



What works in neighbourhood-level regeneration?  
**The views of key stakeholders in the New Deal for  
Communities Programme**





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February 2010

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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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# Key points

The New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme is one of the most important Area Based Initiatives (ABIs) ever launched in England. The Programme's primary purpose is to 'reduce the gaps between some of the poorest neighbourhoods and the rest of the country'. In 39 deprived areas, on average accommodating about 9,800 people, NDC partnerships are implementing approved 10-year Delivery Plans, each of which has attracted approximately £50m of Government investment. This report reflects the views of 30 key players in eight NDC areas which saw considerable positive change between 2002 and 2008.

## Planning 10 year strategic change

There is general agreement that the early days of the Programme were characterised by a formidable array of 'setting up' tasks, including building community support and establishing robust systems for governance, financial management and delivery. There were often delays in agreeing early Delivery Plans, at a time when considerable pressure was being put on partnerships to spend annual allocations.

Most observers point to the merits of planning the strategic transformation of these areas. This process can be eased through masterplanning techniques designed to facilitate the achievement of both people-, but also place-, related outcomes. However, not all commentators consider their partnerships adopted what might retrospectively be seen as a 'strategy'.

There is general recognition of the importance of the timely implementation of capital schemes, some of which act as beacon projects in the neighbourhood. Such schemes can take a long time to come to fruition. Some will not be completed before NDC Programme funding finishes.

## Organisation and skills for regeneration

There are generally positive views about the 'NDC model' based on community engagement, working with partners to effect change in defined neighbourhoods, and the ability of partnerships to operate at 'arms-length' from the local authority.

Some observers point to the need for regeneration practitioners to have formal or technical skills. But a key message to emerge is the importance of personal attitudes and more informal skills: *'having emotional intelligence'*. Successful NDC teams tend to be characterised by staff continuity and the tendency for many of the staff to live locally. There is an important role for innovative secondment models enabling those with appropriate skills working in other delivery agencies to be seconded into NDC partnerships.

Key stakeholders consistently point to the importance of leadership and vision in driving through the complex processes involved in achieving transformatory change across six outcomes in these deprived neighbourhoods. There is a strong sense that the 'chief executive' can play an absolutely essential role in helping to create positive change.

## Working with agency partners to deliver change

Partnership working is one of the signature features of the Programme. NDC partnerships have been able to influence the scale and scope of regeneration by facilitating other organisations to invest in the area. Having a dedicated regeneration resource has helped NDC partnerships work with agencies which would not normally be seen as central to area regeneration.

There were often early teething problems between partnerships and their local authority, but in general relationships have improved over time. NDC partnerships tend to liaise most with local authority 'Environment and Regeneration Directorates'. There have been instances when the practices of local authorities have been out of step with partnerships wishing to innovate. However, as accountable bodies, local authorities are constrained in what they can encourage and allow given audit and HM Treasury guidance.

Some agencies have consistently proved more supportive of the NDC Programme than others. The police have been identified as key players in this respect. However, not all observers see the police as the most crucial of partners, partly because in some localities levels of crime are not especially high. National targets and priorities can constrain the involvement of some agencies such as Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and schools. Individuals within delivery agencies can play a critical role in supporting local NDC partnerships.

## Working with the local community

The NDC Programme is premised on the assumption that the community is 'at the heart' of the initiative. Some, but not all, partnerships were able to work with an established community infrastructure. Despite initial problems in some areas, NDC officers and external agencies are generally positive about the community dimension. The community can play a role in driving change, validating new proposals, and delivering interventions.

However, NDC areas do not always represent natural communities. There have been some intra-community tensions. Community expectations need managing, and there are divergent views with regard to the value of electing community representatives onto partnership boards. There can also be tensions between community attitudes and the views of regeneration professionals. A few local observers think there has been too much emphasis on the community dimension which has tended to deflect attention from the priority of improving these areas and the lives of local residents.

## Impact and sustainability

It can be difficult to assess the degree to which developments occurring in these 39 areas can be attributed to partnerships: *'a lot of has been delivered in the area, but how much of this has the NDC delivered is the \$64 question'*. However, stakeholders are consistent in their view that partnerships have helped introduce place-related change and that NDC investment has given encouragement other organisations to invest in these areas.

Some commentators think more could have been achieved, and relationships with delivery agencies eased, if the 39 NDC areas had on average accommodated more people. There are also varied views with regard to what might best be delivered at the NDC level. Most observers support the notion of regeneration schemes seeking to achieve both place-, and people-, related change. But others would question whether outcomes such as worklessness can be tackled at the neighbourhood level.

Observers point to the importance of embedding issues of sustainability and succession into thinking from an early stage. Many partnerships are seeking to leave a longer term legacy through developing a property portfolio, the rental income from which might maintain a neighbourhood level regeneration programme. But there can be problems in managing a property portfolio. Support for some projects will be taken on by other delivery agencies after NDC funding ceases. But the scale of this may be limited, partly because of likely reductions in public expenditure.

## Lessons for regeneration policy and practice

Evidence from these key stakeholders points to a number of lessons for regeneration policy and practice.

# 1. Learning from the NDC Programme

- 1.1. The New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme is one of the most important Area Based Initiatives (ABIs) ever launched in England. Announced in 1998 as part of the government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal,<sup>1</sup> the Programme's primary purpose is to 'reduce the gaps between some of the poorest neighbourhoods and the rest of the country'.<sup>2</sup> Seventeen Round 1 partnerships were announced in 1998 and a further 22 Round 2 schemes a year later. In these 39 deprived areas, which on average accommodate about 9,800 people, local NDC partnerships are implementing approved 10-year Delivery Plans, each of which has attracted approximately £50m of Government investment.
- 1.2. This Programme is based on a number of key underpinning principles:
- NDC partnerships are carrying out 10-year strategic programmes designed to transform these deprived neighbourhoods and to improve the lives of those living within them
  - decision making falls within the remit of 39 partnership boards, consisting of agency and community representatives
  - communities are 'at the heart of the regeneration of their neighbourhoods'<sup>3</sup>
  - in order to achieve their outcomes, the 39 partnerships have worked closely with other delivery agencies such as the police and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs): the notion of working collaboratively with other delivery agencies is central to the Programme
  - partnerships are intended to close the gaps between these areas and the rest of the country in relation to:
    - three place-related outcomes designed to improve NDC areas: incidence and fear of crime, housing and the physical environment (HPE), and community
    - and three people-based outcomes intended to improve the lives of residents in the 39 areas: health, education and worklessness.
- 1.3. In 2001 a consortium headed up by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University was commissioned to undertake the 2001–2005 Phase 1 of a Programme wide evaluation. In 2006

<sup>1</sup> HM Government (1998) *Bringing Britain together: a national strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (Cm 4045).

<sup>2</sup> DETR (2001) *New Deal for Communities: Financial Guidance*

<sup>3</sup> ODPM (2004) *Transformation and sustainability: future support, management and monitoring of the New Deal for Communities programme*, 11

CRESR secured the 2006–2010 Phase 2 of the national evaluation working with a similar, albeit smaller, consortium.<sup>4</sup>

- 1.4. The evaluation is based on the collation and analysis of an extensive array of change data including:
  - four household surveys carried out in all 39 areas by Ipsos MORI in 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008; overviews of main findings for the periods 2002–2006<sup>5</sup> and 2002–2008<sup>6</sup> have previously been published
  - the Social Disadvantage Research Centre (SDRC), a constituent member of the evaluation consortium, has provided administrative data through time for all 39 NDC areas including evidence in relation to worklessness, pupil level educational attainment rates, and house prices.
- 1.5. The depth and longitudinal nature of data available to the national evaluation has allowed for an assessment of change through time to all 39 NDC areas. As part of final reporting of the Programme due to be published in 2010, that evidence will be subject to quantitative analysis in order to help understand why some of these 39 neighbourhoods have seen greater change than others.
- 1.6. This quantitative evidence is used here to inform qualitative investigations designed better to understand why, and how, change has occurred at the level of the individual NDC area. One group of local observers is in an especially advantageous position to expand on what underpins positive change: key stakeholders working in, or associated with, NDC areas seeing greatest change.
- 1.7. This report reflects the views of key players in eight NDC areas which have seen considerable positive change. This list was primarily based on the scale of positive change over the 2002–2008 period, although the final selection was refined in order to include representation from across the country. This final list is not therefore a reflection of which eight NDC areas saw ‘greatest’ change. However, all eight fell within those 12 NDC neighbourhoods seeing most positive change over the six year period 2002 to 2008. The NDC areas within which this research was undertaken are:
  - Birmingham Aston
  - Islington
  - Lambeth
  - Manchester
  - Newcastle

<sup>4</sup> Consortium members are: Cambridge Economic Associates, European Institute for Urban Affairs at Liverpool John Moores University, Geoff Fordham Consulting, Ipsos MORI, Local Government Centre at the University of Warwick, School of Health and Related Research at the University of Sheffield, Social Disadvantage Research Centre at the University of Oxford, Shared Intelligence, and SQW.

<sup>5</sup> CLG (2007) *New Deal for Communities National Evaluation: An Overview of Change Data: 2006*. [www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/publications.asp?did=1898](http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/publications.asp?did=1898)

<sup>6</sup> CLG (2009) *An Overview of Cross-sectional Change Data: 2002–2008: Evidence from the New Deal for Communities Programme*. [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/crossectiondatandcp](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/crossectiondatandcp)

- Plymouth
  - Sheffield
  - Walsall.
- 1.8. Members of the national evaluation team interviewed key stakeholders in each of these eight NDC areas in summer 2009. Typically interviews were held either separately or collectively with three or four key players in each NDC partnership, usually the Chief Executive, Programme Manager and Chair and the most relevant officer in the Accountable Body (in all cases the local authority).
  - 1.9. Interviews with key stakeholders were deliberately designed to provide attendees with an opportunity to reflect at length on their experiences of this Programme. To assist in this process the evaluation team produced a topic guide (Appendix 1). This provided a broad agenda for discussion, but inevitably debate proved wide-ranging. Interviewees were told that their names could be quoted in a final report, although in some instances it was agreed to report comments anonymously. Those interviewed have, wherever possible, been given an opportunity to comment on this report. This does not apply to all of those originally interviewed, since some partnerships were in the process of effectively being dissolved at the time of, or shortly after, these interviews were held. In some cases these views were caught just in time.
  - 1.10. In all, 30 stakeholders were interviewed, of whom 19 had been employed by, or associated with, an NDC for at least three years and 17 for at least six. This is a very experienced group of practitioners, a full list of whom is outlined in Appendix 2.
  - 1.11. Care needs to be used in interpreting evidence from these key stakeholders for two reasons. First, although common themes emerge from this evidence, it is not hard to identify different interpretations and reflections: the NDC Programme has played out as 39 different narratives. Second, although these eight NDC areas have seen considerable positive change, it would be unwise to assume that these local observers, or indeed the national evaluation team, will ever be able fully to explain 'success'. In practice change at the area level will reflect the inter-related impact of a wide range of local, national and even inter-national trends over which regeneration bodies such as NDC partnerships may have little, if any, control.
  - 1.12. Nevertheless, this is a valuable source of evidence, drawing as it does on the direct experience of regeneration practitioners working in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, often for considerable periods of time. This report reflects their views. No attempt has been made to 'validate' these using findings from the evaluation as a whole—even assuming that were possible. Evidence outlined in this report will be used to inform a suite of seven Final Evaluation reports to be published in 2010.

1.13. The remaining sections of the report are structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: discusses issues surrounding planning 10 year strategies
- Chapter 3: explores issues of organisation and skills
- Chapter 4: considers the role of partners
- Chapter 5: addresses questions surrounding the role of the community
- Chapter 6: examines local impact
- Chapter 7: identifies key lessons for regeneration policy and practice.

## 2. Planning 10 year strategic change

- 2.1. In terms of the history of regeneration, New Deal for Communities (NDC) partnerships are in the unusual, probably unique position of presiding over 10-year programmes. No other Area Based Initiative (ABI) has had such a generous time period within which to plan for the transformation of local areas.

### Setting-up regeneration partnerships

- 2.2. It is clear that the very early days of the Programme were characterised by a formidable array of 'setting up' tasks which followed (and in some cases preceded) the allocation of funding. The key local authority contact in Sheffield felt that:

*'my recollection is that the first couple of years there wasn't very much done at all really; there was a lot of sorting out of the board and what the board thought and all the processes and so on.'*

- 2.3. Similarly, in Newcastle, observers recall the need in the early years of the programme to devote considerable energy and resources to building community support and establishing robust systems for governance, financial management and delivery. The Neighbourhood Partnership Manager reported:

*'the appraisal system, feasibility systems, evaluation, monitoring, procurement, developing performance indicators – all those systems and procedures were worked up over a series of planning events where the staff went away and then presented it back to the board for their approval. That takes time, and only in about 2003/4, at that point, we felt we were on much firmer ground.'*

- 2.4. There is a view from officers in one local authority that, when the Programme was launched, central government did not fully appreciate the practical difficulties of setting-up community-led partnerships. This meant that the NDC concerned *'lost two years at the beginning and this distracted from its ability to deliver on the ground.'*

- 2.5. And in Manchester, observers also comment on a long period of development work leading up to the submission of the initial delivery plan. The deputy Chief Executive at New East Manchester comments that:

*'it was a very time intensive process about developing, going through consultation, identifying the problems and the issues, identifying priorities, starting to determine what the solutions might be and putting a delivery*

*plan together. So that took us 12 months from the launch of NDC to submission of the delivery plan.'*

- 2.6. At the same time as partnerships were being set up, according to the Programme Manager at Lambeth, '*... GOL and ODPM were pushing us to "spend spend spend" on quick wins*'. At that time this was perceived as an unhelpful approach. However, interestingly those projects which were introduced because of pressures to spend, in turn contributed to the improvements in crime: rates in the NDC neighbourhood improved much faster than across the rest of borough.
- 2.7. Similarly, the Chair of Aston thinks that '*it was necessary to do some quick wins at the beginning. This helped to overcome disillusionment in the community that nothing was happening. However, quick win projects needed to be carefully thought through*'.
- 2.8. Bearing in mind the 'community focus' of the Programme it is not surprising to see that observers consider one of the key guiding forces in aligning the early development of strategies was resident sentiment. The Chair of Walsall indicates that:

*'My one lasting impression of New Deal is that it is community led, and I think that's been the most important thing because the strategy has come out of the people...'*

- 2.9. A similar view emerges from Lambeth, where according to the Chief Executive:

*'residents felt they needed a new neighbourhood, and they saw this as a one-off opportunity to change the neighbourhood for ever', an aspiration which could never be achieved through the council ... 'decent homes standard was all they could hope for, and even that was not guaranteed.'*

- 2.10. Because these are deprived areas it is not surprising to find that that many have hosted previous ABIs. The key local authority contact in Plymouth mused on whether this:

*'actually helped or hindered (the NDC) because there was 10 years, probably more than that, with what turned out to be the first phase of an estate action programme. We then had urban programme money, SRB, so I suppose NDC came into an area that ... had some experience of dealing with regeneration programmes. But, I suppose on the negative side it had all been a bit stop/start ... actually knowing we've got 10 years and we can plan for 10 years, I think was the real difference compared to what had gone before, because there was that certainty; so at least there was an opportunity to learn from what hadn't worked as well' ... in addition there was the certainty 'from the city council, to do something with the housing stock round here which meant that NDC could look at where it could add value to that, rather than having to put a lot of money into big housing projects.'*

- 2.11. Once some of the initial 'setting-up' tasks such as sorting out financial arrangements and accommodation had been completed, then one early manifestation of change was that more people were around. The key local authority contact in Sheffield reports:

*'once things started a lot of the interventions were about people, employing extra people, having people around in the area, both working for New Deal, for example extra police officers or wardens, extra people, street cleaners and so on, and then a lot of emphasis on education projects, employment projects, adult skills and that kind of thing...'*

- 2.12. These observers consistently point to the reality that the setting-up tasks associated with a Programme as ambitious as this take a great deal of time and effort. In reflecting on the scale of tasks NDCs needed to do in their early years, the Neighbourhood Manager at Walsall suggests that:

*'although New Deals had a start up period it was very very short and I think that could have been longer ... I think there's a start up period that's needed ... where the partners and the community work out their relationships before they've got the added pressure of having to do stuff ... so start slow and move quicker.'*

- 2.13. Nevertheless, getting systems and structures right is important in driving forward programme delivery. As Walsall's Chief Executive indicates:

*'I think what we've benefited from internally as an organisation is getting the staffing structures, but also the relationship and the governance arrangements right, and getting those agreed with the accountable body; we got staff secondment agreement ... we got project appraisal approval, evaluation processes and so that it's very formalised and we haven't been afraid to spend money on getting the right advice either from legal or getting the right consultancy advice or whatever; ... our projects are independently externally appraised and the majority of our evaluations similar. So I think there's a lot of learning in that because that enables the board and everyone else to look at the longer term and look at the need and other wants and so on; you've got that framework which everybody accepts and I think that enables the programme to have a sustainable long term view.'*

## Delivery plans

- 2.14. There are different views regarding the longer term virtues of initial Delivery Plans. Other work by the national evaluation team,<sup>7</sup> points to many of these being revised. But it is clear that some proved to be of lasting value. To Walsall's Chief Executive:

<sup>7</sup> CRESR (2005) *The NDC National Evaluation: Analysis of Delivery Plans 2004: outcomes, floor targets and projects*  
<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ndc/downloads/reports/Analysis%20of%20Delivery%20Plans%202004.pdf>

*'I wasn't around when the original delivery plan was formulated but I have seen it and obviously worked from it, and it's quite an impressive document ... so from that point of view, that set out a very clear strategic approach in terms of identifying needs and addressing what interventions broadly, and what outcomes, people wanted.'*

- 2.15. And in the context of Manchester NDC Partnership, the Deputy Chief Executive, New East Manchester, comments that early investment in the development of the delivery plan had resulted in a strategic approach which remained relevant for the lifetime of the programme:

*'I think the remarkable thing about our strategy is that we put together a delivery plan back in September '99, and I think if you read that delivery plan today I think we've delivered a good 95 per cent of it. It remains fairly accurate in terms of what the issues were and how we set it out.'*

## Planning for strategic, long-term, and holistic change

- 2.16. Setting up appropriate systems and creating initial Delivery Plans were means through which to plan for the longer-term transformation of these deprived areas. Interestingly however, there are different views on the merits and realities of planning the strategic, holistic, and long-term regeneration of these neighbourhoods.

- 2.17. In broad terms most observers probably would point to the merits of planning the strategic transformation of these areas. The Plymouth Chief Executive would, for instance, see strategy in terms of a longer term process:

*'view yourselves as a catalyst, set targets that are realistic but challenging; but recognise that this concept of a vision should always be just beyond your reach' ... and in setting targets it is important to be both 'evidence based' and to 'avoid the temptation for revisiting and unpicking...'*

- 2.18. In planning longer term strategies, it is intriguing to note that a number of commentators point to the particular virtues of masterplanning. Masterplans set out proposals for buildings, spaces, transport and land use. They are supported by financial, economic and social policy documentation and identify clear delivery mechanisms.<sup>8</sup> A masterplan is therefore a device for building support for a sequence of actions that may unfold over several years. The Head of Programmes in Plymouth felt that one of the reasons why successful change has been delivered is because masterplanning provided a framework through which to guide investment and support from relevant delivery agencies. In part this was because no existing agency 'owned' the process or the product. Masterplanning represented a 'neutral' arena within

<sup>8</sup> Issues surrounding the implementation of masterplans in four NDC areas are discussed in: CLG (2008) *Devising and delivering masterplanning at the neighbourhood level: some lessons from the New Deal for Communities Programme*. [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/ndcmasterplanning](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/ndcmasterplanning)

which agencies were collectively able to agree how the area should be developed:

*'we weren't invited to do masterplanning, nobody told us we needed to do that, nobody even suggested it ... and it certainly wasn't a focus for the agencies that we were working with ... and that's been the reason it has worked ...'*

- 2.19. One reason why there may be a particular need to use techniques such as masterplanning, is because, as Walsall's Chief Executive comments, strategic thinking needs to culminate in beacon projects:

*'I think this (major community and service delivery building) does act as a focal point and a beacon and does give confidence to the local community that something is actually happening; there's money that's coming in, is coming in for their benefit. And I think it does act as that spur and the earlier you do that the better.'*

- 2.20. Not unexpectedly coming from this ambitious and wide-ranging ABI, there are also positive views about the need to drive forward holistic regeneration in order to achieve both people-, but also place-, related changes which directly address problems evident in the locality. The Deputy Chief Executive, New East Manchester felt that:

*'a holistic, neighbourhood focused approach is absolutely right. There is something about making sure that it's focused on the right locality – not a pre-determined four thousand households or whatever, but making sure you focus on the needs of the locality. To make regeneration work you've got to get the economic, the social and the physical conditions right.'*

- 2.21. And whatever approach is adopted towards strategic planning, there is a commonly held view that regeneration needs time. As the key local authority contact in Walsall suggests:

*'I think regeneration is blighted by ... short termism and I think that's the one thing for me that there was a recognition (in the NDC Programme) that the right thing to do was say 'look, the scale of problems we face in these and other areas isn't going to be over ... we're not going to solve them in 10 years, but we certainly won't solve them in two or three' ... We face problems that are so deep rooted, generations, it'll take generations to get over them ...'*

- 2.22. It is important too to stress that approaches adopted by NDC partnerships towards transforming their areas changed through time. The Chief Executive of Plymouth for instance can identify four phases: a commitment by the board to *'make sure they fully understood exactly what the issues were from within the area'*; spending the best part of three years in *'heavy consultation' ... 'so that when the moves were made they were the right moves for the long term'*. Then a second phase which involved *'alignment with the public sector, both in terms of priorities, funding streams, timescales, so Devonport wasn't facing one way and everybody else was facing the other way'*. A third

main delivery phase was characterised by things *'taking off'*. And finally a fourth phase was built around succession. Interestingly one of the reasons why this more measured approach was possible was because the *'board held their nerve because there was a lot of pressure from a lot of quarters, particularly around spend in those earlier years, but they held their nerve, weren't distracted, weren't deflected, and have, I think, reaped the benefits, the area's reaped the benefits of that long term approach at the outset.'*

2.23. Strategies also evolved through time because of apparent changing priorities in central government. The Islington Chair for instance felt that an initial emphasis on community leadership and close links with service providers changed to a greater focus on delivery: *'There was a return to top-down, parachuting in, which was less transformational.'*

2.24. And there was a further more pragmatic reason why strategies changed: a lack of understanding about how long change would take to occur. The Chief Executive at Lambeth reports:

*'There was massive misunderstanding about the time frames. When people were being consulted 10 years ago, they thought they would see this thing (stock transfer and housing refurbishment) completed before the NDC finished. I don't think people appreciated how long these things take even with a yes vote' ... 'we had the yes vote in March 2005, and then nothing happened for over a year. Absolutely nothing whatsoever happened that residents could see. Because that time was spent with our partner Registered Social Landlord (RSL) (Metropolitan), who then reviewed everything – every plan, every assumption: they went back to basics'. And negotiations with the council over the terms of the stock transfer were excruciatingly slow.'*

2.25. One unforeseen outcome in all of this was the lack of investment in housing because of uncertainties surrounding stock transfer *'... all we saw was the absolute minimum in responsive repairs. The programme is three years behind schedule; so over the period an unintended consequence is even less investment in existing stock than might have been expected otherwise! There is no longer an agreed programme because of the collapse in the housing market – the RSL has had to go back to the banks'*. However, the lenders have now agreed to fund the next development phase.

2.26. Although most observers would see merits in adopting a strategic and holistic approach, there are contrary, or at least subtly different views, here.

2.27. Not all observers consider their partnerships adopted what might retrospectively be seen as a *'strategy'*. In Islington for instance, initial priorities identified through consultation such as investment in housing estates, action to address high levels of anti-social behaviour, and more localised investment in youth facilities and GP services, were clear and dominated early NDC activity. Not everyone agreed with these priorities. The accountable body representative didn't see the value of all the security measures on estates *'... but it's resident led and that's what they want'*. Alongside these *'strategic'* priorities, the NDC partnership has also spent heavily on education and

worklessness, but officers express concern that this expenditure can easily get lost in mainstream budgets if projects are not carefully designed to add value.

2.28. Similar kinds of thinking emerged from the Chair of Walsall:

*'if you try and impose too much of a strategy you get into awful problems, I just don't understand the concept of an overall strategy, councils don't work that way either.'*

2.29. In this context the Chief Executive at Lambeth makes a useful distinction between strategy and vision:

*'What they (local residents) did have was a very clear vision of what they wanted to change; but at the outset they did not have a very clear strategy about how they wanted to effect that change.'*

2.30. Equally so, some commentators are not entirely convinced that holistic regeneration is inevitably the best approach to adopt. For instance the Chief Executive at Lambeth:

*'Although it's nice to have holistic programmes ... it was frustrating that we had to embrace all the outcomes – some are so intractable – they involve changing the way people think, for example, about attitudes to work and benefits, these can't be changed by a small ABI.'*

## Phasing capital and current expenditure

2.31. One issue impacting on 'strategic planning' is the need to achieve an appropriate balance between, and the relative phasing of, capital as opposed to revenue projects. In Sheffield for instance, the local authority contact commented that:

*'it was only in the last four years that the capital spend happened; so I think that was an interesting one, because some places would have done it the other way around; but I think the people who were involved seeing other places and looked at Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) programmes where maybe the big housing stuff was done and it took four years and then they belatedly thought 'what about the community?'*

2.32. Reflecting on issues of phasing, it is however clear that capital projects certainly have one immediate and obvious advantage because:

*'people can see it, and they can see that 'oh that's what's happened'; if somebody's been through training or anything like that you can't tell ... when you walk down the street, and it does have that sense of invisibility. Until the public realm started to change there was still voices in Burngreave (the NDC area) going 'I don't know where all that money's going.'*

- 2.33. In Manchester, capital spend was prioritised in the middle of the programme, according to the Deputy Chief Executive, New East Manchester, because:

*'We recognised that the big physical projects should happen in the early years of the programme so our key years of spend were three, four and five and then it started to tail off from thereon in and over the last couple of years it's been revenue spend.'*

- 2.34. The Chief Executive at Islington emphasises the importance of undertaking a master plan or area action strategy as an early priority, in order to help shape the 'place' and to provide a framework within which to identify key capital priorities to be implemented by regeneration agencies working with delivery partners. Once implemented, larger capital projects can bring benefits in their wake: they act as flagship, 'emblematic' projects for the area; they are more likely to be sustainable in the longer run; and it is more cost-effective to manage a smaller number of larger projects, rather than a larger number of smaller ones.

- 2.35. In that context it is interesting to note that there is a view that capital spend may come too late in the 10 year horizon. To the Executive Manager of Sheffield NDC: *'having spoken to colleagues at other NDCs, those that have left their capital projects till last have come unstuck on a mighty scale'*.

- 2.36. Delay can also occur because, although NDC capital investment can attract or 'lever in' sometimes much greater resources than those available to the partnership, time is needed to establish relationships with other funding partners. In Newcastle, NDC capital investment has focused on planning and feasibility and small scale environmental improvements, because as the Neighbourhood Partnership Manager comments:

*'the vast majority of our capital spend was probably about planning with partners to make sure that their investment came in, because even with 55 million quid you are not going to make a massive impact on an area like NDC.'*

- 2.37. One final factor driving the balance between capital and revenue spend has been the question of sustainability. Islington for instance discontinued some investments because of costs or, because projects were being funded via mainstream budgets. Fresh resources were coming in from the NHS, and in addition the Metropolitan Police had introduced the Safer Neighbourhoods programme. The NDC instead started to shift the focus to capital projects, concentrating on legacies with real prospects of sustainability. There was a greater emphasis on more innovative revenue projects, offering things that other delivery agencies could not deliver.

## 3. Organisation and skills for regeneration

- 3.1. One of the benefits in interviewing those who have had considerable experience of the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme is that they are well placed to comment on appropriate organisational frameworks and on skill-sets through which to drive forward local regeneration schemes.

### Organisational models for regeneration

- 3.2. There are generally positive views about the 'NDC model' based on community engagement, working with partners to effect change in defined and deprived neighbourhoods, and the ability of partnerships to operate at 'arms-length' from the local authority.
- 3.3. But there are nuances here. According the Chief Executive of Islington, *'there are some real advantages – the transparency of the money, local connection, resident influence, and it does drive delivery.'* But there are downsides too. This approach can lead to what can seem an apparently interminable debate as to what *'community leadership means'*. And because of its community-based nature, it can be hard to see how the NDC links into wider strategies. To the research officer of this London NDC: *'we are just one, oddly-shaped bit in Islington, and no other oddly-shaped area in the borough has either the money or the representation we have. So we get dealt with by Islington as a one-off oddity. It leads people to say – "that area already has some money so we don't need to bother about it". It's a kind of top-down localism.'*
- 3.4. A similarly somewhat guarded response emerges from the Chief Executive at Lambeth NDC. The community-based partnership is *'...not necessarily best placed to deliver – but the community has to be involved. For example, we couldn't have delivered the housing programme without the community.'* But the theme group system – made up of 50–50 residents/professionals – was the real strength of the NDC: *'residents do want to have their views heard but they don't want to deliver'*.

### Skills for regeneration

- 3.5. There is recognition that, in the early days of the Programme, some NDCs had problems in attracting staff with the right skills. They were perceived to be relatively unstable organisations, offering limited career opportunities over the longer term. The role and importance of innovative secondment models was emphasised by both the Executive Director and the Chair at Aston. In some cases, good people, perhaps the very best, could be attracted from local authorities, and elsewhere, provided that there were ways in which

they could later re-engage with mainstream job opportunities. The Chair of Aston pointed out that secondment of staff was especially pertinent in a context where *'the turnover of good people always remains a problem. The best people eventually leave. The need is for intensive commitment but it can never be a job for life or one that is going to appeal to someone who has a long term career ambition in a major organisation unless they can find some way of returning with credit, be that in a local authority or elsewhere.'*

- 3.6. What sort of skills do regeneration practitioners require? Some observers point to the need for regeneration practitioners to have formal or technical skills. The Executive Manager at Sheffield felt that, *'the basic skill somebody's got to have is some financial competence, financial management skills, and some communication ... (skills)'*. Interestingly too if there is one crucial area of skills that partnerships consider they lack it is often that surrounding an understanding of how capital projects are funded and implemented. To the Chief Executive of Islington *'... before we had a health programme manager, an education programme manager, doing both capital and revenue. We now realise they are quite different, and require very different skills.'*
- 3.7. But the key message to emerge is the importance of personal attitudes and more informal skills, or as one commentator put it, *'having emotional intelligence'*, rather than having specific technical skills.
- 3.8. These informal skills are manifest in various ways. There is a view, for example, that successful practitioners need to understand how their regeneration area 'works'. As the Chair at Sheffield commented: *'in terms of skills, I think obviously local knowledge is absolutely essential, from a residents' perspective, and I also think wanting to make a difference ...'*
- 3.9. Local regeneration practitioners need too to be able to see the bigger picture, the ways in which the local area could change in the future. This is important because such a perspective provides a framework within which to understand how each small scale step can ultimately lead to transformatory change. Sheffield's Chair states that:
- 'I know people want to make a difference for different reasons, but wanting to see that change and, I think, the big strategies and the big visions help to galvanise people in seeing what it is, what their efforts are actually, in a day by day context, what they're actually building up towards ... the big vision.'*
- 3.10. In similar vein, Plymouth's Chief Executive suggests there is a need:
- 'to rise above the choppy waters, I think that's fundamental, recognising the history of this area ... and appreciating ... a very, very strong sense of identity ... being able to retain the best elements of that history with merging into the way forward, so it's that kind of rounded approach...'*
- 3.11. And it is not just about knowing the area, but having a positive attitude towards it. According to the Executive Manager at Sheffield:

*'I don't think there is any qualification or training course out there that you must have in order to work in regeneration, I think it's really about having an empathy and a feeling for what local people are telling you and being able to translate that objectively.'*

- 3.12. Operating in such areas, regeneration staff need to show a willingness to work in new, and imaginative, ways. The Regeneration Coordinator at Manchester indicates:

*'the freedom to do things in different ways was a real positive about coming to work here. It enabled you to work in a way that you'd always perhaps wanted to work ...'*

- 3.13. There are illuminating narratives with regard to how NDC areas have learnt to deploy expertise and resources. In Lambeth in the early days it was assumed that the NDC partnership needed thematic specialists covering health, crime, education, and so on. These were not hard to find. But the really critical skills are the softer ones especially partnership working, and these are not easily come by. According to the Chief Executive:

*'In the early days we created the impression that we were hard to do business with, that we created an antagonistic atmosphere ... we bought in highly skilled and well paid professionals and put them in charge of themes, and this militated against the development of a team approach. We moaned about the council and silos but, boy did we create our own pretty quickly ... we have had a lot of people come to the NDC who just don't know how to work with residents, and the ones that survived and succeeded here were the ones who could work well with residents.'*

- 3.14. In reflecting on the success of NDC teams, the comment is often made that this has been made easier because of staff continuity and the tendency for many staff to live locally. The former, is seen as a key ingredient in the success of NDC Partnerships in Manchester and in Plymouth, where the Chair suggests that staff remaining with the partnership is both *'an explanation of our success and a result of it too'*. And he is equally positive about the helpful if at times challenging function played by a few, consistent, contacts in Government Office South West (GOSW). In Plymouth too, the Head of Programmes points out that about 40 per cent of staff live in the area, which has helped engender a strongly positive attitude towards the regeneration programme.

- 3.15. There is also a strong view that informal skills are best developed in teams. Islington's Chief Executive's suggests that the delivery team as a whole is what really counts: *'a high quality delivery team is absolutely crucial, because residents can't genuinely scrutinise projects.'*

- 3.16. But although team working is essential, there is a view too that key players in partnerships need to be 'leaders', because they will invariably be working in teams, collaborating and negotiating with other organisations. According to the Executive Manager at Sheffield:

*'you need to be good at collaboration, you need to be comfortable working in partnership, you need to be able to articulate your arguments and, importantly, not come at it from a point of view of lobbing grenades at people. You've got to take the problem, and you've got to take the seed of a solution with you as well, so that you've got something to build on. So there's clearly people management skills in that because there will be a team of people, and that's got to be about how to motivate those people and get them engaged in it as well. So financial, communication, staff management skills; but importantly I think it's about the right feeling for it, the right person for it that's going to be able to get out there and work with that huge spectrum of people.'*

## Leadership and vision

3.17. These key-stakeholders consistently point to the importance of leadership and vision in driving through the complex processes involved in achieving transformatory change across six outcome areas in deprived neighbourhoods.

3.18. Leadership can come from different sources. In at least one instance, the point was made that this can come not only from NDC partnerships, but also from the local authority as the accountable body. For the key local authority contact involved in Sheffield, the continuing commitment of the now ex-Chief Executive of the city proved crucial:

*'leadership of the chief exec of the city council, and his commitment and his being prepared to come back as often as necessary to the board to present, to debate, to talk and to make sure that the key people in the council never lost their nerve really, and just stayed with it.'*

3.19. This kind of leadership was especially useful in helping to provide a strategic steer and consistent support when not a great deal appeared to be happening in the early years:

*'it could have been easy for somebody to just have a quiet word and say "do you know what, we won't kick up a fuss if you walk away, put the (NDC) money somewhere else". But you had consistently big senior people in there, on the (NDC) board; ... we did get some kind of penetration (in other agencies) and that made a huge difference to everybody's confidence, community's confidence; "my god these are the big guns and they're turning up" ... so that's critical.'*

3.20. But there is a strong sense too that the Chief Executive/Director can play an absolutely essential role in helping to create positive change. To the Chair of Plymouth NDC, the Executive Director has been central in driving forward change by virtue of being around *'since day one having credibility and sticking with us'*, during which time has had adopted a *'calm, consistent and unruffled approach'*.

- 3.21. One manifestation of leadership skills is thinking ahead. The key contact in Plymouth local authority points out the role both the Chair and the Chief Executive of the NDC play in managing the board:

*'all the time I've been involved, I think there's been a kind of 'no surprises' approach at the board, that nobody's going to get dropped in it ...'*

- 3.22. Finally, in this context of leadership, there is a view too that key players in NDCs need to be aware of, and comfortable with, the world of local government. The local authority contact for Walsall suggests that the NDC Chief Executive:

*'understands my world and the tensions I face and how I need to get something positioned to enable us to get something fixed and work. I think without that ability and understanding of one of the key relationships, I think would be difficult; somebody who didn't really understand the vagaries of local authorities in all their guises and political dimension, I think that would be problematic ...'*

## 4. Working with agency partners to deliver change

### The rationale for partnership working

- 4.1. Partnership working is one of the signature features of the Programme. From the outset it was always assumed that New Deal for Communities (NDC) partnerships themselves would not be able to transform these areas: change would need to be driven forward in collaboration with other delivery agencies. This approach made sense, not least because as the local authority contact in Sheffield points out:

*'(NDC spend is) not a massive massive amount of money, when you think about all the rest of the stuff that's spent in the area. It sounds it when you say it; but actually five million a year, that's probably a tenth of what's being spent.'*

- 4.2. But although total NDC spend is not massive, it has undoubtedly helped to forge valuable partnership arrangements with other agencies. In Sheffield, the Executive Manager points out:

*'... in terms of connecting to other initiatives that are wider than just (the NDC area) you can't underestimate the power of having 52 million in your pocket for getting people to engage with you. So we've worked with the Housing Market Renewal programme, we work with the East Regen team ...'*

- 4.3. Interestingly, NDC partnerships have been able to influence the scale, scope and speed of regeneration by facilitating other organisations to invest in their area, rather than directly spend a great deal of NDC Programme resources. The Head of Programmes in Plymouth felt that major new housing developments did not involve the direct allocation of a great deal of financial support from the NDC:

*'I think it's important to realise that that wasn't about money at all. It was simply about coordination, our input into that, £150,000 for the masterplanning, that's it; we didn't spend any more money, it's that facilitation and that ability to have the staff resources and the expertise to actually know what the community want, bring them together with the partners and to have the time to actually make that work.'*

- 4.4. Having a dedicated regeneration resource has helped NDC partnerships work with agencies which would perhaps not normally be seen as central to area regeneration, but whose presence locally can help in delivery. For officers in Islington, for example, two third-sector organisations have been unusually helpful, St Luke's Parochial Trust and the Cripplegate Foundation, the latter

because of its money, and the former because it is effectively the successor body, although it predates the NDC partnerships by 300 years.

- 4.5. Plymouth provides another interesting case of working with agencies which would not normally be involved in regeneration. The scale of delivery has been substantially enhanced because of the ability of the NDC partnership, working with partner agencies, to help release Ministry of Defence (MoD) land. According to the key local authority contact:

*'the release of the enclave, as it's called, it was fundamental really and the way it was released, it wouldn't have happened in the way it has if NDC hadn't been here. It would have been a standard MoD "stick it on the market, sell it to the highest bidder". I think because of the existence of the NDC, backed up with statutory planning framework which emerged out of the masterplanning, meant that all of the partners got behind the vision that the NDC had ... getting that part of the dockyard released was so important for that community. I think it was very very important.'*

- 4.6. For that NDC Partnership's Executive Director, what this development illuminates is that:

*'one of the principles (of delivering local regeneration) is there is a finite resource available, whether it be money or time or people's involvement and how to get the greatest impact from those limited resources; and I think with that example around the MoD land, "who is it we need to speak to you, what do we need to say to them" ... the holistic approach, the long term agenda with the community influence ... the agencies have been receptive to that ...'*

## Working with local authorities

- 4.7. The single most important partner relationship for NDC partnerships is that with their local authority. There were early teething problems. In Sheffield for instance, the key local authority contact suggests that:

*'one of the biggest things was the desire to keep the council at arms length at that early stage and I think the council allowed that to happen. So things took longer to get started than I think they might have done ...'*

- 4.8. In some cases there were early tensions between emerging NDC partnerships and their local authority. Certainly the attempt by a few NDC partnerships to keep the local authority *'out of the equation'* is widely seen as unrealistic.
- 4.9. It is important to remember that this is a 10 year Programme. There will be changes over such a long time span in relation, say, to political control within parent local authorities. In Plymouth, there have been three or four changes of administration which, according to the key local authority contact, led to practical issues as new councillor representatives had to *'get up to speed'*

*quickly to establish the same level of knowledge of the programme as other longer standing board members’.*

- 4.10. But in general, relationships with local authorities have improved. The example of Walsall is illuminating here. The Chief Executive of the NDC Partnership indicates that there were early tensions because, in part, of a sentiment amongst the local community that *‘the council in the past hasn’t provided services or looked after them sufficiently’*. But these tensions lessened through time:

*‘I think the acceptance of the council that whilst we are part of the regeneration of the whole area, we are an independent organisation, and as long as we are following the governance rules and so on, which we are, and satisfying the accountable body and so on, the programme’s our programme ... I think that’s been very good, and I think that’s down to individual relationships and continuity. Tim’s (the key local authority contact) been involved now since 2004, and I think that’s helped a lot because he understands and attends the board ...’*

- 4.11. Similar sentiments are echoed in Manchester where the Deputy Chief Executive, New East Manchester comments that the local authority has been supportive in allowing the NDC Partnership the freedom to develop appropriate responses to local issues:

*‘they’ve never reined us in in terms of having to go to them about getting decisions ratified etc, and I think that’s been an important part of our success ... having that flexibility, but also knowing that whatever we do we’ve got the support of the local authority when we need it.’*

- 4.12. The Chair in Aston felt that the city council had significantly improved its focus on the needs and problems of the area because of the work of the Partnership itself. It had been a great help that the authority enabled the Acting Head of Development at the council to become an Acting Chief Executive for Aston Pride. She had managed to increase priority given to the NDC area, and this proved important in getting things done in the early years.

- 4.13. NDC partnerships tend to liaise most with local authority ‘Environment and Regeneration Directorates’. In Islington this relationship has been critical, partly because that is where the accountable body function is based. But in addition, the functions central to that department were crucial at a time when the NDC was focusing on the public realm and environmental improvements. However, more recently the NDC Partnership has had most contact with the authority’s Children’s Services. According to that NDC Partnership’s Chief Executive, this is *‘an interesting switch away from the regeneration department, because Children’s Services have put an area structure in, which means they have a clear neighbourhood presence; but also because the NDC is focusing on youth and family issues. Statistically we have dealt with the environment and crime problems. The problem is child poverty and how the children move into adulthood.’*

- 4.14. In at least one NDC area, Aston, the comment is made that local councillors have given support, and this has been of considerable value. Nevertheless, it is also recognised that in some case councillors may have more of a city wide agenda, which may not necessarily reflect the views of residents in a particular NDC neighbourhood.
- 4.15. However, there have been instances when the practices of accountable bodies have been out of step with an NDC partnership wishing to innovate or seeking to lock benefits into the local area. In Newcastle for instance, observers highlight difficulties around establishing community enterprise solutions to help deliver physical investment. The Community Regeneration Team Manager felt that:

*'we were between the devil and the deep blue sea with the community wanting us to fight harder for a more creative solution to local training opportunities, and local job opportunities, and business representatives on our board questioning why we weren't giving preferential treatment to local businesses. All that against how difficult it was to get into the city's procurement machine.'*

## Working with delivery agencies

- 4.16. After many years of partnership working across the NDC Programme, it is clear that some agencies have consistently proved more supportive of this Programme than have others. The Place Manager for the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) commented that, in the case of Aston, one thing that was realised from the outset by most government players involved was the scale of underlying problems facing the area. This meant that it was going to be necessary for mainstream players to be on the board to help shape their priorities to better reflect the needs of the area from the beginning. In terms of involving mainstream agencies, it is about identifying priorities and aligning interests. If these tasks are done well, much can be achieved. It is not possible simply to parachute initiatives into areas and expect them to work without getting the involvement and support of mainstream agencies.
- 4.17. The police tend to figure prominently in positive assessments of partner engagement. In Sheffield for example, the Executive Manager suggests that:

*'... the police and their commitment to this programme, they managed to get everything ... in place by year eight and make a commitment to future ... that mutual agenda about the area has been really helpful.'*

- 4.18. And in Newcastle positive relationships had been vital in establishing trust between residents and police. As the Neighbourhood Partnership Manager points out:

*'I was quite surprised to be honest at how responsive the police were. Obviously they got a significant amount of resource from NDC, so it's*

*always easier when you've got some money to sort the problem as well. But to be fair to them, they were quite happy to make themselves accountable at board meetings and, on a quarterly basis, to provide figures on the performance indicators in the crime and community safety theme in a form that was fairly easy for people to understand. That really helped a trust to develop between board members (and the police) ... they were very accessible as well.'*

4.19. Aston's Chair similarly comments that the *'police and community safety issues have been a significant success story'*. There had never been any sense that the police were fighting over budgets. They had proved *'excellent and sincere partners'*.

4.20. And after a slow start in Manchester, partnership working with the police has provided a model for local policing across the city, facilitated by the secondment of the NDC community safety manager to Greater Manchester police. The view from the Deputy Chief Executive, New East Manchester is that:

*'when we started the police service, I think its fair to say, were poor, the quality of the service was poor, their method of dealing with the community was non-existent. The lead officer was fully engaged, but was very protective of her service, didn't think it needed to change ... (but) we then got a succession of superintendents who were very bright, very aspiring and basically turned round the police service in East Manchester and were fundamentally partners, not just on their own police issues, but across the programme as a whole.'*

4.21. In developing this theme Lambeth NDC's Chief Executive points to ways in which there was an increasing complementarity between what the NDC wanted to do and evolving policy with regard to policing:

*'Police have been great throughout. What helped was the fact that half-way through our programme the safer neighbourhood teams (SNTs) appeared, providing us with a succession strategy for part of the programme, and confirming that our approach was the right way to go – joint patrolling, joint working with the neighbourhood wardens-, and we now have a reputation for having the most effective SNT team in the borough.'*

4.22. But not all NDC partnerships necessarily see the police as the most helpful of partners. In Islington this is not because of anything they do or fail to do. According to the Chief Executive the *'police are neutral for us – they are on the ground so they are useful. But because the crime problems aren't huge we haven't really had to deal with them a great deal.'*

4.23. Bearing in mind evidence developed in this report reflects on contrasting experiences through time and across eight NDC areas, it is not surprising that there is no consistent picture in relation to the commitment of other delivery agencies towards the Programme. One factor which has constrained the

potential involvement of other partner agencies is that of national targets and priorities. As the key local authority contact in Sheffield points out:

*'they (school heads) have so little local flexibility ... they get driven by their central programmes and all the rest of it ... (and for) Jobcentre Plus you think 'oh well ...' you can understand it would be hard for them, in a tiny bit of the city and a tiny bit of their world ...'*

- 4.24. Partly as a result of Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) seeking to achieve national targets, there are also mixed, and often somewhat negative, views in relation to their involvement in the Programme. In Islington, the Chair felt their role had been limited. A similar picture emerges in Newcastle, where constant re-organisation within the PCT has inhibited partnership working. According to the Neighbourhood Programme Manager:

*'over the past few years it has been a permanent revolution in that organisation. You go to a meeting, you meet somebody and then you come back two months later and somebody else is sat there who doesn't have a clue what you are talking about. It's incredibly difficult to deal with a bureaucracy that constantly changes.'*

- 4.25. A similar narrative emerges from Lambeth where, as the Chief Executive points out, the PCT say the right things, *'... but they are almost impossible to influence, because they require an almost academic standard of evidence before they make decisions'*.

- 4.26. Although as the Programme Manager in that NDC points out:

*'we have good a working relationship with people at senior level, but when we move further down to the next level of management, people do not appear to have an understanding of how the relationship works ... there is no understanding of the pressures we are under to spend against project profiles.'*

- 4.27. Other organisations have proved to be, at best, neutral towards the Programme. To the Chair of Sheffield NDC for instance:

*'when you're trying to improve the local economy of an area you'd think the Chamber of Commerce would have an interest. It's literally quarter of a mile from here.'*

- 4.28. The Chair from Aston comments that he is pleased with the representation, and support, the board now receives from mainstream agencies. But experiences of different agencies has varied significantly through time. The basic commitment of mainstream organisations could be somewhat fickle. It was important to be on top of key issues and to align priorities amongst partners. Mainstream agencies *'can get you to do their work with your budget if you are not careful'*.

- 4.29. However effective partnership working may be, there will be limits on the degree to which other agencies engage with a neighbourhood level regeneration agency. The view of the Lambeth Chief Executive is apt here:

*'We have had tokenistic involvement, from some partners, for example Lambeth College and Jobcentre Plus, but no-one's actually tried to trip us up ... I think the further they are away from delivering in the neighbourhood, the less interested agencies are likely to be.'*

- 4.30. NDC partnerships have also increasingly worked in partnership with other Area Based Initiatives (ABIs). Evidence from across the Programme suggests that on average each NDC area contains six overlapping ABIs.<sup>9</sup> Working with other ABIs is seen by observers in Manchester as crucial to the regeneration of the area, where the co-location and, subsequent merging, of a Sport Action Zone, Education Action Zone, an Urban Regeneration Company (URC) and the NDC partnership drew on the strengths of these various programmes. With regard to the relationship between the NDC Partnership and the URC for instance, the Deputy Chief Executive, New East Manchester suggests that:

*'we always recognised that the approaches were very, very different, but complementary. So one you've got top-down, very physical-led regeneration and one you've got a lot more community focussed and social regeneration, and I think it was just the recognition and understanding from the outset that the NDC would deliver certain things and the URC would deliver certain things and we would work together on many aspects of it ... but equally recognising that the benefits that we could bring from the social regeneration and community-focussed regeneration side would significantly support and help the URC and vice-versa.'*

## The role of individuals

- 4.31. In exploring relationships between NDC partnerships and other agencies, it is clear that individuals can play a critical role in supporting joint working. This can be apparent in relation, say, to the education agenda where the attitudes of head teachers can be of vital importance. In Sheffield, the key local authority contact indicates that:

*'I think, unfortunately, the challenge about dealing with schools is just a hard one; it's hard for long in the tooth professionals to deal with, so for a community to deal with it's really hard when something has to be done about it, because they are not responsive, there's no requirement for them to be responsive, and we all celebrate when we come across a head who is.'*

<sup>9</sup> CLG (2009) *The 2008 Partnership Survey: Evidence from the New Deal for Communities Programme* [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/partnershipsurvey2008](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/partnershipsurvey2008)

- 4.32. Nevertheless, however difficult it can be to achieve change in some organisations, it is important to create and sustain good relationships with key officers in the main delivery agencies. As the Chair at Aston points out, politicians come and go, but usually core officers in mainstream agencies remain: working with them can have a tremendous influence on NDC neighbourhoods.
- 4.33. On the broader canvas commenting on all potential partners, the Director of Environment and Regeneration in Islington said:
- 'We have had a chequered time with most of them, and so much depends on the individual selected and how much time and effort they want to put into it. Partners often arrive with a defensive attitude – they bring their day job role with them, rather than that of NDC board member – perhaps there should have been some training to help them adjust to their role. Partners thinking there was a pot of money in which they could get their snout wasn't the most helpful of attitudes.'*
- 4.34. Others are more positive with regard to the role of 'regeneration partners' as a whole, but even then, there can be a sting in the tail, since as Lambeth NDC's Chief Executive points out:
- 'The professionals were all ... very helpful in advising NDC how to spend its money – it was just very hard to find ways to get them to change the way they spend their own.'*
- 4.35. And however much individuals in partner agencies might wish to support NDC partnerships, there is one practical reason why direct engagement from partner bodies may not always be as comprehensive as it might be. As the Chief Executive at Walsall points out, although engagement with police, the PCT and the key housing agency has been good:
- 'I wouldn't say it's absolutely perfect, because we do have a lot of meetings ... and all those meetings are in the evenings and I think it's a big ask really to expect partners to habitually or regularly turn up at somebody's meeting late on a wet Monday ...'*
- 4.36. One trend which anecdotal evidence suggests has cropped up across the Programme as a whole, is for senior agency representatives who initially played a role in the partnership to move 'onwards and upwards'. Typically key agency players may move from NDC boards to sit on other bodies such as Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) charged with developing a more strategic approach to regeneration across local authorities as a whole. But there is little evidence to suggest this has occurred in these eight areas. In Plymouth for instance the Head of Programmes points out that:
- 'we've probably had more individuals representing the police than anyone else, and yet they've all bought into it, and we've still retained partnership superintendent, chief inspector ...'*

- 4.37. Indeed some of these NDC partnerships have been pro-active in developing relationships with LSPs. The experience of Walsall is of interest here since, as the Chief Executive points out,:

*'we had a bit of the foresight I guess of the previous chief executive from the council putting Tom (NDC Chair) as a representative from New Deal on the LSP; and I was on something called the 'chief executive's group', which is essentially senior officers from around ... in terms of my engagement with the LSP at officer level I thought it went very well ... There's also all the various thematic groups both in the LSP and within our NDC and there's a lot of core representation across that; so there's a lot of meshing going on.'*

- 4.38. Whether directly as a result of this engagement or not, a Neighbourhood Manager in Walsall NDC points out that:

*'we seem to have come up with a set of outcomes that structured our various thematic areas very much akin to where their Local Area Agreement (LAA) certainly is heading ... I can actually attribute every single intervention we've ever done against an LAA outcome ... it all fits in very nicely, which does lead to me to believe that there is an ongoing relationship between what we've done and where the local authority has got to go ...'*

## 5. Working with the local community

### Developing a community infrastructure

5.1. The New Deal Communities (NDC) Programme is premised on the community being 'at the heart' of the initiative. Evidence from across the national evaluation indicates that partnerships have been pro-active in informing, engaging and empowering local residents.<sup>10</sup>

5.2. In exploring the history of community engagement in these eight areas, it is apparent that in some instances it was possible to build on experience gained in implementing previous Area Based Initiatives (ABIs). In Sheffield for instance, as the local authority contact points out:

*'we'd already got over all that stuff about the council and we were delivering SRB5 in the north of Sheffield, we'd had a fantastic process of involvement of people and there wasn't ... hostility, suspicion and distrust and all the rest of it...'*

5.3. In other cases, NDC partnerships were able to build on established community infrastructure. For the Chief Executive at Walsall, for instance:

*'there was a fairly mature community representative body in place, one of our neighbourhood committees which covered this area, so we weren't dealing necessarily with people who were entirely not used to the sort of thing we were talking about. So they came in with a bit of an advantage in that sense and I think that advantage has stayed throughout the programme.'*

5.4. But in others areas, NDC partnerships were essentially starting from scratch. According to the Deputy Chief Executive, New East Manchester:

*'I think the starting point in East Manchester was a community that had never really been engaged before, consulted before, even informed to be honest; and there was a high degree of scepticism, massive degree of anger, frustration and there was little trust. There were no real structures in place around resident engagement. We had 11 recognised resident groups in the area at the outset and we built it up to at one point 60 odd in terms of the work that we'd done. So you're starting almost from a position that whatever you do can only make things better and there's a partly open door, but as long as you get it right the circumstances are*

<sup>10</sup> CLG (2009) *Improving outcomes? Engaging local communities in the NDC Programme: Some lessons from the New Deal for Communities Programme*. [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/improvingoutcomesndcp](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/improvingoutcomesndcp)

*absolutely ripe for making a fundamental change and fully engaging residents.'*

- 5.5. In effect as the Chief Executive in Lambeth points out, social capital varies hugely across cities as large as London:

*'There was next to no community or voluntary sector capacity, and we now have a vibrant third sector. One of the lessons here is there's not as much social capital in these neighbourhoods as there is in the better-off parts of London, so you really have to work hard to develop that social capacity.'*

- 5.6. The sheer scale of tasks involved in setting up community partnerships in the early days of the Programme, combined with the lack of community infrastructure in at least certain areas, suggests to some observers that central government at the time did not appreciate the scale of difficulties that were likely to crop up. Initial problems in some NDC areas now lead some local government observers to think that councils effectively 'rescued' a few NDC partnerships from failure.

## What has helped community engagement?

- 5.7. Whatever the strength of community infrastructure at the outset, lessons have emerged with regard to engaging local residents and ensuring their effective deployment on partnership boards. For instance, some partnerships have seen advantages flowing from effective communication with local residents. The Head of Programmes in Plymouth stated:

*'I think my personal learning about that (community engagement) is that communication is the key, and when it doesn't happen, where it goes wrong is when people don't tell the community why something has changed; and just that openness of communication, transparency around what's going on and that is what we sought to do throughout. It's what we've advocated to our partners, and where our partners are prepared to operate in that way, then we win the trust of the community.'*

- 5.8. And the same stakeholder commenting on what has contributed to the success of the board, suggests that:

*'... the consistency, the board members I genuinely believe have been able to build up a trust in, not only the agency representatives on the board, but all their staff team, because they've had so many people who've been here all the way through ... some of the board members have been re-elected and re-elected and have been there for the long term. That consistency enables so much more trust than when you've got the churn of agency reps on the board, board members, and the staff team.'*

- 5.9. In this context, the Chair of Aston stresses the benefits flowing from the NDC Partnership using community based organisations to link into the broader

community. Board members had communicated effectively with relevant local groups in recent years. Community board members had, he thinks, gone the extra mile to explain things to local residents.

## The benefits of community engagement

- 5.10. Despite initial problems in some NDC areas, there is no doubt that residents, NDC officers, and external agencies are generally positive about the community dimension. From the point of view of the Chair in Sheffield, it was important to establish the role of the board before becoming involved:

*'Before I came on this board one of the things I asked one of the reps is 'is it a talking shop?' Are we just being dangled there to rubber stamp things, cos if I thought that I wouldn't have come on; so I wanted to test the integrity of the partnership and if the community were really an integral part of it; and I got positive messages, so that's why I came on board.'*

- 5.11. For local observers, the emphasis on the community dimension has helped delivery in a number of ways. First, the community can play an absolutely central role in driving strategic change. Reflecting on Lambeth's experience, the Chief Executive comments that:

*'The driving force here has always been residents' desire to take control of their own destiny. That's based in long term mistrust of the council, and also explains why they always wanted to appoint and employ their own staff.'*

- 5.12. Second, community representatives have a critical function with regard to validation and critique. In Sheffield the Chair suggests that:

*'What I would say, as well as the actual critiquing of services done by local residents, the scrutiny of services and the flagging up of gaps in services has been absolutely vital in making more focussed, refined and fit for purpose local delivery; the residents have been an integral part of that, with residents saying "this is not working".'*

- 5.13. This 'validating' role is important because, according to the Executive Manager in that NDC partnership:

*'a lot of times I'm afraid officers from all sorts of organisations say "we've put this in place and this is happening", and it's not, "that doesn't happen, I haven't seen that person for the last month", that kind of thing'.*

- 5.14. To the Chair of Plymouth NDC Partnership, validation is made easier as a result of the involvement of local residents because they can '*challenge based on local information and profile*'. This view is supported by the Chief Executive at Walsall:

*'there's a sense of reality in local inhabitants; and they're not going to be put off with any kind of airy fairy talk, they're not going to stand for bluff, they're not going to stand for people telling them things that they know are not true. They are very careful in gaining information from their particular patches ... they can bring the kind of a counter-balance to the voice of officialdom ...'*

- 5.15. Having local residents on partnership boards might be seen as possibly impacting adversely on the decision making process. But to the key local authority contact in Walsall this is not the case:

*'I think there's a lot of lessons in that for the local authority and other partners; what on the face of it looks like a very complicated model and very time intensive but actually it works and ... it's not being afraid of getting people involved right at the start, not thinking you've got to actually get it 90 per cent fully crafted and rounded before you put something on the table. You can actually put issues, you can put different options and there is the experience and the knowledge and commitment where people will work through that in a way that isn't problematic. We've certainly taken that away in other areas which I think is testimony the way things have happened here.'*

- 5.16. Moreover, the ability of resident community based members to work effectively on partnership boards can be assisted by drawing on the expertise of experienced neighbourhood managers. The Chair in Aston points out that:

*'the appointment of a highly experienced neighbourhood manager, with hands on knowledge of a similar area where ethnic and cultural diversity militate to hold back progress was a masterstroke. The Chair and the CEO worked tirelessly with a difficult, but talented board, of community representatives to convert them from a fractional, disparate group that was deeply cynical about the prospects for success, into a cohesive force focused on the common good. This, combined with an educational programme for the board, completed the foundation for the decisive and efficient NDC that Aston Pride has become.'*

- 5.17. Third, local residents can help in the delivery of interventions. In Sheffield what has happened with the NDC Partnership contrasts with experience from other parts of the city. According to the key local authority contact:

*'in normal programmes ... you get an officer or someone, maybe another organisation, producing a proposal that gets lobbed in to a board and the board knocks it about a bit, and then kicks it back, and that can feel really adversarial can't it? This hasn't often happened here because things have had to go through that much stuff, theme groups and so on, to get it changed, polished, all the rest of it before it gets to the board; a few council officers used to moan about this and say "flipping heck ..." because it felt like a difficult process because it is seriously challenging: "no we don't like that, why can't you do it like that, we think you should do more for the money" all that kind of thing, ... I think officers had to*

*change their behaviour, as well as the proposal they were making, in order to accommodate that and it was absolutely quite right.'*

- 5.18. In Newcastle, the involvement of residents is seen to have contributed to successful interventions by bringing to bear local knowledge which resulted in modifications to the style or delivery of projects. According to the Community Regeneration Team Manager:

*'some of the most successful projects, the ones that have had the biggest impact, are those where we have successfully engaged residents in the design of the projects; and some of our least successful projects, including some of the disasters, have been the ones where we haven't engaged residents.'*

- 5.19. And as trust has grown between NDC partnerships and the local community, this has in turn helped to deliver projects and improve standards. As the Chief Executive at Lambeth points out:

*'on the crime front, they know who's doing what, and once they trust you they will share that information with you so you can do something about it. They're very good at the eyes and ears stuff.'*

- 5.20. And finally, the community can be critical in helping to access traditionally difficult to reach groups, notably younger people. According to the Chair of Sheffield NDC:

*'we had some high profile issues around some killings that happened in the area ... I can think of the community getting involved in getting the Streetwise project set up and trying to get more diversionary positive activities, like for example the mentoring scheme that we've now got working in the area ... we've got youth council and we've got local youth who are being trained up, I use the word loosely, empowered, and now they're active in the community, reaching kids who I don't think anybody from outside the area could have possibly reached.'*

## Community engagement does not always run smoothly

- 5.21. Although these interviewees are generally supportive of the concept of community engagement, it is clear that problems can arise. In the early days it soon became apparent that NDC areas did not always represent natural communities. In Newcastle early tensions were driven in part by geographical and ethnic divisions. According to the Community Regeneration Team Manager:

*'there was a quite overt view amongst the community that it was a competition to grab resources for one ethnic community or another. And in the west-end of Newcastle it's quite graphically illustrated in a north/*

*south geography. So you got a lot of meetings in those early days that were quite overtly about the north/south race to grab resources.'*

- 5.22. There were also issues, again evident in Newcastle, arising from the need to manage the expectations of both the community and also of service providers, whilst at the same time responding to the pressure to spend NDC resources. According to the same interviewee:

*'there wasn't time (initially) to manage the expectations of the community, the statutory service providers, the voluntary sector service providers, because we were all under such an incredible pressure to spend money before all of those relationships could be formed.'*

- 5.23. Tensions arose too in the early days between those who had gained from, or were involved in, the NDC process, and the wider community questioning the speed of decision making. In Sheffield the key local authority contact indicates that:

*'there was a lot of division in the community between people who were involved, ... and people were saying "well where's this 52 million?".'*

- 5.24. In the early days of the Programme, there was evidence too that the process by which community representatives came to sit on boards created problems. In at least one NDC partnership, elections to the board were initially based on dividing the area into a number of Community Forums. Each of these put forward a 'nominated' candidate to the board. This culminated in a highly polarised board unable to make virtually any decision that involved somebody getting something, without everybody else getting the same. Ultimately this led to a re-formation of the partnership, during which the process of block voting was dropped to be replaced by direct elections for community representatives.

- 5.25. In some instances too there were attempts by relatively small groups to 'take over' partnerships. In Islington the board was 'captured' though an organised campaign by the Islington Working Class Association (IWCA), a small anti-council, anti-New Labour group. For a couple of years the NDC Partnership was paralysed. According to the current Chief Executive, *'lots of dysfunctional in-fighting meant that decisions weren't made'*. In part these problems were overcome by changing the electoral system. In the early days there were elections to the board, with the NDC area subdivided into constituencies, an arrangement that made it easier for a small group like the IWCA to secure representation. This was one of the factors that led to the replacement of elections by selection. To the current Chief Executive *'appointment is definitely the right thing to do, though it has made our board a bit more professional-dominated, and less representative – leaseholders are now dominant.'*

- 5.26. It is not universally the case that the local regeneration programme necessarily reflects community attitudes and aspirations. In Islington, for instance, the view is that officers have driven the strategy, and it would have been different if this function had fallen to residents. The Chief Executive

points out that *'we only have a couple of meetings a quarter now, so there is a limit to what these kinds of boards can do. The board is the public face of public money, and adds democratic legitimacy to what we are trying to do'*. And reflecting on the entire history of community involvement in the NDC area, he concludes that *'community-based partnerships offer a good model, but it needs to be clear how it's linked into the next level up. I think neighbourhood management may be a better way of developing a community partnership, with the big money spent at one level up. We need to give the community some kind of control over the big money, but not to the degree or in the kind of detail NDCs have.'*

- 5.27. Reflecting on the potential tension between community engagement and 'professionally driven' change, the Deputy Chief Executive, New East Manchester suggests that:

*'there's a challenge, you can't say we know best as professionals and therefore we'll determine the programme, and you can't say the community know best, therefore they'll determine what the programme is. There's a sort of balance somewhere in the middle to say we have to listen to what the needs of the community are and their concerns are priorities; but equally we have to ensure that the balanced approach to regeneration that we recognise is essential, it has to be delivered as well.'*

- 5.28. But it can be difficult to achieve this 'balance' between what the community might want and professional advice. As the Chief Executive at Lambeth points out:

*'Fifty per cent of the board members are residents and they have also been the most cohesive group on the board, and the agencies have respected that. It might have been good if the partners had been more willing to challenge residents when they are wrong-headed.'*

- 5.29. Tensions can also arise in terms of sustaining community involvement through time. According the Deputy Chief Executive, New East Manchester:

*'I think the height of community engagement in East Manchester was years three, four and five, around the time of the Commonwealth Games, around the time we were making big differences to people's lives. I think it's incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to sustain that forever because people are getting involved, because they've got issues and problems and problems get solved ... (But also) people move out of the area and get replaced by people who've not engaged before, people fall out with us or each other, decide that they're not interested any more, or that they've got a life after all. But just as important these people get engaged and involved in different ways: friends of park groups, being involved on management committees of voluntary organisations, or the local housing company or whatever else. So I don't think it's a surprise that engagement has dropped off significantly. There is almost a process and we shouldn't expect a constant in terms of community engagement and if that starts to fall we've failed.'*

- 5.30. And finally, it has not always been easy to instil a sense of reality into community engagement. This tension is brought out well in Lambeth, where substantial changes are ultimately likely to take place because of a stock-transfer vote and the probable refurbishment of the stock. According to the Chief Executive there remains a lack of understanding among residents about the real potential, but also the limitations of the housing programme. There is a chronic housing shortage in the area, and many residents saw the stock transfer and the housing redevelopment as their route to a new home, not fully realising that there were only ever going to be 50 additional units of social housing – and that most of the new stock would be for sale. It is important that in developing relationships with their local community regeneration partnerships instil a degree of reality into discussions about what might happen: expectations need to be managed.

## 6. Impact and sustainability

### Assessing Impact

6.1. Many of those interviewed as part of this project have been involved with the Programme for many years. They are therefore well placed to comment on issues of impact, value for money and sustainability. However, it is not easy to make informed comments here for three reasons.

6.2. First, it can be difficult to measure change. This is an issue especially relevant to health. According to the Chair in Sheffield for example:

*'the fact that people just feel better, less stressed about the area, a bit more relaxed, they want to spend more time here instead of getting out, but it's a very loose health benefit.'*

6.3. One reason for this as the Head of Programmes at Plymouth points out:

*'... you can't possibly get a health authority to turn around the services quickly enough and then you can't possibly achieve the improvements in health that you need in that time ... it is a direction of travel report, rather than categorically everything is achieved.'*

6.4. Second, there is the issue of additionality: establishing the degree to which developments occurring in NDC areas would anyway have gone ahead even had the NDC Programme not existed. In this context it is interesting to see that the Chair of Islington NDC Partnership is convinced that projects affecting the environment, estate security, and the public realm would not have gone ahead without partnership support, since without NDC contributions these interventions would simply not have happened. It is often easier to make such observations in relation to capital, rather than revenue, projects.

6.5. Third, there is the related question of attribution: establishing the degree to which any changes in a neighbourhood can be attributed to the actions of the NDC partnership involved. In exploring this theme the Deputy Chief Executive, New East Manchester suggests that:

*'in terms of the community side of things, there's a lot we could take credit for ... over the first three or four years we made huge impacts in terms of reducing crime levels and they've been sustained. A lot of those initial gains we could take credit for because we put huge resources into it. It becomes more difficult when you're looking at the jobs side of things and very, very difficult looking at the health side of things, if not impossible.'*

- 6.6. Doubts as to the degree to which NDC partnerships have been responsible for change, can also be levelled at some housing schemes. If very large scale developments are planned, it may be difficult to argue that these can plausibly be attributed to the NDC partnership involved. According to the Executive Manager at Sheffield:

*'I think the other one we'd struggle on would be housing because that was part of the original targets and objectives for us and at some point in the programme there's been a conscious decision that we'll leave that to the housing professionals. So I think on housing, health, on all of them really, we're going to be about claiming we've made a difference, but you can't claim that without acknowledging that there are other people who have helped.'*

- 6.7. A similar comment emerged from the research officer in Islington NDC where early priorities have been met, but there remain doubts as to who is responsible: *'a lot of this has been delivered in the area, but how much of this has the NDC delivered is the \$64 question.'*

## Changing places

- 6.8. Despite difficulties arising from additionality and attribution, these stakeholders are generally consistent in their view that their partnership has helped introduce place-based change. When asked if changes would have occurred in the Sheffield NDC area (Burngreave) had the NDC Partnership not been in place, the key local authority contact was quite clear:

*'No I don't think they would, nobody was going to touch Burngreave; it was never on their radar, it never featured in the top 10 for anybody really ... it's having that money that you can put on the table to help match some other money that makes a difference.'*

- 6.9. Very similar sentiments are voiced by the key local authority contact in Plymouth who argues that if the Programme had not been launched in the area:

*'Well I think it would be quite different. We'd have had more of the same, it would have been piecemeal programmes, we wouldn't have got the kind of transformation of people's perceptions of the area and that's the biggest change. This was an area nobody wanted to live in, people want to live here now, and that's probably the biggest single measure of success, people want to come and live in Devonport, and I don't think we'd have affected that, we'd have made improvements, but it wouldn't have been transformation.'*

- 6.10. This sense of NDC partnerships presiding over changing places comes too from the Chief Executive at Walsall. In his view if the NDC Programme had not gone ahead:

*'I don't think this building (a flagship community and service delivery centre) would have materialised, I don't think the housing across the road would have materialised, I don't think that the home buy scheme that we've got which enables local people to access those houses at preferential rates would have materialised, I don't think the infrastructure improvements would have happened, I don't think that the park improvements, the facility for over 50s. You can go on ... you might say that's because the area's had £52 million thrown at it, and certainly that's an element to it, but I think the other element is the focus which we've provided for the area and the relationship that we've developed with the residents.'*

- 6.11. Key stakeholders also point out that NDC investment has given comfort to other organisations to invest in these areas. To the Neighbourhood Manager at Walsall:

*'New Deal has given them added confidence that it's worth them investing what will be tens of millions of pounds of funding in the future because they're pouring it into an area that actually has had that sustained investment and has got the chances of succeeding ... there's plenty of examples where you put it into deprived housing estates and you go back 10 years later and you can't see any difference.'*

- 6.12. And an interesting comment from Lambeth Chief Executive is that the success of the NDC Partnership has had at least one unexpected benefit in relation to attitudes towards the local authority:

*'Residents see us as a mini town hall, so some of the positivity that's aimed at the NDC rubs off on the other agencies – NDC makes the council more popular – and this is borne out by Ipsos Mori (the household survey).'*

## Is the neighbourhood the right spatial scale?

- 6.13. One question central to all regeneration programmes is that of spatial scale. On average each of the 39 NDC areas accommodates just short of 10,000 people. After 10 years, these observers can make informed comment on the degree to which this scale of operation makes sense. In Sheffield and Newcastle, observers remarked that the relatively small scale of NDC areas can inhibit delivery. According to the key local authority contact in Sheffield for instance:

*'it was a bit too small actually; it is a small area, you can do certain things in a small area, but there are some other things ... you're just never going to quite make that kind of progress, like the economy ... it's like minute, they are parts of a ward, and it was a small ward at that. So some of the expectations about what you could do in a small area I think are a bit bizarre, and it did feel like a bit of an arbitrary thing. We'd just done an SRB programme for an area of 50,000 people, so I think there's some*

*question marks there. But it does give you the focus on the other hand, and it does allow you to have the community involvement ... so there are advantages to it, but I think there's distinct disadvantages really.'*

- 6.14. Similar views are expressed by the Neighbourhood Partnership Manager at Newcastle in that he thinks it would have been preferable to have had an area:

*'maybe three times bigger than the NDC area. It would have made more sense to the accountable body. It would have made more sense to local people, who define themselves as 'West-enders'. If they had given more discretion to local authorities, but also to the voluntary sector to discuss the area with communities, I think that would have saved an awful lot of angst and made a lot more sense' ... 'with the socio-economic stuff we've had enough resource to be honest and to a certain extent, I know this is probably heresy, but probably more than we need for the size of area. It should have been a bigger area and it would still have got the same benefits from the resource that went in.'*

- 6.15. As a result, in Newcastle the NDC Partnership has been working to a 'commission area' which is larger than the NDC area and covers most of the West End of the city:

*'since the commission area has been identified in the West End, we have probably worked more to that than the original NDC area ... any feasibility studies that we commissioned, spatial plans, skills audit, small business audit, etc, are based on the commission area. It's not based on the NDC area, because it frankly doesn't make any sense to us, never mind anybody else.'*

- 6.16. In considering what might best be undertaken at the scale of the NDC area, there are issues of definition. For instance there is a distinction to be made between accessing, and delivering, services. According to Islington's Chief Executive:

*'what matters is access to services, not necessarily delivery. For example you don't need a neighbourhood-based employment service – although you may need some outreach – there is no point in duplicating an employment service all over a borough. What matters is that people can access that employment service.'*

- 6.17. There is perhaps something of a circular argument here: if money is allocated to a small area, it gets spent there. But that does not mean it couldn't have been spent elsewhere within local authority districts as a whole. As the key local authority contact in Islington points out:

*'the fact that there was money to make things happen, particularly on physical environment activities, means it's easy to say you can do that at a neighbourhood level. But if we had that money at borough level, there may have been other priorities – more deserving cases.'*

- 6.18. In considering what might best be implemented at the scale of a typical NDC area, the Lambeth Chief Executive puts forward a view that most observers would tend to support:

*'the issues most effectively tackled at neighbourhood level are crime, environment, primary education, community development, housing management and public health. In fact, the services that are delivered best at neighbourhood level are those that interact at that level with service users; a couple of years ago it was all worklessness, worklessness – but what can we do at this level?'*

- 6.19. This view is shared by the accountable body representative:

*'it's hard to see how things like developing community leadership and building community cohesion can be done other than at the neighbourhood level. But in terms of other things – business and enterprise, employment programmes, all our experience suggests that these things won't work unless they are well linked to higher spatial scales. That's not how labour markets work.'*

- 6.20. Although not raised to any large extent in these discussions, an intriguing issue emerged in at least one instance: are some areas more appropriate for holistic regeneration programmes than others? In particular does the NDC model make a lot of sense in areas whose problems are mainly associated with the poor design and peripheral location of many council estates built in the late 1960s and early 1970s? In these cases one interviewee indicated that maybe a 'Housing Action Trust' model would have been a better vehicle through which to refurbish these estates where key tasks involved improving the quality of, and widening choice in, the housing stock.

## Sustaining the benefits

- 6.21. These stakeholders are well placed to comment on strategies and mechanisms through which the benefits of regeneration might be sustained once NDC funding ceases. One theme to emerge from a number of observers is the importance of embedding issues of sustainability and succession into thinking from an early stage. According to the Executive Manager at Sheffield:

*'it's making sure you try and lock in and make sure that you've got the right exit strategy, so that you lock in as much of what you've achieved as possible and how you can build those partnerships to make sure that you get continuation at the end, otherwise, it's not a waste of time, but it was a big party and you all get the hangover at the end.'*

- 6.22. These observers are well placed to provide informed comment on the likely success of specific mechanisms through which benefits from the Programme might be sustained after funding ceases. One approach by which NDC Partnerships are seeking to leave a longer term legacy is developing a

property portfolio, rents from which maintain some form of neighbourhood level regeneration programme. In Sheffield, the Executive Manager indicates that:

*'our succession strategy is based on the assets that we've purchased during the course of the programme and managing them to generate a profit that we can reinvest back into the community, that's the basis of our succession strategy. In terms of the sustainability ... we're up to 59 per cent (occupancy). We've every reason to believe that in terms of this building, as our major asset, it will be genuinely commercially sustainable. We need to land a big public sector tenant I think, but other than that I genuinely think this is sustainable ... The reinvestment of the money will go (to meet) continuing NDC outcomes, not only because we've got to, but because we want to. But it's not across the board. The partnership board have chosen their key objectives of education, enterprise, employment and engagement, the four Es, so we're very much about keeping that focus on those issues ... it's the funnelling down of NDC outcomes and objectives to those that the board feel are locally appropriate, and it's about using the assets from the NDC Programme.'*

- 6.23. However, there can be problems in managing a property portfolio. For instance there are difficulties in ensuring full occupancy. As the Executive Manager points out in Sheffield:

*'there will be a gap before we get to that happy reinvestment point of view. We're in the transition phase now, we're managing the buildings to get to that surplus point of view and then there'll be hopefully an agreed local mechanism for reinvestment ...'*

- 6.24. The community's attitudes towards the future development of the area can have a direct bearing on the kinds of projects supported by partnerships and hence in turn their likely sustainability. In reflecting on the ultimate construction of a major new community and service delivery facility in the area, the Chief Executive at Walsall indicates that the community:

*'had the foresight to recognise two things, one that it needed to be a building which the community could be proud of and had the community ownership thing, and also they had the foresight to recognise that if they did it, constructed it in a certain way, it tied in public services into the area ad infinitum for a long time in the future ... they would represent a main piece of the succession of the organisation beyond the 10-year programme; the income has been generated from the tenancies which are here.'*

- 6.25. For many NDC partnerships sustainability will depend on effective working with delivery agencies, to ensure that NDC funded projects secure future commitment from mainstream agencies. The Head of Programmes at Plymouth suggests that:

*'we took mainstreaming seriously from the start ... 'if we're going to start you up with some pump priming money how's this going to be*

*continued?’ We haven’t been universally successful in that; but for instance with the police we funded eight police officers plus a sergeant ... it’s brought about a greater change than I think we expected it to; but the police have recognised that and have actually brought in, when the police officer’s gone down they’ve brought in Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to replace them ...’*

- 6.26. Similarly, health projects took time to get off the ground in Plymouth, but then some have been:

*‘built into the budgeting from the Primary Care Trust (PCT); so actually those services will continue, ... So that’s been our approach throughout; there’s a whole load of things which will continue because they were designed to continue obviously on the basis that they worked.’*

- 6.27. And again in Plymouth the likely future mainstreaming of some projects has been assisted because of judicious use of evaluation:

*‘not as a tool at the end of the projects, but part way through to reflect on what’s happened ... to shape formal delivery as well. That has really paid dividends in terms of actually being able to shape that service delivery. Not everything’s going to continue because you can’t just suddenly take away the sort of money that we’ve been putting into the area and expect it all to continue.’*

- 6.28. One critical issue for many of these NDC partnerships has been the importance of ‘managing out’ the end of the programme. Observers highlight the need to begin succession planning early, and for timely guidance to both NDC partnerships and also accountable bodies. To the Neighbourhood Partnership Manager in Newcastle, for instance:

*‘we were asking for a year eleven 18 months ago. A project of this size and complexity, after managing an SRB programme and a City Challenge programme, we’ve always had some race at the end, if you like, to be able to wind things up and make sure that the accountable body is not going to get stitched up with a load of liabilities, that you can’t avoid in an area-based programme.’*

- 6.29. Despite the scale of activities designed to sustain local regeneration, there are concerns that once the Programme ends, some of the drive and benefits which came from NDC partnerships will be lost. The key local authority contact in Sheffield felt that:

*‘one of the things I was wondering about was whether you can sustain the mood of an area which definitely is more positive, definitely is more close I think, and it’s whether you can keep that mood really. That’s not the right expression but how do you keep that going because that’s an outcome that you wouldn’t have described, you talk about wanting people to feel positive and have aspirations, we use those kind of words; but you get an expression of it just through how it feels don’t you, and how we can keep that going is going to be really important to me.’*

*So making sure that we have got parents who keep on at the schools and play a more active part in challenging them and that kind of thing, the things that make other places work have to work in a place like Burngreave as well.'*

- 6.30. In similar vein the Regeneration Co-ordinator in New East Manchester also points to less tangible benefits which have emerged, in this case with regard to modes of working:

*'from a staff and partner perspective as well, it's important for us to make sure that the lessons that we've learnt and the freedoms we were given through NDC to engage with people, that we don't go back to working in the way that we had all that time ago ... it's more of a partnership with local residents and local communities than it used to be.'*

- 6.31. However, the critical issue now impacting on sustainability is that of public sector finances. In Islington according to the Chief Executive:

*'this borough won't contemplate stock transfer, so it's not clear how the council will finance housing – so there is a danger that in 5–10 years, the now-improved estates will slump back again. Satisfaction levels are higher than the borough – people want to live here, and that will help sustain change for a while. But we are hoping for at least five years of revenue support from the local authority, for neighbourhood management and for the Trust.'*

- 6.32. And in Newcastle, the key representative from the accountable body reflects on the importance of learning lessons from the Programme, in a context in which the NDC 'model' could not be replicated:

*'you've got 10 years of working with this model, that's been very successful ... (but) to what extent you'll be able to roll out that model across the city in its entirety? It's not going to happen ... there isn't the capacity of funding to enable it to happen. So we need to interpret the lessons learned quite carefully.'*

## 7. Lessons for regeneration policy and practice

- 7.1. In this final chapter the evaluation team attempts briefly to synthesise across stakeholder evidence presented in previous chapters in order to pull out key lessons for policy and practice. Bearing in mind that many of these observers have been involved with regeneration in general, and the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme in particular, for many years, this is an important concluding task.
- 7.2. However, it should be recognised that:
- it is not possible to reflect on the many policy observations made by all of those interviewed
  - some policies may play out well in specific local environments, but have less applicability on the wider canvas
  - although many of these policy observations would broadly reflect evidence from the national evaluation as a whole, no effort is made here to ‘validate’ these perspectives: policy considerations discussed below reflect the views of key stakeholders.
- 7.3. One other preliminary comment should be made here too. Perhaps the most striking feature to emerge from the evidence laid out in previous chapters is the divergence of views. There are contrasting perspectives in relation to virtually all key aspects of the Programme. This is not surprising. These eight teams are faced with different problems and operate within contrasting political and institutional frameworks. One implication is that key policy observations outlined below reflect commonly held, rarely unanimous, views.
- 7.4. There is broad support for the NDC model based on a ‘semi-autonomous’ agency seeking to achieve the holistic regeneration of a specific locality over a longer period of time. However:
- the size of regeneration areas needs to be flexible in order to reflect local circumstances, natural boundaries, and anticipated policy directives; but there is a view amongst a substantial minority of observers that delivery would have been eased had NDC areas accommodated more people
  - regeneration agencies need flexibility to set targets which meet local needs and circumstances
  - interventions designed to achieve the physical regeneration of neighbourhoods are more likely to culminate in measurable and visible achievements
  - sustaining change in relation to education and health have been made increasingly complex because of factors such as institutional change,

national targets, and lack of local accountability in relation to some delivery agencies such as academies

- the balance between, and phasing of, capital as opposed to revenue spend, is a vital, and often neglected issue; on balance, most stakeholders suggest capital spend should come neither too early, before the needs of the area are fully understood, nor too late, becoming dependent on post-regeneration scheme funding for completion
- there is an argument that fewer, larger 'beacon' capital schemes sustain proportionately more benefits locally, and are easier to deliver and to manage, than are lots of smaller initiatives
- institutional and political changes will occur within any 10 year horizon thus potentially creating complexities for regeneration agencies; where major refurbishment schemes are not being considered, there is case for shorter time horizons.

7.5. Devising long term strategies is a far from straight-forward process. Indeed some would question whether it is actually possible. But the broad consensus points to the importance of:

- using the existing evidence base wherever possible
- devising local strategies for local problems, whilst at the same time ensuring regeneration programmes complement wider city and regional frameworks, especially Local Area Agreements (LAAs)
- not being over-ambitious: some early NDC Delivery Plans were unrealistic
- creating flexible strategies able to accommodate unforeseen changes
- undertaking real and robust evaluation and being prepared to act on any evidence pointing to lack of success
- having boards which 'hold their nerve'; in the early days of regeneration schemes there can often be strong pressures to spend and deliver when it would be better to deliberate and prioritise.

7.6. Setting up regeneration agencies is a complex, time-consuming, and uncertain process, but getting it right is vital:

- there is clear case for a 'year zero', dedicated solely to 'setting-up' tasks such as employing the right people and selecting the right systems
- these stakeholders consistently point to the importance of getting in place appropriate appraisal and evaluation systems at the outset: these help select the best interventions, provide evidence in relation to success, and add to the evidence base
- good appraisal and evaluation systems also provide comfort to partner delivery agencies, who may on the basis of robust evidence, be prepared to mainstream projects after regeneration funding ceases
- but even with the best systems in place, there will still be problems in measuring, or giving a monetary value to, some aspects of change, such as feeling more positive about the area and the local community.

- 7.7. Perhaps the single most consistent theme to emerge from these interviews, is the importance of creating, and sustaining, appropriate staffing teams. Lessons include:
- developing teams with appropriate formal, but also informal skills
  - formal skills may be especially important in relation to understanding, and being at ease with, land and financial markets
  - but successful NDC partnerships not reluctant to commission specialist external legal, financial and technical expertise when needed
  - observers stress the importance of employing people with informal skills which allow them to work effectively within a Programme whose ethos is rooted in community involvement, holistic regeneration and partnership working
  - benefits appear to arise from keeping a stable staff base and employing people with a direct interest in, indeed often living within, regeneration areas.
- 7.8. Stakeholders consistently point to the importance of leadership. In practice it is not always easy to define exactly what this looks like at the local level, but, in general, it encompasses:
- an ability to help guide the creation of a longer term vision, as well as having the practical knowledge to get there
  - being visible: stakeholders often point out how effective leaders 'are just there'
  - staying around: many chief executives/directors of the NDC partnerships involved in this project have been in post for many years
  - having a sense of when problems are going to occur, and deflecting these where little is to be gained from conflict; but equally so where necessary being prepared to face up to unavoidable issues in a measured, informed and forward looking manner
  - having inter-personal skills to deal with residents, local politicians, partner agencies, key players in the local authority, and so on
  - familiarity with how local government operates: in the end the key partner will be the council.
- 7.9. The notion of having over-arching partnership boards consisting largely of partner agency representatives and local residents is central to this Programme. Lessons to emerge in relation to governance include:
- the critical role of the chair; partnerships which have run into problems in the past have sometimes found that having an 'independent' chair can help drive forward progress and dampen down conflict
  - ensuring board meetings are run on a proper, business-like, measured and recorded basis

- making boards focus on strategic, not operational, issues: effective appraisal systems can reduce the time boards have to spend on assessing specific interventions
- if boards run into what appear to be insurmountable problems and conflicts, starting again may be the best option
- ensuring community representatives are given training, to help their involvement in, and contribution to, meetings
- wherever possible, securing consistency and seniority with regard to partner agency representatives
- making informed decisions as to whether electing community representatives to boards is actually the best way forward; in some cases appointing representatives from existing organisations or theme groups might make more sense in getting the right people in the right place
- being aware about the implications of having an electoral system based on 'patch representation'; it has worked well in some places; but especially where there are marked geographical sub-divisions such as those rooted race, this approach can encourage intra-community strife.

7.10. Partnership working is central to this Programme, and is likely to underpin any future area regeneration initiatives. Much has been learnt about working with partners:

- agencies with a more clearly defined 'spatial' remit such as the police are more natural allies than are those whose natural constituency is based on individuals, households or firms
- there needs to be an understanding that not all agencies will see a great deal of mileage in helping regeneration bodies operating in small, and possibly unorthodox areas, for relatively short periods of time
- agencies will generally try to meet national targets, rather than those determined locally by regeneration bodies
- regeneration bodies need to be 'instrumental' in efforts to gain agency support; sometimes relatively small amounts of regeneration funding can lever in much larger sums of money from other agencies
- relationships change, and often for the better, through time: agencies have become accustomed to NDCs, have seen benefits of working with them, and many early tensions often dissipated
- regeneration bodies need to be aware of changing institutional landscapes; many local authorities are moving towards some form of 'neighbourhood forums' with which regeneration agencies will need to engage
- it is hard to overemphasise the importance individuals play in effective partnership working; regeneration agencies need to court, and keep, key supportive players; the more such individuals have executive authority within their own organisations, the more useful they are likely to be

- regeneration partnerships need to be cautious about where partnership working is going: partner agencies may be useful in informing the way regeneration bodies should spend their money, but be far less inclined to bend their own into defined localities.

7.11. The community dimension has been central to this Programme and, on balance, most observers think it has brought real benefits in its wake. But there are lessons to be learnt:

- some NDC areas had little in the way of community capacity at the time of designation; it will be intriguing to see what remains in some in a few years
- from the outset, regeneration schemes need to establish what any community dimension actually means: consultation, involvement, engagement, empowerment, delivery or some kind of combination thereof?
- it is vital to manage expectations in the local community; especially where major refurbishment proposals are planned, local residents may have inflated views as to the speed of delivery and the scale of benefits such schemes will bring for those living in the area
- creating effective, reliable, robust and informative mechanisms through which to communicate with local residents is essential
- the NDC Programme, in line with other Area Based Initiatives (ABIs), has encountered problems in engaging groups which have traditionally tended to play only a marginal role in regeneration such as business and younger people; one approach through which progress has been made is using members of such groups to contact their peers
- community representatives and key players need skill and development programmes if community capacity is to be sustained after regeneration funding ceases
- communities can play an especially strong role in defining needs and validating the 'additionality' of new proposals; they tend to be less interested in, and may often lack the skills for, delivering projects.

7.12. Finally, these key players have important reflections on sustaining the benefits of regeneration after funding ceases. For instance:

- it is never too early to address issues of sustainability: for example the question of longer-term support from mainstream agencies should be written into project appraisals from an early stage
- regeneration programmes need to provide timely guidance in relation to legacy and succession; the whole arena is fraught with financial and technical problems
- several partnerships point to the particular problems raised by long-term staff pension commitments potentially falling on successor bodies
- 'beacon' service delivery projects supported by NDC partnerships, especially those also accommodating private sector tenants, may provide

guaranteed rental income after regeneration funding ceases; but it can be easy to underestimate management costs, it may be difficult to maintain an appropriate occupancy rate, and rental income will not maintain the same scale of activity as that occurring during the lifetime of the NDC Programme

- there must be some doubt as to the real longer term impact of other mechanisms through which to sustain activity, such as community or social enterprises: they may work in particular contexts, and in particular markets, but their success depends on specialist expertise
- especially in what is likely to be a period of retrenchment in public sector finances, there must be doubt as to whether mainstream agencies will, or even could, sustain the same scale of activity as that supported by NDC partnerships, or provide assistance on as flexible a basis.

# Appendix 1: Understanding change in NDC areas: The views of key stakeholders – topic guide

## Strategy

What have been the most important features of the NDC's strategy for neighbourhood renewal? Why?

Has the NDC's strategy changed over time? How?

How have interventions been phased? What has been the impact of this?

## Role of partners

Which partners have been most influential in improving outcomes in the NDC area? How?

How has the local authority supported the NDC?

Have any partners hindered progress? How? How has this been overcome?

## Community involvement

How has the community helped to deliver positive outcomes?

What has been the impact of community representation on the NDC board?

How has the NDC developed capacity in the local community? How have levels of local capacity influenced what the NDC has been able to achieve?

## Skills

What are the key skills needed to deliver neighbourhood renewal? How has the NDC been able to ensure that these skills have been in place?

What has been the impact of key leadership roles (chair, chief executive, programme manager etc) – has there been consistency in these roles? What difference has that made?

## Organisation

Is a community-based partnership the best vehicle to deliver neighbourhood renewal?  
Why do you say that?

## Spatial scales

Which issues have should been addressed most effectively at the neighbourhood level? Why?

Are there any issues which cannot be resolved at the neighbourhood level? Why? At what level should these issues be addressed?

How have processes and strategies operating at wider spatial scales supported the work of the NDC?

## Impact and value for money

To what extent has the NDC met or likely to meet objectives?

Do you think there were any unintended or unforeseen outcomes from the NDC investment?

To what extent can the (intended and/or unintended) outcomes be attributed to NDC activities?

To what extent would activities have gone ahead anyway without the NDC investment?

To what extent have NDC activities displaced those provided by others?

To what extent would beneficiaries of NDC interventions have experienced the same outcomes anyway?

Do you think the same outcomes could have been achieved for less than NDC expenditure?

How cost effective has the partnership been in achieving outcomes?

## Sustainability

What is likely to be sustained after NDC funding ends?

What will be needed to support sustained improvement in the NDC area?

How will that be provided?

## Factors associated with change

What have been the most significant achievements of this NDC?

What have been the key drivers for positive change?

What have been the key barriers to change – how have these been overcome?

Which interventions have contributed most to positive change? How?

Why has NDC worked well/not so well in this neighbourhood in particular?

## Lessons

Thinking over your experience of NDC – if you were starting out again what would you do the same? And what would you do differently?

What are three key lessons for future regeneration policy?

What works in area based regeneration?

# Appendix 2: List of interviewees

## Birmingham Aston

Terry Cotton, Place Manager, Government Office for the West Midlands.

Dale Guest, Executive Director, Aston Pride.

Pat Kattri, Senior Regeneration Officer, Birmingham City Council.

Simon Topman, Chairman, Aston Pride.

Richard Woodland, Senior Regeneration Officer, Birmingham City Council.

## Islington

John Hitchin, Research Manager, EC1.

Matthew Humphreys, Chair, EC1.

Kevin O'Leary, Director of Regeneration and Environment, LB Islington.

Kirby Swales: Chief Executive, EC1.

## Lambeth

Donna Henry, Chair, Clapham Park Project.

Angus Johnson: Chief Executive, Clapham Park Project.

Phil Langslow, Head of Business and Enterprise, Lambeth Council.

Ching Wah Wong, Programme Manager, Clapham Park Project.

## Manchester

Irene Baron, Chair, Beacons Partnership.

Sean McGonigle, Deputy Chief Executive, New East Manchester.

Lesley Spencer, Regeneration Co-ordinator, New East Manchester.

## Newcastle

Paul Joyce, Director of Area-Based Regeneration, Newcastle City Council.

Bruce Trotter, Community Regeneration Team Manager, Centre West.

Graeme Williams, Neighbourhood Partnership Manager, Centre West.

## Plymouth

Marc Gardiner, Chair, Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership.

Teresa Lakeman, Head of Programmes, Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership.

Peter McNamara, Executive Director, Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership.

Nigel Pitt, Director of Development, Plymouth City Council.

## Sheffield

Ann Allen, Executive Manager, NDC Partnership.

Ronnie Lewin, Chair, NDC.

Evelyn Milne, Director of Neighbourhood Renewal and Partnership Service, Sheffield City Council.

## Walsall

Mike Brice, Neighbourhood Manager, NDC.

Tim Johnson, Executive Director, Walsall Council.

Tom Perrett, Independent Chair, NDC.

Paul Rowlands, Chief Executive, NDC.



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