAA target contribution: NI 163 Working age qualified to NVQ2 or higher NI 165 Working age qualified to NVQ4 or higher.

5.7.   Newcastle NDC partnership's succession strategy involves the formation of a charitable company, Centre West, which will continue to work for the benefit of the West End area and to manage the portfolio of assets acquired by the NDC partnership. It is not clear at this stage how the company will approach education or what level of resources will be available to support local projects.

5.8.   There are proposals for the formation of a Theme Management Group once NDC funding ends. This would be facilitated by a local authority Area Based Regeneration Officer and involve schools and relevant local agencies, linking in to the local authority's structures for area-based working. However, there is as yet no clear understanding of the purpose of this group, or how it will operate in the absence of NDC resources.

5.9.   Southwark NDC partnership has similarly established a successor body: the Creation Trust which will continue beyond the NDC's lifetime. A year 10 priority for the NDC partnership is 'to develop the succession strategy further and a robust business plan for the Creation Trust to sustain the improvements in quality of life on the estate'. It remains unclear how this will affect the prospects for survival of the NDC partnership's education activities.

5.10.   A key element in the development of effective succession strategies concerns how closely NDC partnerships are able to align their priorities to those of wider strategies – and in particular the LAA. In Birmingham Aston, all NDC project aims are now linked to LAA objectives, and this has helped attract partners from the public sector. This has been helpful in design and implementation, but the NDC partnership realises that this will not help to sustain projects unless partners are able to support projects from their

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[66] These are three of the 198 indicators from which LSPs can choose priorities for their LAA. In full, the three are: NI 117 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment; NI 163 Working age population qualified to at least Level 2 or higher; NI 165 Working age population qualified to at least Level 4 or higher.

mainstream resources, and this will only happen if projects meet their own organisational objectives.

5.11. In Liverpool, the overall focus for ensuring that mainstream activities continue to meet the needs of the area and that further improvements are achieved to bring the NDC area closer to the city average, will be through the City and North Economic Development and Enterprise and Children and Young People Neighbourhood partnership Working Groups. These are both linked to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and have responsibility for the coordination of activity to ensure that the relevant Neighbourhood Area Agreement targets (sub-sets of the LAA) are achieved. The city council, as local education authority, will build on the activity established by the NDC partnership and will continue efforts to promote the adoption of best practice as established through the NDC Schools Programme. In particular it will assume responsibility for ensuring continuation of the successful 'Heads Together' network.

5.12. In Southwark, there are as yet only indirect links to the LSP, through the borough and local head teachers. The NDC partnership's outcome targets already conform to those in the LAA. Interviewees suggest that similarities in objectives between the NDC partnership and the borough arose by accident. The need for substantial improvements in education attainment across Southwark was widely recognised, and this happened to coincide with developments in the NDC partnership. The NDC partnership is now in the process of trying to strengthen and formalise its links to the LSP.

NDC funded projects

5.13. So far as sustainability is concerned, there is, as ever, a major distinction to be made between capital and revenue projects. In Liverpool for example, there is confidence about the capital programmes and community infrastructure, but concerns about where replacement revenue funding will come from for other projects. In Birmingham Aston, interviewees expressed concern that the NDC partnership's slow start had meant there has been insufficient time to build up a capital base.

5.14. Managers of short-life area-based initiatives (ABIs) are increasingly alert to issues of sustainability, and this study suggests that sustainability is now often routinely built into the planning of interventions. In Newcastle for instance, although there was never a formal education strategy, interventions were shaped by two key principles, one of which was the '… desire to use NDC resources in ways that are innovative, enhance mainstream provision and are sustainable'. Moreover, sustainability is not necessarily relevant for all projects. Newcastle NDC partnership developed some projects as 'quick wins', for instance providing school sweatshirts and breakfast clubs. These were described by interviewees as important markers which responded to the needs of low income communities, but it was recognised at the outset that these projects would not (necessarily) be sustainable beyond the life-time of the NDC partnership.

5.15.   In many (and perhaps most) cases however, it is expected that NDC interventions, which are often innovative, will be able to survive beyond NDC funding, either by becoming self-sufficient, or more feasibly, though absorption into the mainstream. In the current financial climate however, when many local authorities are expecting cuts in budgets, there are no guarantees irrespective of how carefully projects have been structured to build in mainstream support: finding continuing revenue streams will not be easy. The case study partnerships reviewed here are at very different stages.

5.16.   Interviewees in Birmingham Aston said that at this point in the programme they would have expected to know how far mainstream resources had been bent to tackle education problems. Nearly all the NDC projects have the potential for being mainstreamed and have been designed with that in mind. However, the comparatively late start of certain projects means that, in some cases, they are only just beginning or are part way through, and thus not yet sufficiently mature to persuade mainstream agencies of their value.

5.17.   Nevertheless, interviewees were optimistic about the prospects of most projects, as they had succession built in to them from the beginning. Most projects are expected to be sustainable because they have involved a number of partners and collective resources from the beginning. The NDC partnership has always been clear that its money was for pump priming to build sustainable projects, and they have largely achieved this.

5.18.   Mainstream agencies are expected to play a major role in continuing the legacy of the NDC partnership, although this has been an issue in the past with previous area programmes. Mainstream providers have been accused of using resources from area programmes (including the NDC programme) to support their own mainstream activities.

5.19.   The major projects have individual sustainability strategies, though some are still at too early a stage in their development to know if these strategies are plausible. For example, it is expected that the extended building at Broadway School will house a variety of services including the police and youth services, and will therefore draw funds from a variety of public agencies. However, the building is not yet complete so it is too soon to tell if the sustainability plan will work. Similarly, the English Language Learning Project has the potential to be mainstreamed by the Learning and Skills Council (or its successor) but this will not be confirmed until the project has proved its worth, and it is not yet in a position to do that.

5.20.   Computers in the Home has, in part, been mainstreamed in that the infrastructure is being absorbed by the Birmingham Grid for Learning. The project's main impact, though, has been through its learning and support operations rather than the hardware itself. Short term plans for funding are in place but how much of this will be mainstreamed in the longer term is unknown.

5.21.   The Liverpool NDC Partnership is reviewing all its major projects, and providing support for each to develop a business plan which in effect

constitutes a project succession strategy. Details are set out in the box below.

Box 5.2: Liverpool NDC Partnership: project succession planning		
Project	Current status/proposals post 2010	Contribution to LAA target (LAA 2008–11)
Kensington Bursary Project– bursaries for residents undertaking full-time degrees in return for 40 hours voluntary work.	Activities being managed by Kensington Regeneration Community Interest Company. Given the success of the project ongoing funding could be sought through the CIC Community Fund post 2010.	NI 165: Working age population qualified to at least level 4 or higher
Yellow House – arts and cultural activities in schools and in-house for young disadvantaged people.	Funding strategy in place beyond 2010	NI 117: 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEET)
Kensington Fields Community Association – community based ICT, lifelong learning and drama training programmes.	Consultant commissioned by KFCA to develop a business plan.	NI 117: 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEET)
Well Being Project – training in youth work, health and exercise for young people.	Project will cease.	NI 117 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEET)
Prospects – outward bound residential training and personal development modules for young people.	Prospects 2000 developing a business plan.	NI 117 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEET)
Music for Life – music education programme for the Kensington community.	Local schools have integrated the project into the school curriculum and will continue to fund the project post 2010.	

5.22. Newcastle NDC partnership's emphasis on revenue spend means that there is a need to find continuation funding for projects once NDC funding ends. So far, none of the NDC partnership's education work has been mainstreamed by the local authority, although some Early Years interventions have been adopted by the Children's Centre. Although interviewees were hopeful about the dialogue with the local authority about support for NDC interventions, they were also aware that any future mainstreaming would be dependent on resources, and that these were likely to be scarce.

5.23. There is hope that schools may be able to assume financial responsibility for some projects. Two key interventions – Classroom Assistants and Family Support – were supported through tapered funding arrangements, meaning that in the final year of NDC funding only 20 per cent of project resources came from NDC partnership. This has allowed schools to assume gradual responsibility for funding and head teachers in the relevant schools were confident that these projects would survive beyond NDC Programme.

5.24. Many of Southwark NDC partnership's projects have been mainstreamed for some time. Funding for InSpire/2InSpire has been uncertain, but Big Lottery support has now been secured, as has it for the Aylesbury Push. According to the NDC team, it only remains to find a home for the sports development team. Discussions are continuing about the long term arrangements for the Community Learning Centre. However, as with other NDC partnerships there are concerns abut the implications of chasing replacement funding in the current financial climate.

Sustaining cultural change

5.25. This report has shown that NDC partnerships' legacies are not restricted to institutions or funded projects. The NDC presence has prompted changes in behaviour and in some cases culture – the survival of which is as important as the survival of funded interventions. Prompted by the NDC presence, schools are working together in ways that had not happened before, and there is a level of parental involvement that is new. Generally, interviewees were confident that NDC partnerships' cultural legacy could survive. In Birmingham Aston, for example, interviewees believed that the way schools work together now will continue, and that increased parental involvement in schools will also survive. The NDC partnership initiated these changes but they are now held together by APEG (the head teachers' group) and by the schools themselves

5.26. In Southwark, some residents expressed concern that the estate might fall back after the money had gone – 'we need more parent power' according to one. Parent governors are still in short supply, although there is already much more parental involvement than before.

5.27. However, interviewees thought the changes would be sustained, partly because of the successor body (the Creation Trust), and the determination and stamina of local activists (one of whom recently won a Regeneration and Renewal award). Some argued that a virtuous circle had been created in the schools, where success breeds success and children who have gone through the system are becoming youth leaders and advisers and sometimes employees – and role models for those who follow.

Conclusions

5.28. Three of the four case studies (Birmingham Aston being the exception) were in the first wave of 'pathfinders', announced in 1998, and are therefore approaching the end of their funding. Yet details of succession strategies are still being put in place. Particularly given the budgetary pressures local authorities (and indeed all public agencies) are likely to face over the next few years, it is too early to tell how many of these partnerships' interventions are likely to survive. Indeed some interventions are conceived as short-life, providing early quick wins. However, all the case study NDC partnerships are

alert to issues of sustainability and are seeking ways in which their legacies can survive.

5.29.   Sustaining the legacy of the NDC partnerships is important. However, evidence presented in this report suggests that in most cases educational attainment has risen no faster in NDC areas than other deprived neighbourhoods. In many ways the sustainability of the improvements in educational attainment in NDC areas depends on a range of issues beyond the control, and outside the influence, of, partnerships. With current financial circumstances generating uncertainty about the future policy framework, it is impossible to be certain about the sustainability of the changes reported in this paper.

6. Conclusions: the implications of the research

Introduction

6.1.   The evidence presented in this report shows that educational attainment has improved in all New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas, in some cases substantially. Without spending on a lavish scale, NDC partnerships have supported a wide range of educational interventions targeting all age ranges. These have included:

- interventions directly to help improve attainment
- capital programmes
- resources and equipment
- collaboration with early years providers
- support or families and parents
- help for those aspiring to higher and further education.

6.2.   It is never easy to link outcome to intervention. Most interviewees, including teachers, community representatives and staff from the agencies thought the NDC Programme had made a contribution to improved educational standards; none thought NDC partnerships alone were responsible for the improvements.

6.3.   In this instance, the evidence about what has contributed to improved educational attainment strongly suggests that other factors, beyond any NDC intervention, played a major part and indeed may have been decisive. In chapter 4 we described how improvements in educational performance in the comparator areas had matched, and in some cases outstripped, improvements in NDC areas.[67] However, standards of attainment by young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have also been improving rapidly throughout the country.

6.4.   In *Breaking the link between disadvantage and low attainment* DCSF reported that '… the most deprived areas, using the proportion of young people entitled to free school meals (FSM) as our proxy measure of deprivation, have made the biggest gains. Over the past decade standards have risen in every single local authority. But the biggest improvements have been in those local authorities where schools have had to contend with the highest levels of deprivation.'[68]

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[67]   See paras 4.3 – 4.8
[68]   DCSF (2009b) *Breaking the link between disadvantage and low attainment – everyone's business*. London: DCSF.

6.5.   It is hard therefore to avoid the conclusion that improved standards in NDC areas owe at least as much to changes in the national policy framework as they do to interventions by the NDC partnerships. What then are the implications for NDC partnerships and any similar area-focused intervention that may follow them? We focus on three specific aspects of NDC activity:

* schools-based interventions

* working with parents

* out of school activity

Schools-based interventions

6.6.   There are significant variations between NDC areas, not just in levels of attainment but in the educational infrastructure. That makes generalisations about the Programme dangerous: local strategies plainly need to reflect local circumstances and challenges. However, for most NDC partnerships, the evidence presented in this report suggests that *schools-based* interventions are not necessarily the most efficient means of improving educational attainment for children who are residents of the area.

6.7.   The SDRC study reported earlier[69] described the geographical diversity of schools attended by children from NDC areas – with the Hackney NDC area representing one extreme, its children attending more than 170 different schools. Under these circumstances, (which apply even to 'average' NDC areas that must deal with 10 secondary and 10 primary schools to reach 80 per cent of the school-age population), there are two implications for NDC partnerships seeking schools-based investment:

* interventions in the most 'local' schools (those taking the highest proportion of NDC residents) will not bring benefits for all local children in the age-group

* the wider the NDC partnership's investments (in terms of the numbers of schools receiving assistance) the greater the dilution of the focus on NDC area residents: NDC-funded schools-based interventions must benefit *all* pupils, and not just those from the NDC area at the school in question.

6.8.   Of course there are areas – and Rochdale is one of them – where the degree of concentration of NDC area children in a limited number of schools may change the calculation. But for most NDC areas, there may be better ways of targeting the educational needs of children from the area than through schools-based activities.

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[69] CLG (2009) *Raising educational attainment in deprived areas: the challenges of geography and residential mobility for area-based initiatives*. London: CLG.

Working with parents

6.9.   All the case study NDC areas have developed a variety of activities working with parents, and the evidence confirms absolutely that they are right to do so: however, the evidence also suggests that some types of parental involvement make more difference to children's educational performance than others.

6.10.   An earlier study of NDC partnerships' educational activities to engage parents[70] began with a quote from one NDC partnership's educational co-ordinator: '… it's about bringing parents into school life'. Although the study described a variety of forms of parental involvement, its main focus was on parents in schools: parental involvement '… includes parents coming into schools informally; say for coffee and biscuits, as well as more formally, such as meetings with teachers or taking part in their children's education through classroom participation'.

6.11.   There are examples among the case study NDC areas where interventions have been designed to increase parental involvement (and engagement) in their children's schools, and this is important (although its importance decreases as children get older). But our evidence review in chapter 2 suggests that parental involvement is most valuable for their children's educational attainment *when it takes place in the home*.[71] Developing parental awareness of the importance of this role, (as well as the confidence to carry it out) may be a potentially critical task for NDC partnerships and similar area-based programmes that may follow them. The computers in the home project in Birmingham Aston, and Newcastle's family intervention project, both offer good examples of this approach in practice.

Out of school activity

6.12.   Finally, the review of evidence confirmed both the importance of out-of-school activity, and the fact that represents yet another area where the advantages enjoyed by children from least disadvantage backgrounds are compounded.[72] All the case study NDC partnerships have supported a variety of out-of-school activity, both promoting leisure pursuits (Liverpool's work with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic) and offering more explicitly academic support (the Aylesbury Push in Southwark). The evidence review documents the benefits of a diverse range of out-of-school activities; from an NDC perspective, the great advantage of investment in out-of-school activities is that it allows rather more precise targeting of benefit than schools-based investment.

[70] CRESR (2004) *Research Report 31: Parental Involvement in Education*. Sheffield: CRESR.
[71] See paras 2.32 – 2.33
[72] See paras 2.35 – 2.38

Conclusions

6.13.   The evidence appears to suggest that for many (and perhaps most) NDC partnerships, investing in activities outside the school system may be the mot cost-effective way of improving the educational attainment of children from the area. Given the improvements that national policy has delivered for children from disadvantaged backgrounds more generally, this may also be the area where NDC partnerships can generate the greatest added value.

6.14.   None of this is to decry the value of much of what NDC partnerships have done in partnership with schools. The schools forums that the case study NDC partnerships have facilitated are valuable, and appear likely to survive NDC partnerships themselves. It was also sensible that NDC partnerships developed their programmes with the approval of local head teachers. It is also the case that much of the case study partnerships' interventions were influenced by the perceptions of local community representatives, who unsurprisingly saw local schools as having a major role to play in improving educational standards in the area. It may be counter-intuitive to suggest that for many NDC partnerships, a strategy that focused investment *outside* the school system may have been appropriate; however, given the impact of national policy, and the difficulty of targeting NDC area children through schools-based approaches, this is what the evidence indicates.

Appendix 1: Research methodology

Four key research tasks were undertaken during 2009 in the research for this study in the four case study New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas to inform community engagement outputs:

(1) evidence review

(2) project reviews

(3) data analysis

(4) interviews

Evidence review

A review of evidence was undertaken to explore the existing state of knowledge about the scale, distribution, character and causes of educational disadvantage, outside the context of the NDC Programme. The review drew on a wide range of studies of UK experience, drawn from both academic sources and work commissioned by government. Literature drawn on is listed in the references at Appendix 2.

Project Reviews

Fifteen project reviews were undertaken across the case studies. These addressed issues around project planning and development, funding, outcomes and sustainability.

Data analysis

CRESR and SDRC pulled together available quantitative evidence on educational performance across the Programme as a whole, and in the case study partnerships. This provided data on questions such as:

* where do children from NDC areas go to school?

* what is the rate of turnover in schools serving the NDC area?

* how do levels of free school meal entitlement in NDCs areas compare with the surrounding district?

- How have the main indicators of educational attainment (key stage scores and GCSE exam results) changed in NDC areas, compared to their parent district, the comparator neighbourhoods, and the nation as a whole?

Interviews

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

Approximately 8–10 interviews were held in each case study NDC: typically to include education theme leader, Board rep(s) involved in theme groups, representatives of relevant agencies and especially the schools, partnerships and projects and other key local activists.

Key research questions and sources of evidence

Nature of the problem in deprived areas generally and in NDCs areas specifically

What are the relationships between deprivation and educational attainment?

What is the influence of ethnicity and gender?

What is the role of population turnover?

Evidence base

Analysis of household survey and administrative data will provide an overview of educational attainment in NDC areas, and in relation to comparator areas, local authority districts and national trends. This analysis will explore relationships between gender and ethnicity and education outcomes.

Research carried out by the national evaluation team has explored relationships between residential mobility and outcome change. This research will refer to other relevant outputs, notably highlighting negative relationships between levels of mobility and outcome change at KS4, and highlighting the impact of mobility amongst pupil cohorts in NDC areas.

Current thinking on best practice in relation to improving education outcomes in deprived areas

What does previous research and evidence say about best practice?

Evidence base

A brief review of evidence and current policy issues will be provided by as context for the findings of the study.

How have NDCs been seeking to improve education outcomes?

What are the key factors contributing to low levels of educational attainment in NDC areas? Are NDC partnerships aware of these factors? How have these factors influenced NDC interventions?

What are the nature and extent of education activities and projects?

Have interventions been focused at particular stages in the lifelong learning cycle? If so, why?

Have interventions sought to target particular groups? What evidence has this approach been based on?

How are interventions combined with projects from other themes, e.g. crime, education, worklessness – both in terms of project design/co-ordination and achieving outcomes across multiple outcome areas?

What is the role of the third sector? How are NDC partnerships working with the third sector to improve educational outcomes?

What is the role of education providers? How have they been involved in shaping and delivering NDC interventions?

How has the community been engaged in designing education projects/strategy?

To what extent have NDC partnerships been successful in ensuring their projects fit with wider local and national strategies for improving educational outcomes? How do NDC interventions complement other programmes and the activities of other service providers and third sector?

Evidence base

The key source of information for this question will be case studies of NDC partnerships. There will be a number of research tasks in each case study:

- Analysis of relevant documentation including strategies of NDC partnerships and other agencies and local project and theme evaluations

- Interviews with key individuals in NDC partnerships to gather evidence on research questions identified above

- Interviews with education providers and partner agencies to gauge the extent to which NDC interventions complement those of other providers and the nature and impact of other strategies and interventions in case study NDC areas.

Other sources of evidence include:

- Previous research carried out for Communities and Local Government by the national evaluation team has reviewed NDC approaches to improving educational outcomes. In particular, reports produced in Phase One of the NDC evaluation addressed issues such as working with communities and

parents, widening participation in adult learning, raising attainment in BME communities, and tackling school exclusions.[73]

- Additional research on community engagement, carried out in six case study NDC areas in 07/08 provides evidence in relation to the engagement of communities in designing education projects and strategies.

- System K data provides information in relation to the scale of NDC spend on education projects and associated outputs across the Programme.

How successful have NDC partnerships been (at the Programme wide and partnership level) in improving education outcomes, and what accounts for variations between partnerships?

Are there differential outcomes and rates of change across NDC areas?

How does change at the NDC level compare with local and national benchmarks and in comparison to other deprived areas?

Has change differed for different social groups?

Has change been different for NDC partnerships in different geographical areas?

What are relationships between spend and education outcomes?

Is there a relationship between education outcomes and particular types of partnership strategy and intervention?

Evidence base

Programme-wide data analysis will utilise household survey and administrative data to explore changes in education outcomes over time. In the main cross-sectional data will be used to consider data at an area level. However, where appropriate, findings from analysis of longitudinal data will highlight factors associated with individual outcomes. Trends over time in NDC areas in relation to comparator areas, local authority districts and national benchmarks will be considered, as will evidence for convergence across the 39 areas.

How can we ensure that successes are sustained in the future?

To what extent have NDCs been successful in bending mainstream resources to improve education outcomes in their neighbourhoods?

Do NDCs projects appear sustainable?

Evidence base

Evidence on mainstream bend and the sustainability of interventions will be obtained through interviews with NDCs and mainstream agencies in the six case study areas.

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[73] See Research Reports 10–13, 28–31 and 49–52 http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ndc/ndc_reports_01.htm

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Appendix 3: Glossary

ABI: Area-based initiatives

APEG: The local name for the Aston Pride Head Teachers' Group

BME: Black and minority ethnic

CCTV: Closed Circuit Television

CLG: Department for Communities and Local Government

CRESR: Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

DCSF: Department for Children, Schools and Families

DETR: Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions

DfES: Department for Education and Schools

EAL: English as an Additional Language

ECM: Every Child Matters

EPA: Educational Priority Areas

ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages

FSM: Free school meals

GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education

GFA: Geoff Fordham Associates

H and FE: Higher and Further Education

HMRP: Housing Market Renewal Partnership

ICT: Information and Communications Technology

IDACI: Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index

IMD: Index of Multiple Deprivation

IPPR: Institute for Public Policy Research

JRF: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

KS: Key Stage

LA: Local authority

LAA: Local area agreement

LEA: Local education authority

LSOA: Lower Super Output Area

LSP: Local Strategic Partnership

NDC: New Deal for Communities

NEET: Not in Education, Employment or Training

NRU: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit

NVQ: National Vocational Qualification

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education

RBSA: Royal Birmingham Society of Artists

RLPO: Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

SATs: Standard Assessment Tests

SDRC: Social Disadvantage Research Centre

SEAL: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

SEN: Special Educational Needs

SOA: Super Output Area

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