



Working with Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements

Some lessons from the New Deal for Communities Programme



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September 2008
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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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Executive summary

The study explores the relationship between four New Deal for Community (NDC) partnerships and their Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and what impact if any this has on the Local Area Agreement (LAA). It assesses the extent to which each influenced the other, identifying what helped and what hindered the development of the relationship, concluding with a summary of the implications for both policy makers and practitioners.

NDCs typically have multiple connections with their LSP, which do not always necessarily include formal representation. In most cases, NDCs are represented on at least some of the thematic or block partnerships, and even where the NDC is not formally represented, there are frequently partners involved in both organisations. As LSPs have evolved, and particularly with the arrival of LAAs, NDC involvement has tended to increase. In some cases – the Shoreditch Trust for example – the NDC has been extensively involved in the development of the LAA and its processes. Outcome targets, priorities and even budgets are now being aligned.

Alongside involvement NDC influence has also grown in some areas. This is particularly evident in relation to community engagement, in the development of partnership working, and key procedures like data collection. There are also examples where particular project approaches have been rolled out – for example New Cross Gate’s experience of special educational needs delivery, or the Shoreditch Standard which embraces the NDC approach to delivering better homes. But the influence works both ways, and there are growing signs that NDCs are starting to align their activities with the LAA, often as part of their forward strategy and as a way of seeking to develop the sustainability of their interventions.

It is still too early to assess the impact of NDC involvement with LSPs and LAAs on outcomes but there are already some encouraging signs and most interviewees were confident that LSP-NDC collaboration would produce added value. There are examples where joint working has enabled local community representatives to challenge and influence local service providers in a way that was previously not possible. In some cases NDCs have succeeded in securing additional resources, from the NRF and from Europe, because of the new relationships.

The development of NDC involvement with and influence over LSPs was hindered in the past by a variety of obstacles, including resistance to joint working (by those involved in NDCs as well as LSP stakeholders), differences in the scale of operations, resentment about the level of resources available in NDC areas, and in some cases simple personality clashes. The arrival of the LAA was the single most helpful factor in improving relationships, while the experience of joint working, capacity building, and publicising the NDC’s achievements have all been helpful.

NDCs are starting to realise that LAAs are important as a mechanism to help ensure the sustainability of NDC achievements. Securing mainstream funds to continue NDC-funded interventions is an important element, and the LAA and its processes are important in that respect. Some NDCs – Braunstone Community Association for example – are setting up asset-based companies to continue in the longer term, and

hope that these will attract revenue funding to run services through contracts under the LAA.

Some key messages

For NDCs: NDCs need to be fully involved in the LSP and the LAA processes, not least because the LAA is crucial for the forward strategy, and as a route into mainstream funding; but NDCs must develop a clear strategy and develop the capacity of staff and board members to ensure they understand the developing policy context. Aligning outcome targets and some budgets will assist with the process of closer working.

For LSPs: NDCs are a major resource that can provide local knowledge and intelligence as well as tried and tested ways of working, especially relating to community engagement and capacity building. Smaller, neighbourhood based organisations can be used to test out new ideas, and NDCs have the funding and flexibility to develop some innovative work around a number of programmes including neighbourhood management, community safety and housing partnerships.

For policy makers: Support and encouragement should be given to NDCs and other Area Based Initiatives to link in as quickly as possible to LAAs, if they have not already done so. The LAA process is useful in bringing together NDCs and their various LSP partners to focus on common objectives. Greater guidance needs to be given on how NDCs fit within broader structures, particularly in terms of ensuring succession strategies complement and support the LAA.

1. Introduction

Summary

The study explores the relationship between four New Deal for Community partnerships and their Local Strategic Partnership, and what impact if any this has on the Local Area Agreement. It assesses the extent to which each influenced the other, identifying what helped and what hindered the development of the relationship, concluding with a summary of the implications for both policy makers and practitioners.

The purpose of the study

A Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU¹) paper, *Strengthening links between Local Strategic Partnerships, New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Management Initiatives* (2005)² set out a series of principles to assist New Deal for Community (NDC) Partnerships in working more effectively with Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). The NRU note suggested practical ways of strengthening the links between LSPs, NDCs and Neighbourhood Management initiatives. If there is a climate of mutual support and a readiness to collaborate, there is scope to exploit the particular features and strengths of LSPs and NDCs. On the one hand, the NDC provides an opportunity to learn about what works and test out new ideas about delivering services because they can take managed risks in small areas. It can bring more detailed local knowledge and greater reach into the local community and the potential to build the capacity of local people to engage. On the other hand, the LSP's strategic role enables it to influence the policy framework and facilitate an alignment of plans. It is also in a stronger position to tackle some of the barriers to delivery, for example, by challenging service providers.

The purpose of this practice study was to produce up to date and in depth evidence about how NDCs are now engaging with LSPs, and to use this evidence to draw out implications for policy and practice.³ Although the focus of the study is on NDCs' relationships with LSPs, the current significance of Local Area Agreements (LAA) on LSPs' agendas means that it was appropriate also to include NDCs' emerging links with LAAs within the scope of the research.

Research questions

In examining the relationship between the NDC and LSP/LAA, the following questions were explored:

¹ All acronyms are fully explained in an Annex.

² NRU, *Strengthening links between Local Strategic Partnerships, New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Management Initiatives*, ODPM, March 2005.

³ There were four NDCs chosen for the fieldwork, selected as they seemed to offer some good practice in LSP-NDC relations.

- To what extent, and in what ways, are the NDCs represented in LSP structures and decision making processes?
- To what extent is the NDC able to influence decisions in the LSP?
- To what extent does the LSP influence the NDC?
- What are the factors that have either facilitated or impeded relationships between the NDC and the LSP?
- What are the benefits to both the NDC and the LSP of engaging with each other?
- How far has the NDC's relationship with the LSP developed into engagement with the LAA?
- Is closer working between NDCs and LSPs/LAAs helping to ensure sustainability through mainstreaming and, if so, how?
- Are there examples of good practice?
- What are the policy implications of the findings both locally and nationally?

Methodology

This practice paper is the result of a two-stage research methodology. In the first stage, we reviewed 19 NDCs and their relationships with their LSP based on information from a questionnaire and subsequent telephone interviews with the NDC Chief Executive to discover:

- how far the NDC is represented in LSP (and LAA) structures and processes
- the nature of the issues on which the NDC has been involved
- whether the relationships involved are limited to formal representation or more extensive and in depth
- whether the NDC is able to exercise influence, or does it merely have a token presence.

As a result of this initial phase, four NDCs were selected for more detailed examination in the second stage, largely because in these cases relationships appeared relatively well-developed. The four selected for the final fieldwork were:

- Braunstone Community Association (BCA), Leicester
- Hathershaw and Fitton Hill Partnership, Oldham
- New Cross Gate NDC, Lewisham
- Shoreditch Trust, Hackney.

The fieldwork in these NDC areas has drawn on documentary evidence and semi-structured interviews with a range of NDC and LSP participants to examine these issues in more depth.

Structure of the report

This report explores:

- NDCs' involvement with LSPs and LAAs
- Extent of influence – NDCs on LSPs and LAAs, and *vice versa*
- Outcomes and impacts: what's changed as a result of all of this?
- Sustaining NDC achievements: LSPs, LAAs and NDC forward strategies
- Improving NDC involvement: helps and hindrances
- Conclusions and lessons – for NDCs, LSPs and central government policy makers.

2. NDCs Involvement with LSPs and LAAs

Summary

NDCs typically have multiple connections with their LSP, which do not always necessarily include formal representation. In most cases, NDCs are represented on at least some of the thematic or block partnerships, and even where the NDC is not formally represented, there are frequently partners involved in both organisations. As LSPs have evolved, and particularly with the arrival of LAAs, NDC involvement has tended to increase. In some cases – the Shoreditch Trust for example – the NDC has been extensively involved in the development of the LAA and its processes. Outcome targets, priorities and even budgets are now being aligned.

LSP structures: how do NDCs fit in?

Compared with NDCs – which have been a feature of the policy landscape for six or seven years – most LSPs are recent arrivals, yet in many cases have already undergone significant processes of organisational and policy review and revision. Inevitably this turbulence has affected their relationships with NDCs. In a number of cases these restructurings have arisen with the introduction of LAAs (even more recently), and this has produced a new focus which generally appears to have strengthened LSPs' relationships with NDCs.

Relationships have also been affected by the longer term relationship between NDCs and their local authorities as accountable bodies. For example, in Oldham, the NDC's early relationship with Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) as the accountable body was sometimes problematic. On the one hand, the NDC found it difficult to strike the right balance between developing a close working relationship with the Council and its staff and demonstrating its independence so that it was not just seen as an adjunct to the local authority. On the other, the Council needed to make the NDC more central to its priorities and be supportive whilst at the same time sustaining a 'light touch' approach and sustaining the NDC's independence.

In all four case study NDCs, there are multiple connections between the NDC and the LSP and its various structures at a variety of levels, but only the BCA in Leicester and the Shoreditch Trust were directly and explicitly represented on the main LSP board. But for all four, the NDC relates to LSP structures in a variety of ways.

Shoreditch Trust

- Board Champion: The NDC's Chief Executive was given the role of Board Champion for Capacity Building during the re-structuring of the LSP. As a member of the Building Capacity Task Group his remit covers:

- developing roles and responsibilities
- leadership, governance and accountability
- building organisational and participant capacity

As an LSP Board member he is also Champion for Arts and Culture and for the Olympics.

- Common Partners: The NDC has four major players on its Board who also sit on the LSP Board or its Thematic Partnerships:
 - the Borough Commander for Hackney Police
 - the Chief Executive of the Hackney PCT
 - the Chair of the Economic Development Partnership
 - the Chair of the Better Homes Partnership.
- LSP representation on the NDC Board: The borough's Deputy Mayor is the LSP's representative on the NDC's Board.

Braunstone Community Association

In Leicester, the Chief Executive of BCA presently sits on the main Board of Leicester Partnership, (the LSP) but the NDC has no representation on the Executive Board which is made-up of senior managers from the main stakeholders, including two representatives from the voluntary and community sector. However, its connections to the LSP structures include:

- membership of all relevant thematic partnerships and their sub-partnerships, with strong involvement in the economic, environmental and stronger partnerships, such as the Local Economic Partnership, but also including membership of the Anti-social Crime and Behaviour theme group, and Adults' Services Forum which forms part of the health block
- membership of the city-wide Neighbourhood Management Board, which is being funded through the 'neighbourhood element', overseen by the LSP.

New Cross Gate NDC

In Lewisham, although the NDC is not formally represented, either on the LSP or its themed partnerships, it nevertheless has other links via common partners who sit on both the LSP and NDC Boards, including the Primary Care Trust (PCT), Lewisham College, the Police and Lewisham Community Network.

Moreover, the LSP's Vice Chairman sits on the NDC Board as a Community Empowerment Network (CEN) representative (so there is some common membership). He also holds other influential posts including chairing two LSP sub-groups concerned with education and stronger communities, as well as chairing the LSP's Appraisal Committee. As such he has played a key role linking the LSP and NDC by:

- Acting as a conduit of information between the two boards

- Raising issues of NDC interest or concern to LSP Board members (this is done mainly informally)
- Bringing together officers from the NDC with those in partner organisations.

Prior to the LAA and outside the formal LSP structure, the NDC had already started to develop bilateral working relationship with key LSP delivery partners including the police, PCT and Local Education Authority. Now that the NDC is formally represented within the LAA structure it is able to exercise a more influential role and exploit new opportunities.

Hathershaw and Fitton Hill Partnership

In Oldham, there is no NDC representative on the LSP as such but there are individuals who are involved in both. One of the Medlock Vale ward councillors sits on both the NDC Board and the LSP Steering Group. There are also NDC Board members involved in the LSP Partnership Boards:

- two members on the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Board, which is responsible for the Safer and Stronger Communities Block
- the Housing representative on the Board is one of the LAA block leads for Housing
- the Oldham PCT Director of Public Health who is the lead officer for the LSP Health and Social Care Partnership
- Oldham MBC Director of Social Services.

How have these structures evolved?

As discussed already, the changes in the roles expected of LSPs since they were first established (or more accurately encouraged) by government have inevitably prompted local reviews and reorganisations. This has often been accompanied by a strengthening of the role and influence of the NDC, and especially since the advent of LAAs.

Hackney

In the case of Hackney, there was a relaunch (and rebranding) of the LSP in 2005, mirroring a substantial overhaul of the local authority itself. According to an Audit Commission report, the restructuring has significantly strengthened partnership working, which is "underpinned by greater clarity of purpose and a shared vision among the LSP partners". Shoreditch Trust took a key role in the re-launch process. The NDC's Chief Executive, in his role as Champion for Capacity Building, played a lead role in facilitating and teambuilding during the LSP's restructuring. The LSP's Directorate has rated the NDC Chief Executive's contribution as one of the most effective. In particular he is respected for his support and commitment to the process and for thinking wider than the NDC.

Lewisham

Clearly defined links between the New Cross Gate NDC and the Lewisham Strategic Partnership have only really developed during the past twelve months. Prior to this, both organisations appear to have concentrated on developing their own structures, strategies and programmes with little reference to one another. Progress was slow and each followed its own agenda: the NDC with its local area focus and the LSP with its borough-wide remit. The fact that there is only one reference to the NDC in Lewisham's Community Strategy suggests that it did not figure largely in the LSP's thinking at the time.

Until recently, the main areas of engagement appear to have been the sharing of some common partners on their respective boards and participation in some joint funded Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) projects, mainly concerned with employment. The catalyst for changing relations and improved linkages between the two organisations has, by mutual acknowledgement, been the LAA process. This has seen a shift in emphasis by the NDC from an area-based perspective to one seeking to build bridges and develop wider strategic alliances.

Leicester

As with many LSPs Leicester Partnership is an evolving entity. While it predates the government's decision to promote LSPs, it is considered to have lacked robustness and direction in the past. These challenges continued when the partnership became the LSP for the city, as reflected in its amber-red performance status in one Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM) review. At this time the Board was large, with poor links with the council and no delegated responsibility to act. This occurred in a context in which leadership from the council was lacking over the previous 10 years because no one party had been able to take control.

The response included a review of partnership arrangements. The Board and sub-Board arrangements were streamlined, and terms of reference, constitutions, and protocols were developed. An executive group was developed to ensure a greater focus on delivery.

As with Lewisham, these changes were in part stimulated by the demands of the LAA process. The role of the LAA Leadership Group has been transferred to an Executive Group. This follows a general evolutionary trend amongst LSPs as LAA responsibilities and the operationalisation of Community Strategies have required a smaller core group of agencies. Such arrangements permit decisions to be made in the short term.

Oldham

The Oldham Partnership was formed and accredited as the LSP in 2002, but it was slow to become established as a strong and credible partnership. Partners participated but for some, at least, without any great enthusiasm or necessarily being convinced that it was a worthwhile exercise. Similarly, elected members regarded it with some unease. Its rating by Government Office for the North West (GONW) was Amber Red in 2004.

GONW arranged for a Neighbourhood Renewal Adviser to work with the Partnership for some time. This enabled an ambitious process of change supported by GONW

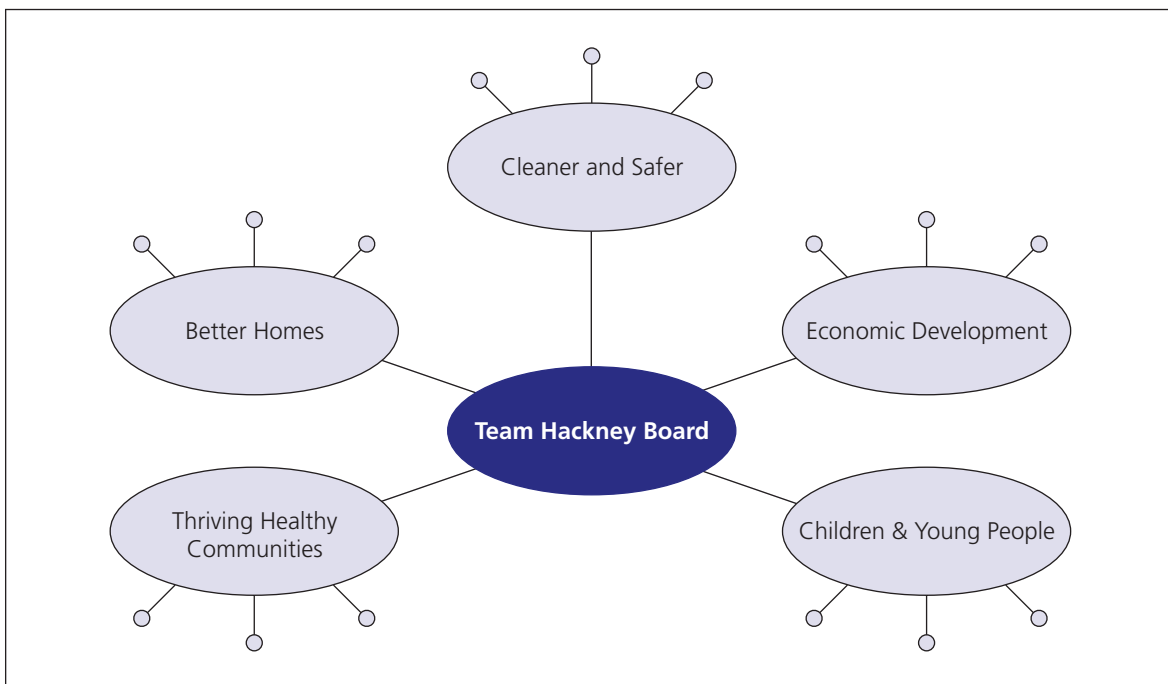
to be set in train. An Improvement Board was set up chaired by GONW. The appointment of a new Partnership Development Officer was particularly significant and a change in the management arrangements also helped to galvanise partnership working. In 2005, the performance rating was Amber Green.

In Oldham, as elsewhere, the restructuring process that accompanied the introduction of LAAs has also increased (or at least coincided with an increase in) the NDC’s influence over the LSP and its structures and processes. For example, the NDC Chief Executive is part of the Oldham MBC Executive Director for Regeneration’s management team, which meets fortnightly. The Regeneration Director or a deputy attends the NDC Board meetings and awaydays as an observer. The NDC Chief Executive is also very central to the LAA. He is one of the supporting officers for the Economic Development and Enterprise Partnership Board. However, at team level, the NDC connections with the Partnership Boards (which oversee the development of strategies underlying the thematic blocks of the LAA) and their associated groups are patchy.

How are LAAs produced – and how do NDCs fit in there?

Shoreditch Trust

As is commonplace nowadays, the LSPs examined here are developing and overseeing the delivery of the LAAs through a series of thematic block groups. As an example the Team Hackney structure is reproduced below.



In some cases, the introduction of LAAs has led to a rationalisation of the numbers and functions of these thematic groups, so that they directly reflect the LAA block structure. In most cases (though not all in our sample), NDCs are involved in some

fashion in these block groups or partnerships, which, arguably is where the real policy decisions are made.

Shoreditch Trust has been involved in the development of the LAA from the start and has contributed to the process in several ways:

- Helping to define priorities: key decisions relating to the LAA's priorities were taken at Board level and the NDC's Chief Executive played a strategic role in contributing to these discussions. For example, he was able to highlight the problem of infant mortality in both Shoreditch and the rest of the Borough
- Providing resources and expertise: the NDC seconded a member of its staff, part-time, to the LAA Team. Other members of NDC staff were represented at sub-partnership meetings to share their expertise and explore common targets and strategies for meeting them, particularly around projects developed within the Children and Young People Block
- Aligning NDC priorities and budgets to the LAA: aligning its priorities and budgets to the LAA has been integral to the NDC's strategy and indeed the Shoreditch Trust Delivery Plan for 2006/07 is structured around the LAA. One of the major areas of intervention that the NDC is aligned to through the LAA is described below.

Aligning budgets in Hackney: reading recovery

Educational underachievement is a key issue for Hackney and has been highlighted by the LSP as one of the five priority outcomes in its LAA. The Children and Young People Block in the LAA aims to expand reading and numeracy interventions to include the 30% of schools in Hackney with the lowest attainment. This builds on established programmes in the borough, particularly the NDC's Reading Recovery Programme, an internationally recognised early intervention scheme for children with reading difficulties. The NDC has been funding Reading Recovery Programmes for the past five years in six Shoreditch primary schools.

The NDC has contributed tapered funding of £890K to the current Reading Recovery Programme, which runs from 2005 to 2008. The schools are part funding the programme and their commitment increases annually so that by the final year they will be responsible for 40% of the funding.

The NDC's targets and budget for Reading Recovery have now been aligned in the LAA, and the programme being mainstreamed by the Learning Trust, across the Borough to cover the 30% of primary schools with the lowest attainment. The intention is that 80% of the cost of the programme will be provided by the LAA, with 20% being provided by the schools.

New Cross Gate NDC

In Lewisham, the New Cross Gate NDC has engaged in the LAA process in several ways:

- the NDC's Chief Executive has sat on the LAA Steering Group from its inception

- there is NDC Senior Officer representation on each of the LAA Block groups
- the NDC has contributed £200K from its budget to the four LAA Blocks.

Through its participation in the LAA process (particularly the Steering Group), the NDC has been able to take a strategic role by contributing to discussions on the LAA's outcomes and the allocation of resources. Participation at Block Group meetings has ensured that the NDC is fully in tune with specific issues and developments. By taking an active role in the process, the NDC initially became involved in a mini LAA: Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF) which has provided the basis for the main LAA Safer and Stronger Communities Block.

The NDC's Chief Executive recommended to the NDC Board that £50K be approved for each of the four blocks from its 2005/06 budget. So far, this has resulted in two key projects being developed within the LAA.

- The Older People's Health Prevention Project: the NDC's £50K contribution to the Healthier Communities and Older People Block of the LAA is being aligned with mainstream funds that support Adult Social Care, Community Education and Culture and Leisure Activities. This is being used as part of a total funding package of £533K, (of which £400K is from NRF/LAA funds) for a project to deliver a health prevention and wellbeing service for older people, based on the principles of early intervention. The model for the project was originally developed in another part of the borough and is now being rolled out across the borough to three other parts of the borough, including the NDC area
- The CCTV Project: following its decision to align £50K to mainstream funding in the Safer and Stronger Communities Block, the NDC has been able to access funding from the SSCF pot for a project to link up its Rapid Reaction CCTV cameras to the Borough's central CCTV station. By linking its cameras to the Borough's central CCTV system, the NDC's cameras can be monitored twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. There are four key benefits to this project:
 - continuous monitoring leads to a more rapid response and can help deter incidents before they occur
 - this should contribute to one of the SSCF (and NDC's) key outcomes of reducing crime, the fear of crime, perceptions of anti-social behaviour and harm caused by illegal drugs
 - with total costs for the project estimated at £103K, the NDC has been able to attract additional funding from the LAA over and above its contribution of £50K
 - the project offers significant mainstreaming benefits with the NDC's CCTV cameras linked into the Borough's system in perpetuity.

Braunstone Community Association

In Leicester, while the LSP itself has not undergone any major restructuring, a range of new structures and processes have been introduced to oversee the development and delivery of the LAA. This included the establishment of four Partnership Delivery Groups which were established to oversee the delivery and performance management of the four respective LAA blocks:

- Leicester Children & Young People Strategic Partnership
- Leicester Economic Partnership
- Leicester Public Health Partnership
- Leicester Safer & Stronger Communities Partnership

These partnerships have been developed more fully over the last 12 months in conjunction with the LAA. The tasks of each group are set out below.

Functions of the Leicester Partnership Delivery Groups

- Bring together the key service delivery organisations to deliver and improve public services
- Manage available resources and relevant funding streams to achieve Leicester Partnership priorities and more efficient service procurement
- Ensure that modernised forms of public service delivery become embedded across the many public sector workforces in Leicester
- Develop local collaboration and joint delivery
- Help to raise public perceptions of the value and importance of good government and effective public services at local level
- Undertake consultation and community engagement exercises and ensure that these influence service improvements with the support of Voluntary Action Leicester and the Community Empowerment Network
- Oversee the delivery and detailed performance management of the relevant block of the Local Area Agreement (initially from April 2006–2009), reflecting the aims and objectives of the Strategy for Leicester and the city's neighbourhood renewal targets

BCA is fully involved in the LAA process. The chief executive was part of the project management team that developed the LAA. This provided the BCA with an opportunity to be involved in creating the framework for the agreement, and contribute to decisions about the selection of outcome targets.

Although the BCA does not presently have representation on the Executive Group of the partnership, it does not believe this to be a problem as the main decision making takes place in thematic partnerships. For the chief executive of BCA and officers within the accountable body, the LSP and LAA are evolving entities. There is an expectation that the role of the NDC is likely to grow as the new BCA delivery plan and broader strategies are developed, for example neighbourhood management which is being implemented in parts of the city.

The NDC has representatives on each of the four delivery blocks which, as one interviewee put it, are considered the "main decision making arenas". This includes strong levels of representation on the economic, stronger and environmental block partnerships. In certain instances this has involved a convoluted process. The crime theme lead at BCA did have initial difficulties with getting involved in LAA SSC activities, and was only able to get onto the theme when they utilised their existing relations with its chair.

Hathershaw and Fitton Hill Partnership

In Oldham, NDC involvement is more uneven. The strongest links are those with the Safer and Stronger Communities block where the extent of previous collaboration with key players in the NDC context means that the invitations to participate have come very readily and naturally. The Liveability Theme Manager attends the LAA group for SSC; however, the first invitation seems to have derived from informal links rather than because the NDC Partnership was seen as integral to the process. There has been less involvement in other areas in which it has been more difficult to be recognised as a significant partner. There was no engagement between the NDC either in the process of developing the Children's Plan or the Children and Young People block.

The NDC has taken some positive steps towards participating in the Economy and Enterprise block. The NDC Education and Lifelong Learning Manager goes to the Workforce and Skills Group, which all the key players attend, and she is on the Skills for Life Strategy Group. These groups feed into the Oldham Learning Partnership. One of the Council officers driving the LSP worklessness strategy is also on the NDC Learning Partnership. The NDC Employment and Enterprise Manager sometimes attends the Enterprise and Innovation Group although he has not always been notified about meetings.

More generally however, because the LSP and NDC have many agency partners in common, even where the same individuals are not involved, agencies such as local authority departments, the PCT, Jobcentre Plus and the Police have staff involved with both organisations. Key partners, for example, feed into the NDC thematic working groups – but not notably, so far at least, as a direct consequence of the LAA.

3. Extent of Influence

Summary

Alongside involvement NDC influence has also grown in some areas. This is particularly evident in relation to community engagement, in the development of partnership working, and key procedures like data collection. There are also examples where particular project approaches have been rolled out – for example New Cross Gate’s experience of special educational needs delivery, or the Shoreditch Standard which embraces the NDC’s approach to delivering better homes. But the influence works both ways, and there are growing signs that NDCs are starting to align their activities with the LAA, often as part of the forward strategy and as a way of seeking to develop the sustainability of their interventions.

How NDCs have influenced LSPs and LAAs

Involvement in the process of developing LAAs is one thing; securing real influence is quite another. The consensus among many of our interviewees suggests that the value of NDC experience of programme development and implementation is recognised by other partners, and has enabled NDCs to secure at times significant influence.

New Cross Gate NDC

In Lewisham for example, it is evident that the main vehicle for NDC influence has been the LAA rather than the LSP. In particular, the participation of the NDC’s Chief Executive on the LAA Steering Group has given the NDC a strategic role in defining priority outcomes and the allocation of resources. Having NDC Officers represented within the LAA Block meeting structures has also given the NDC a role in shaping programme and project development. Finally, by contributing funds to the LAA, the NDC has also, by its own admission, ‘bought itself a place at the table’, where it is now regarded as a fully-fledged partner.

Particular contributions made by the NDC to the LAA process, as perceived by other partners, include passing on its experience and expertise in:

- Project appraisal
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Budget setting
- Data collection, particularly around health and education.

Interviewees outside the NDC identified a variety of specific areas, both procedural and substantive, where NDC experience has proved valuable and underpinned influence:

- Community engagement: It is often easier to discern where the NDC has had influence on individual LSP partners or their programmes rather than on the LSP as a corporate body. One area, where the NDC appears to have had direct impact on the LSP is its approach to community engagement. The LSP rates this as innovative and effective and is increasingly using NDC models for community consultation. In particular, the LSP has drawn on the NDC's model of citizen-led events.
- Partnership working: we encountered several references to the NDC's capacity for promoting partnership working. For example, a recent peer review of the LSP notes in its report that: "although not a member organisation of the LSP Board, the NDC is an active member of all four of the thematic boards. Partnership work within the New Cross Gate area is consistently improved thanks to the local expertise, contacts and physical presence of the NDC"⁴.
- Assisting service delivery: it is evident that some service partners have been greatly aided and influenced by the community infrastructure developed through the NDC. For example, the NDC's approach to involving the community and working closely with its police partners is considered to be very good practice, and where possible, is being used by the police elsewhere in the borough. In particular, the police have highlighted a number of community structures which they have been able to plug into in the NDC area including:
 - Community consultations
 - Community advocates
 - Street briefings
 - The NDC newspaper
 - Daily briefings with the street wardens
 - Close working contact with NDC staff
- Data Collection: the NDC's method of collecting and analysing educational statistics is considered highly innovative and is being introduced in other parts of the Borough. The Schools Data and Monitoring Project involves data collection, analysis and dissemination over years 7 to 10 of the NDC Education Programme, recording all interventions with pupils across primary and secondary schools. The model makes predictions of expected grades and analyses individual interventions to track progress, enhance targeting and improve impact.
- Provision for special educational needs: the NDC is considered a model of good practice in the way it has supported the delivery of special education needs in primary schools. The programme provides schools with community link workers and a speech and language therapist. The five local primary schools supported by the NDC have become the first Lewisham Extended Services Collaborative, which is now fully integrated with the Borough's Extended Services Programme.

⁴ Lewisham Strategic Partnership – Self Assessment. IdEA Peer Challenge, 8/9 February 2007.

- Working with voluntary/community sector partners: several interviewees have highlighted the ways in which the NDC has been able successfully to build capacity amongst voluntary and community groups to help deliver projects and services. This is being achieved through one of its key capacity building projects – Community Works.

Shoreditch Trust

We were told about a similar range of areas where the Shoreditch Trust has been able to influence the development of the Team Hackney LAA, on the strength of the reputation it has built up. These include the following:

- Working with voluntary/community sector partners: several interviewees have highlighted the ways in which the NDC has been able successfully to build capacity amongst voluntary and community groups to help deliver projects and services. This is being achieved through one of its key capacity building projects – Community Works.
- It has championed the case for using evidence to shape the LAA's priorities. For example, the NDC highlighted the high incidence of infant mortality in Hackney, which has led to this becoming a stretch target in the LAA.
- It is contributing its own experience and good practice of working in partnership to deliver health and education programmes to achieve specific stretch targets in the LAA.
- More generally, the NDC has contributed local knowledge and has been particularly effective in sharing its expertise in engaging with communities.
- Several of its innovative approaches are providing a testing ground for the LAA. For example, its Shoreditch Standard, which encapsulates its partnership approach to delivering better homes in Shoreditch, is now recognised as the NDC's contribution to the Hackney Standard for Decent Homes.
- It is also providing a testing ground for neighbourhood management, through its Shoreditch Neighbourhood Management pilot. This is being designed to provide a strong platform by which all new interventions will require mainstream "buy in" from inception, with the focus of the programme being on the reshaping of mainstream services.
- The NDC's approach to community safety, which provides a joined up and accessible local base to address issues of crime, antisocial behaviour and environmental crime, is also perceived as a model of good practice.

Securing influence over LAA priorities and processes is not accidental, but is part of the NDC's forward strategy, as the latest delivery plan makes clear.

The Shoreditch Trust commitment to the LAA

"A proposal will be going to the Board of Shoreditch Trust in late 2006 for it to consider aligning the remaining NDC budgets with the Local Area Agreement in Hackney ... Team Hackney, the newly revitalised Hackney Strategic Partnership will be the driver for this process and the (NDC) Trust is a key partner in that dynamic. This, brokerage, influencing role will become increasingly important as funds diminish and demand continues. The Trust has in many ways made itself indispensable to partners, we must continue that role if we are to be successful.

Aligning budgets does not mean that monies will not be spent in Shoreditch, they will. But it does mean that decisions that the Board make will also take account of the strategic priorities of Team Hackney in looking more broadly at the borough wide agenda and how we can add value to that".

Introduction to Shoreditch Trust Delivery Plan for 2006/07

Braunstone Community Association

Similar thinking has influenced BCA's approach to its relationship with the Leicester Partnership. BCA is in the process of establishing priorities and outcome targets for the new delivery plan. There was confirmation at a recent LP Board meeting of the new NDC delivery plan being "an appendix or attachment to the LAA". This is considered to be recognition by all partners for the need to have the same outcome targets, and thus there is confirmation that the new delivery plan "can tie in with the process of refreshing the LAA".

There is an acknowledgement of the expertise of the partnership within the LAA. This occurs through deliberation and decision making at various partnership meetings. The NDC representative was asked to chair a sub-group of the SSC partnership which examined the partnership's terms of reference, constitution etc. The purpose of this was to help in moving beyond a simple reactive role that had been the case in the past. BCA also has a role in discussions around allocation of spend for the Anti-social Crime and Behaviour theme group. Other areas of influence include the health theme manager being nominated by VAL to distribute grants for the health programme area, through the Adult's Service Forum.

Influence comes through other means, most notably in terms of spreading good practice and seeking to deliver programmes in other areas as part of a succession strategy: as an NDC interviewee put it: "There are people in the Leicester Partnership that understand the impact we are making and want to embrace some of the work we have done as best practice". BCA is considered by one key partner as a "good example of community led regeneration that is spreading good practice across the city". This relates to a number of successful features of the NDC programme, including community engagement and business planning. BCA is recognised as having been effective in terms of management and spend, particularly in pulling in leverage and match funding. It is viewed as having been a "catalyst for change" in the area, evidenced in the funding of the health centre, leisure centre and future enterprise centre.

However, their experience also suggests there are dangers for NDC areas as these relationships develop, particularly where they reflect perceptions of NDCs' success. There is an acknowledgement on the SSC theme group that BCA has contributed to a reduction of 30% in levels of recorded crime in Braunstone since the NDC started. However, this success means that Braunstone is now a *lower* priority for intervention than other parts of the city.

NDCs' perceived status within the national policy framework is still contributing to individual NDCs' capacity to exert influence locally. In Leicester for example, the NDC's influence within the Leicester Partnership partly derives from its links with the national NDC network and senior figures in DCLG. Because of its access to knowledge about contemporary thinking within government the partners listen to the NDC. Examples of this include mixed communities.

Hathershaw and Fitton Hill Partnership

In Oldham, the unevenness of NDC involvement described earlier is reflected in the influence it wields, and there are comparatively few mentions of NDC in the LAA block strategic plans. Although there is clearly recognition of the role of NDC in terms of piloting and potential roll out, there have not been proactive attempts to make links. The NDC Chief Executive has given a presentation at the LSP, but it is unclear whether this was a formal reporting mechanism rather than a learning and dissemination exercise or a springboard to greater collaboration.

The NDC is piloting a Neighbourhood Contract in Hathershaw and Fitton Hill. This idea anticipates more devolution of services and more opportunity for residents to influence priorities on issues such as grass cutting, street cleaning and customer service. The pilot is at an early stage. There has been a series of workshops and meetings about it attended by heads of service and key partners, such as the local authority, the Police and crime reduction agencies, Registered Social Landlords and youth organisations. About 30 officers are now committed to attend training. In addition, a group of 18 residents has been identified who are interested in being involved to drive the process forward. They will be the link between the agencies concerned and the rest of the community, will represent other residents, feed in their views and report back to them.

There are increasing links between NDC and Oldham MBC Regeneration directorate in relation to the mills in the area and attempts to turn them into managed workspace and also about the Ashton Road retail businesses, which means that NDC programmes are potentially significant to the Economy and Enterprise block of the LAA. NDC was also actively involved in the Oldham and Rochdale Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) bid, which was mainly written in Rochdale and had comparatively little business input apart from that of the NDC theme manager and the manager of the Enterprise Factory, who was brought on board by the NDC.

A project that is starting to influence work across the Borough is Enterprise in Schools. The NDC employs a project manager to run this in four primary schools and a secondary school in the area, but the LEA tend to use him more widely across the Borough. The project now includes financial literacy classes for parents. The Oldham Credit Union is collaborating and has opened collection points in schools to encourage young savers. There is also a 'Dragons Den' Project in secondary schools

across Oldham run jointly with the Enterprise Factory. It is felt in NDC that there would be scope for co-ordinating and extending this work under the auspices of the LSP if it could be driven by someone with a good business background.

An issue of central interest to both NDC and the LAA is that of young people not in education, employment or training – NEETs. It is one of the LAA stretch targets and it is also an important target for the NDC because the percentage of NEETs in the area has been about twice the Borough average. NDC has funded, wholly or in part, three projects linked with the work of Positive Steps Oldham, which covers Connexions. The Youth Inclusion project, part-funded by the Youth Justice Board is continuing. There has been a Mobile Advice and Guidance ‘Highway to Opportunities’ Bus, but funding for that ran out at the end of March. There has also been funding for additional Connexions work, half of which took place within Hathershaw Technical School and half for outreach work with young people not in education, employment or training. Within the school, the extra resource enabled Connexions to target the most vulnerable 20–30 young people in each year group. This preventative work resulted in a reduction in the numbers subsequently becoming NEETs.

Another complication relating specifically to the NEETs issue, but potentially of wider relevance to the development of NDC-LSP relations more generally, concerns the attitude of some NDC Board members. Not all regard work with NEETs as a priority, as it is perceived as “rewarding bad behaviour”. This can mean that they are not receptive to project proposals from agencies especially if they see them as “coming to top up their resources with our money”. We return to this later: the capacity for introspection has been a feature of NDCs since the start (as indeed it was with earlier small area programmes).

How LSPs and LAAs have influenced NDCs

The discussion so far indicates how NDC priorities and those of LAAs are (in some areas at least) becoming increasingly intertwined. For that reason it is difficult to assess whether NDC priorities and targets are being adjusted to reflect those in the LAA, or *vice versa*.

New Cross Gate NDC

In Lewisham however, the evidence suggests that as a consequence of its engagement in the LAA, the New Cross Gate NDC’s priorities and targets have broadly been aligned to conform to the borough’s overarching targets. For example, in the case of the Older People’s Health Prevention Project outlined earlier, the project aims to contribute towards the achievement of a number of targets set out in the Healthier Communities and Older People block of the LAA. In particular it aims to address mandatory indicators around improved health and reduced health inequalities and local indicators around improved quality of life.

Braunstone Community Association

Similarly it is hard to decide who is influencing whom where issues facing the NDC are to be found elsewhere within the local authority district. For example in Leicester,

the BCA report found no difficulty aligning the targets of the NDC and LAA because priorities are similar across the city: “you would expect this because the problems in Braunstone are similar to those in many other parts of the city”. An example is health where the priorities of obesity, smoking, mental health and health issues affecting the elderly are common to both.

So far as the BCA is concerned, aligning the priorities of the NDC with those of the LAA (and to that extent submitting to LAA influence) is viewed as contributing to ensuring the sustainability of the partnership’s achievements beyond the life of the programme. Currently discussions are exploring ways in which the remaining NDC grant can be aligned with the LAA, but focused on Braunstone. Theme managers at BCA have been asked to ensure targets between the NDC and LAA are consistent wherever possible. For example, reducing violent crime is both a target of the NDC and LAA. This will tie in with city-wide activities so that “we can get our investment and much better value for money”. This also reflects the difficulties in setting up new projects with only two years of the NDC’s life remaining: buying into city wide activities becomes critical as there will be no infrastructure costs.

Other NDCs are in the same position, and the rest will face it soon: there is very little NDC funding left uncommitted, so the NDC is no longer a delivery agent, but increasingly has to work through its delivery partners. BCA’s role has been to liaise with these partners to ensure they are aware of the funding opportunities coming through LSP/LAA thematic partnerships. An example of this is the liaison that takes place between BCA and its ‘Fit and Active Braunstone’ project which is run through the PCT. The NDC provides assistance to these projects when putting in funding applications.

The NDC is presently discussing the possibility of aligning its remaining £4m with the LAA. This will have to be distributed through the LAA commissioning approach. So for example the NDC will provide money for certain activities that will achieve particular LAA and NDC outcomes. In this arrangement the NDC will need to ensure it has an adequate role in the commissioning process, that the right process is put in place and that the accountable body and GOEM is happy with this process. To some degree this means the NDC relinquishing control, and raises issues that are currently under discussion within the NDC.

Since the BCA is winding down it is not possible for them to undertake long term or large scale projects. It needs to provide a contribution to support new interventions in Braunstone which may stretch across other parts of the city, but that offer “a return, some added value for our contribution which may go forward for a number of years”. However, this raises important potential issues, including the possibility of the Board not having power to make the final decision on whether projects are approved. They will also need to share their scrutiny role with other partners if this involves alternate performance management approaches.

Hathershaw and Fitton Hill Partnership

In Oldham, the Hathershaw and Fitton Hill Partnership is in the process of adjusting its targets and priorities to the new policy context. In its 2006/7 delivery plan the partnership says:

The partnership's key outcomes and targets have been reviewed through the Theme groups and translated into a delivery programme that is fit for purpose. In reviewing its outcomes and preparing the new Delivery Plan, the Partnership has also been mindful of the need to respond to new initiatives affecting the NDC area – in particular Housing Market renewal (HMR) and the Oldham Partnership Local Area Agreement (LAA). Our programme therefore reflects the growing links with our strategic partners and is increasingly cross-cutting in nature...

Work will continue on the alignment of NDC strategy and outcomes with those of Housing Market Renewal (HMR) and the Oldham Partnership. This will include a more structured evaluation of completed and ongoing projects to inform future development and learning. It will also review the existing Theme Group structure in the context of the new LAA blocks. The merger of the Crime and Environment groups is an early step in this direction.

In December 2006, the Oldham Partnership Development Officer presented a report to the NDC Board about the relationship between the two organisations in developing and operating the LAA. The Board agreed “to align NDC programmes and targets, where it is considered to be of benefit to the people of Hathershaw and Fitton Hill, with the refreshed LAA to be submitted to GONW; and to initiate discussions regarding the pooling of NDC funding within the LAA.”⁵ However, this agreement in principle may be more difficult to deliver in practice. There is a legacy of suspicion towards the Council from resident Board members and they identify the LSP with the Council. As we saw earlier in the case of BCA, the residents feel strongly that the intention behind NDC as a policy initiative was that it should be within their remit to determine how the funding is used and to ensure that it is directed towards activities within the NDC area.

The Oldham Partnership's involvement in the feasibility testing for the new generation of LAAs is likely to accelerate the move towards pooling budgets. On the one hand, it will put more pressure on the LSP to get away from silo working. On the other, it may give the Partnership a stronger hand in relation to corralling resources. Oldham can be said to have already paved the way for this with its commissioning framework which also pushes towards a more holistic approach and signals the desired shift towards more joint strategy-making, joint delivery and joint asset management. Discussions with the NDC about this are likely to encounter resistance because the resident Board members would see it as “Oldham taking our money”.

The NDC is soon to have an awayday to start discussing its forward strategy, which will include looking at the future of its capital assets, such as the newly built and opened Community Centre serving both Hathershaw and Fitton Hill, and what infrastructure might be required to manage them. Making arrangements for such assets will probably inevitably require some *quid pro quo* with partners that will counter any NDC ‘go-it-alone’ tendency.

⁵ NDC Board minutes for 7th December 2006.

How service providers have changed their behaviour

There have been examples of service providers changing their methods and approaches in response to NDCs since well before the advent of LAAs, and it is difficult therefore to discern cases where, at this stage, it is possible to isolate the LAA definitively as the explanation for changed behaviour. But this study reveals a number of encouraging examples, all reflecting the respect that is now emerging for NDC processes for tackling disadvantage.

Lewisham

For example, in Lewisham, some examples of mainstream agencies responding to NDC influence have already been discussed. For example:

- The New Cross Gate NDC's method of collecting and analysing educational statistics is being introduced in other parts of the Borough
- The Lewisham Extended (schools) Services Collaborative project is being fully integrated with the Borough's programme
- NDC methods of consulting with the community over community safety issues are now being used by the police elsewhere in the borough.

It is also evident that some LSP partners are already making provision in their budgets for the new NDC Centre (a flagship mixed use development in New Cross combining residential, retail and public service provision). For example, the local authority has earmarked revenue funding for the library service which is to be incorporated within the Centre.

Hackney

In the context of the LAA, it is evident that mainstream agency response to the NDC's influence has, to date, been very positive and that this is indeed why these agencies are working in close partnership with Shoreditch Trust. For example, as discussed earlier, the Reading Recovery programme is now being mainstreamed by the Learning Trust across the Borough at a total cost of £1.6 million. In the case of the Infant Mortality project, this has resulted in Shoreditch being selected for the pilot and being considered for a Birth Centre. There are of course other areas where mainstreaming has been achieved by the NDC outside the LAA framework, notably its Neighbourhood Warden Programme.

Leicester

But there are also circumstances where the capacity of the agencies to respond to influence is constrained – with or without an LAA – for reasons outside the NDC's control. In Leicester at present for example, it is particularly difficult for many service providers to make major changes in their practices for a variety of reasons:

- For many years – until the last election – no party has had overall control of the city council
- The PCT is going through a major restructuring, which means that there is very little funding available for mainstreaming

- The police have also restructured as they have gone from four areas to three. BCA and NACRO co-ordinate the Joint Action Group for the NDC area, whereas in all other parts of the city they are run by the Police.

4. Outcomes, impact and value added

Summary

It is still too early to assess the impact of NDC involvement with LSPs and LAAs on outcomes but there are already some encouraging signs and most interviewees were confident that LSP-NDC collaboration would produce added value. There are examples where the joint working generated has enabled local community representatives to challenge and influence local service providers in a way which was previously not possible. In some cases NDCs have succeeded in securing additional resources, from the NRF and from Europe, because of the new relationships.

Introduction

In some cases LAAs have only been introduced from the current financial year, and it is therefore too early to quantify the impact of NDC involvement on the LAA process or how this is influencing outcomes. Nevertheless, the study suggests that NDCs are adding value in a number of ways from their engagement in the LAA process. These have been discussed in previous sections and include:

- Ensuring that NDC priorities and targets are included in the LAA
- Forming strategic and operational alliances
- Identifying and linking into funding opportunities
- Attract additional funding for new projects
- Harnessing all this for future sustainability

From LSPs' perspective, respondents have confirmed that NDCs are adding value through their experience and expertise in:

- community consultations and engagement
- capacity building voluntary and community groups
- partnership working
- data collection, for example on health, crime and educational issues
- project management experience (monitoring, budget setting etc).

How outcome targets have changed

Shoreditch Trust

In the case of Shoreditch Trust, it is certainly too early in the LAA process to assess how NDC engagement with the LSP may have influenced or affected its outcomes. The LAA's priorities have only been set in the last six months and strategic commissioning has only just begun. Available evidence does however suggest that NDC involvement in the LAA has engendered closer partnership working and a greater sharing of information around specific activities.

As discussed earlier, the NDC has provided several models which are viewed as good practice by the Council and the LSP. The NDC's targets and budget for reading recovery have now been aligned in the LAA, and the programme is being mainstreamed by The Learning Trust, across the Borough to cover the 30% of primary schools with the lowest attainment. The intention is that 80% of the cost of the programme will be provided by the LAA, with 20% being provided by the schools.

Hathershaw and Fitton Hill Partnership

In Oldham, the NDC has commenced the process of alignment and outcome target revision by merging the crime, housing and environment theme under the heading 'Liveability' which corresponds to the LAA Safer and Stronger Communities block. The partnership has also looked at the alignment of priorities and targets. Predictably, there is a lot of alignment already but they are continuing to fine tune all the time. Following its earlier poor performance record, the NDC had to go through a rapid review process with GONW. As a result of this, the Board had to reduce its range of targets and nominate about eight priority indicators on which to report in future. Initially, they went through this exercise without reference to the LAA, but on checking found that the eight indicators chosen were all important stretch targets in the LAA – so outcome targets may change to reflect the LAA, but inadvertently.

Braunstone Community Association

Through membership of the project development group for the LAA it was possible for BCA to influence the selection of outcome targets. This ensured that certain outcomes that were consistent with NDC priorities were included. Such a level of involvement was important because the chief executive and BCA were fully aware of their future outcome targets, and the progress that was required to achieve them. In doing this it was possible to ensure that city-wide actions by service providers would assist in working towards NDC priorities, rather than (deliberately or inadvertently) circumventing BCA.

As we saw earlier, in its latest delivery plan the BCA board (along with the Leicester Partnership) has accepted the need for all partners to have the same outcome targets. There has been some resistance in some NDCs (particularly among residents) to the notion of alignment since it appears to suggest a loss of independence or control. The examples identified in this study suggest that the process of realignment is rarely straightforward or one-sided, in which one party adjusts its targets to mesh in with another's. In practice it is more complex, representing a recognition of interdependence rather than a loss of independence.

How impacts have improved

In all four case study areas interviewees were unanimous that it is too early to expect significant and above all *measurable* improvements in outcomes or impacts that are directly attributable to NDC involvement in LAAs. There was however widespread agreement that NDC involvement either had or would lead to improved performance, even if this had yet to feed through into statistics. A further difficulty in isolating the impact of the LAA is that activities organised around it typically build on previous activity.

In Lewisham, for example, which is a round 2 LAA authority, through joint-funding, the local authority and the NDC had already allocated 10 wardens to the NDC area (compared to the 3–4 available to other communities in the borough without joint funding). This relationship has been strengthened through the introduction of Safer Neighbourhood Teams and the Safer Neighbourhood Panel, (again pre-dating the LAA), allowing the NDC and local residents to interact more easily with dedicated area police officers. However, the recent linking of the NDC's CCTV cameras to the Borough's central monitoring facility (which was funded through the LAA) is also expected to make a major contribution towards the detection, reduction and prevention of criminal offences. Since the introduction of the local partnership approach, there is evidence that crime within the NDC area has fallen by 7% in the last year. In addition, the 2006 MORI Household Survey showed that fear of crime has gone down 20%. The LAA process has made some contribution towards these improvements.

Time will tell if there are significant gains in impact through the LAA method of working; however, NDCs are realising that the LAA process offers one route to ensure that its interventions – and the impacts they generate – survive beyond NDC funding. In Oldham for example, it appears that poor results at Key Stage 2 at least partly reflect a lack of focus on the pre-school age group. The Hathershaw and Fitton Hill Partnership is only now starting to do this but to intervene in the most effective and sustainable way requires collaboration during the planning stage. There have been some constructive discussions with Early Years about the Children's Centre and about whether NDC can help it to become self-sustaining as a social enterprise. If these initiatives are to survive they will require support through the LAA.

The added value of the relationships: how the world's a different place

Shoreditch Trust

We have already explored a variety of ways in which NDC influence on methods and processes have started to change the way partners approach regeneration and neighbourhood renewal. In Shoreditch, the NDC believes that through its influence, as well as that of other partners, the LSP has become more strategic and needs/evidence based in its approach. Since the restructuring there has been better communication between partners, a greater understanding of what they are doing and the possibility of sharing good practice.

Having major delivery partners from the LSP and its sub-partnerships on the NDC Board has also served to reinforce working links between the NDC and the LSP and, in particular, has helped to foster better relations with the community. There has, by all accounts, been a dramatic change in attitudes and increase in trust, with community representatives now able to hold delivery partners to account at Board level. Underscoring this is the NDC's commitment to building bridges, engaging with and developing the capacity of its communities.

Braunstone Community Association

But measuring the added value is difficult and too soon to judge for many interviewees in Leicester. The most tangible benefits at present are in terms of funding. For example BCA attracted European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) support through the economic block. If the NDC had not "been around the table involved in discussions on the types of funding opportunities coming through and how they related to city-wide objectives we would not have got this money," according to one interviewee. The NDC's presence helped others understand how elements of the ERDF plan were underperforming, and then help them pick up some of the underspend. The funding contributed to the development of BCA's Enterprise Campus, a £3m facility of managed space incubator units.

The NDC would also not have got money from the LAA for neighbourhood management. The city council were rolling out NM in five areas by carving-up the NRF monies, despite Braunstone being classed as a priority area. Through involvement in the thematic partnership it has been possible for BCA to negotiate some discretionary funds from the NRF to contribute to NM in the area. Without membership of the partnership the NDC would not have been in the frame for NM, or when or how to bid for the money. The LAA has contributed £50k for the establishment of a NM Board and some discretionary funds for residents to be able to enact limited interventions. This is a similar level of funding to those of three other areas in the city, while a further two areas receive around £120k each.

Hathershaw and Fitton Hill Partnership

But there is still some way to go. In Oldham, there is added value but it is perhaps not as great as it might be. At present, the strong partnership ethos associated with the LSP must – at least indirectly – provide a more positive operating climate for NDC. Similarly the NDC's role in piloting and its community infrastructure are potentially valuable to the LSP. Each can benefit from the other's data collection and analysis. However, it is not clear that these potential mutually advantageous features are fully exploited and there other possibilities, for example:

- Hathershaw and Fitton Hill remain very deprived areas: is there scope to commission NDC to be involved directly in delivering some of the LAA stretch targets?
- Are the mechanisms in place to derive maximum learning from the NDC experience in relation to community engagement as well as in specific thematic projects?
- Are there other approaches that NDC could pilot before they are rolled out in the rest of the Borough?

- Are there ways in which more bridges could be built between the NDC and other parts of Oldham in the interests both of generating broader perspectives and helping towards community cohesion?
- Can the LSP do more to support the NDC in its efforts to get some activities and approaches mainstreamed?
- Is there a role for GONW to facilitate a dialogue and assist in the dissemination of learning?

5. Improving NDC involvement: helps and hindrances

Summary

The development of NDC involvement with and influence over LSPs was hindered in the past by a variety of obstacles, including resistance to joint working (by those involved in NDCs as well as LSP stakeholders), differences in the scale of operations, resentment about the level of resources available in NDC areas, and in some cases simple personality clashes. The arrival of the LAA was the single most helpful factor in improving relationships, while the experience of joint working, capacity building, and publicising the NDC's achievements have all been helpful.

What's impeded NDC involvement?

The factors that hindered NDC involvement in their LSP and subsequently (though generally to a lesser extent) in the LAA vary between areas, reflecting local history, circumstances and in some cases personalities. However, there are some common themes running across all four.

- **Organisational:** both LSPs and NDCs took some time to develop their respective structures, strategies and programmes. In some cases, progress was slow and either or both the LSP or NDC were subject to review by central government because of perceived underperformance.
- **Resistance to joint working:** the 'parochial and provincial outlook of the (NDC) Board' was identified by a number of interviewees as a potent barrier to early partnership working. In some cases it appears that achieving closer links – and getting agreement to the pooling of funds – would certainly require a different perspective amongst resident Board members who might see this as an attempt to use NDC funds to subsidise the rest of the district and would represent a watering down of activity within the NDC area. It is also the case that residents' interest is often in projects and they struggle rather with the LAA focus on targets and outcomes. But this resistance is not restricted to residents: not all LSP delivery partners have responded enthusiastically to NDC involvement over some issues. For example, we have encountered examples of resistance from some council officers. This is felt to have occurred because the ethos of partnership has not been communicated from senior levels to staff lower down the organisation.
- **Scale of operations:** NDCs and LSPs operate on different scales and with differing levels of resources. More specifically NDCs are area based initiatives (ABI) with their own funding to target their own priorities. By contrast, LSPs cover whole districts and involve a larger number of partners, each with their own budget and agenda and a much broader set of priorities and targets. LSPs also have to be aware of changing dynamics of their areas as well as

the competing claims of different neighbourhoods within them. Not only do problems in different places vary in their mix and intensity, but also 'hot spots' for different issues may move around so that it is appropriate to shift resources according to changing needs. In this context, funding that is ring-fenced for one small area seems anomalous.

- **Resentment:** linked to this, there are suggestions that LSP partners from outside NDC areas sometimes resent the level of resources they have available, and therefore seek to exclude them not just from further funding opportunities (a problem faced by many earlier ABIs), but also involvement in wider strategic discussion;
- **Personalities:** historical hostility between disenchanted local residents and service providers (especially the local authority as traditional landlord, but in some areas police and schools as well) has generated mutual mistrust which has proved hard to dissipate;
- **Lack of leadership and staff capacity:** we have already described how LSPs (and indeed NDCs) have needed to undertake major restructuring, which in many cases was partly because of earlier failures of leadership or inadequate resources. The perception of organisational incompetence undermines trust and is hard to dispel;
- **Lack of understanding of LAAs:** at first local partners often failed to understand the intention behind LAAs (and indeed before that, NRF), and this obstructed local views of the need for and nature of partnership working.

What's helped?

Across the four case study areas the LAA has unquestionably been the main factor promoting closer involvement between the LSP and the NDC. In Lewisham, through its representation on the LAA Steering Group and at theme block meetings, the NDC is now regarded in all but name as a partner. Moreover, it has been suggested that participation in the LAA Steering Group gives the NDC more opportunity to exercise influence and add value than if it were a formal LSP partner. To summarise earlier findings, this has resulted in:

- Ensuring that NDC priorities and targets are included in the LAA
- Facilitating strategic and operational alliances with other partners
- Enabling the NDC to identify and link into funding opportunities
- Providing additional funding for new projects
- Harnessing all this for future sustainability

In Hackney, one of the approaches taken by the NDC in trying to get the LSP to work more effectively is to challenge partners at Board meeting, using constructive criticism. At the same time, to counter hostility or suspicion, the NDC stresses its policy of being about 'giving things away and not taking them'. To help promote closer working between Council officers and NDC staff, the NDC has taken the initiative and organised meetings and events.

In Oldham they have found it helpful to have the same people from GONW involved in both NDC and LSP. Also, over the last few years, both organisations have benefited from the attachment of Neighbourhood Renewal Advisers.

How have barriers been removed?

Many of the mechanisms for change are implicit in the previous section. However, specifically, the main drivers for change in these case studies are:

- **Capacity building:** we have already described how the NDC in Hackney has contributed to the development of capacity among members of the LSP. In Lewisham, the NDC has helped improve its wider links by encouraging community board members to broaden their horizons. According to one informant, this is essentially an educative process and is being achieved by demonstrating how broad co-operation can add value to the NDC. Community capacity building is a key NDC priority and through its project – Community Works – support is given to resident involvement and board member support. Participation on the NDC Board by key partner champions such as the PCT, Police and CEN has aided in this process.
- **Improved understanding:** as joint working has developed between NDCs and key delivery partners, there has been greater mutual recognition and understanding of the benefits that each partner offers and the constraints under which each of them operates. This in turn has helped to break down barriers and to reinforce strategic alliances.
- **Recognition of NDC achievements:** in Leicester, as elsewhere, the NDC has shown positive outcomes, making it difficult for them to be ignored. Without the success they have experienced it would have been difficult for them to gain representation.
- **Common problems:** wider trends in terms of the nature of deprivation mean that it is possible to develop a degree of congruence.
- **The LAA:** as already discussed, the advent of LAAs has forced partnerships to change direction, sharing more information and funding in a partnership environment.

6. Sustaining NDC achievements: LSPs, LAAs and NDC forward strategies

Summary

NDCs are starting to realise that LAAs are important as a mechanism to help ensure the sustainability of NDC achievements. Securing mainstream funds to continue NDC-funded interventions is a key element, and the LAA and its processes are important in that respect. Some NDCs – BCA for example – are setting up asset-based companies to continue in the longer term, and hope that these will attract revenue funding to run services through contracts under the LAA.

Introduction

As NDCs move towards the end of their funding, they are increasingly focusing on ways in which their achievements can be preserved and sustained, and the processes they have initiated can be continued. As we have already suggested, in some cases at least this has involved a recognition that the task of regenerating their neighbourhoods is unlikely to be complete at the end of the 10-year funding period. The process of developing 'exit' or 'forward' strategies generally predated LAAs, and typically includes ingredients (such as the development of an asset base) that are largely independent of the LAA. But this study suggests that NDCs are beginning to realise the importance of the LAA as a mechanism to help ensure the sustainability of the renewal process.

Mainstreaming

Finding ways to secure mainstream funding has been a major component of the forward strategies of short- or fixed-life ABIs for many years – at least since the Inner City Task Forces of the eighties and early nineties. In both Shoreditch and New Cross Gate, while the LAA does not explicitly feature in either NDC's forward strategy, where appropriate mainstreaming is an important ingredient, and is being pursued through the LAA.

New Cross Gate NDC

In Lewisham the NDC is taking a strategic position regarding mainstreaming in planning future programmes, and increasingly the LAA is critical to this. For example:

- Key strategic partnerships have been developed with the PCT and other partners for the planned new health services, which will form part of the NDC Centre. These involve a local GP practice, pharmacy and opticians practice, all of which are committed to securing a presence within the Centre.
- The borough's Library Service has earmarked revenue funding for the library that is to be incorporated within the Centre.
- A partnership has been formed with Fusion Leisure (a registered charity providing leisure services for local authorities, schools and voluntary organisations in South East London) to develop the leisure provision within the new NDC Centre.

Existing NDC projects and activities (referred to earlier) are also being mainstreamed including

- The NDC's method of collecting and analysing educational statistics
- The NDC's primary schools collaborative
- The NDC's CCTV community safety monitoring

Shoreditch Trust

Neither the LSP nor the LAA features directly in the Shoreditch Trust exit strategy because of its explicit focus on income generation, to be generated principally by the Shoreditch Property Company, which it hopes will have a portfolio worth £15m providing income of £1m a year by 2012. Nevertheless, it anticipates that, post 2010, the Trust's interests will be represented on the LSP or its sub partnerships by other umbrella organisations such as the Development Trusts Association or Social Enterprise London.

Whilst the NDC has had several notable successes in mainstreaming its activities, it does not feel that all its projects can or should necessarily continue beyond its life. In the meantime, where mainstreaming can add value to its current programmes or where new opportunities arise, these are being actively pursued through the LAA.

Braunstone Community Association

In Leicester, the NDC exit strategy dovetails with the LSP vision and LAA arrangements, particularly in terms of neighbourhood management and community engagement. In particular, a Neighbourhood Action Plan is being developed for Braunstone by BCA. This is considered to be potentially a mini-LAA and will probably form part of the LAA at a later stage.

More broadly, there are two succession strategies, one for the programme and one for BCA as a company. In regard to the former, the NDC is setting up a 2020 strategic framework for Braunstone, offering an alternative to the idea that the programme is ending, envisaging that Braunstone will be developing further, with "impacts in the area carrying on" and residents staying within the area. Commitment is already in place from the Council, and there is expectation that the LSP and LAA will provide important mechanisms in which other partners will be engaged in this process.

The second succession strategy is focused on managing assets and delivering key services. There will be an asset base of £10m, comprising health and social care centre, enterprise management office centre, along with various properties. This is expected to produce a surplus of around £350,000. There will also be contract income from activities such as job brokerage and training services which is to be grown ('Braunstone Working'). The partnership is also seeking to sell itself as a neighbourhood renewal company.

BCA have conveyed to the Leicester Partnership their future desire to run services and facilities as a neighbourhood renewal agency, with an income and funding stream. The NDC wishes to do this across the city. This was presented at the Partnership Board where it was acknowledged as a valuable resource for delivering future regeneration programmes across the city and within Braunstone.

Such an approach is critical at this stage because of the NDC's need to maintain sustainable interventions to address long standing and deep-seated issues. The LAA presents a mechanism where funding can continue to be brought into the area, supported by the NDC, and delivered through its partners. This helps to maintain existing interventions. Such an approach is supported by BCA having originally "bought into many city-wide projects" rather than establishing new projects. This has led to more extensive support in Braunstone. Examples of this include projects on domestic violence, reducing the potential for local offending, the Probation Service's offenders programme and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

7. Conclusions and key messages

Summary

For NDCs: NDCs need to be fully involved in the LSP and the LAA processes, not least because the LAA is crucial for the forward strategy, and as a route into mainstream funding; but NDCs must develop a clear strategy and develop the capacity of staff and board members to ensure they understand the developing policy context. Aligning outcome targets and some budgets will assist with the process of closer working.

For LSPs: NDCs are a major resource that can provide local knowledge and intelligence as well as tried and tested ways of working, especially relating to community engagement and capacity building. Smaller, neighbourhood based ones can be used to test out new ideas. NDCs have the funding and flexibility to develop some innovative work around a number of programmes including neighbourhood management, community safety and housing partnerships.

For policy makers: Support and encouragement should be given to NDCs and other ABIs to link in as quickly as possible to LAAs, if they have not already done so. The LAA concept is useful in bringing together NDCs and their various LSP partners to focus on common objectives. Greater guidance needs to be given on how NDCs fit within broader structures, particularly in terms of ensuring succession strategies complement and support the LAA.

Lessons for NDCs

- In order to develop strategic partnerships and maximise opportunities for their future sustainability, NDCs should aim to be fully represented within the LAA process. This can be more fruitful than seeking direct representation on the LSP's board, although the NDC does need to have an understanding of the way its LSP works. This will be facilitated if the NDC has LSP representation on its board.
- In particular, LAAs and the opportunities they offer should feature prominently in all aspects of NDCs' forward strategy thinking.
- Aligning budgets and/or contributing to a pot, however small, can raise the profile of an NDC, increase its credibility with other partners and help it to add value. By aligning their targets with other key partners in the LAA, NDCs can also secure value-added benefits by ensuring that they link into wider mainstream funding programmes.
- To achieve all this, NDCs need to widen their focus beyond the local area and think strategically. This is likely to require investment in capacity building in order to 'sell' the benefits of partnership working to boards and especially, communities. However, developing the role of involved residents in the

dissemination process could also help to strengthen their relationship with agency partners.

- The experience of Shoreditch Trust suggests that NDCs need to take a proactive role when seeking to engage with and ultimately to influence their LSPs and LAAs. Being represented at Board and/or sub-partnership level will enable them to contribute to strategic decision-making, identify those partners they can work with and those programmes to which they can add value by aligning their priorities, targets and budgets.
- It is also evident that to play a prominent and influential role requires the involvement of a dynamic individual who is not only able to represent and promote the NDC's interests but is also able to challenge fellow partners and hold them to account. Effective engagement requires an ability to communicate, a talent for networking, a shared vision and a willingness to invest time, energy and resources.
- In order to be able to maximise the benefits of LAAs, it is particularly important that NDCs are able to see beyond their own organisations and local area and don't allow themselves to develop silo mentalities. Having key delivery partners sit on their Boards, particularly from the Local Authority, can help mitigate against this, as well as facilitating strategic links and strengthening partnership working. Crucially, having the major players represented on NDC Boards can be a key factor in building trust with local communities.
- Given the current fluidity of the policy environment, NDC need to ensure that the Team and Board are aware of what is happening locally and nationally and of the potential implications for its present programme and its forward strategy.

Lessons for LSPs

- LSPs should recognise that NDCs are a major resource that can be used to add value to the local and wider area. In particular, NDCs can provide local knowledge and intelligence as well as tried and tested ways of working, especially relating to community engagement and capacity building.
- Best use should therefore be made of the NDC's staff and expertise whilst the programme is still active. This could involve timetabling regular meetings for NDC and partner officers. Alternatively encouragement might be given to arranging officer secondments between the LSP and NDC.
- If it is not feasible or appropriate to include the NDC on the LSP Board, the partnership should try to ensure that the NDC is involved in the LAA process at a strategic level (e.g. on the LAA's Steering Group). This should facilitate the development of joint targets and outcomes as well as aligning budgets.
- LSPs should recognise and exploit the benefits, contributions and good practice that NDCs can bring to their partnership structures and LAA forums. These are likely to include their local knowledge, their experience of managing large-scale projects, their performance management skills, their expertise in engaging with communities and their experience of partnership working.

- Because larger organisations, like LSPs and Local Authorities, tend to be more risk averse, smaller, neighbourhood based ones can be used to test out new ideas. NDCs have the funding and flexibility to develop some innovative work around a number of programmes including neighbourhood management, community safety and housing partnerships.
- Where it is not already underway, it would also be helpful for partners in both NDCs and LSPs to discuss 'mainstreaming' and what it means in different situations. There is often a blurring of the distinction between using NDC funding:
 - to test out a different approach that, if effective, could be adopted by mainstream partners without necessarily having resource implications.
 - to 'increase the dose', that is, to put more resources into a limited area or a target group. The latter may also be different in that it enables more intensive work and demonstrates its effectiveness, but mainstreaming it will be more challenging and raise equity as well as resource issues.
- Understand that NDCs are pathfinders with a great deal of expertise in community engagement, built up over a number of years. Adoption of this learning will help reduce the time taken for community capacity building in other areas.

Lessons for policy makers

- This study suggests that early engagement with the LAA has been critical in achieving some positive outcomes. Support and encouragement should therefore be given to NDCs and other ABIs to link in as quickly as possible to LAAs, if they have not already done so.
- Drawing on the experience of this study, policy makers should encourage NDCs to link into LSPs and LAA structures at appropriate levels. In particular, NDCs should be judged on how well they engage in partnership working and mainstreaming to **improve service delivery**, as well as their success in meeting targets and outcomes.
- The other lesson that policy makers should be aware of is that engaging with LSPs and LAAs may only be of strategic value during an NDC's life and in the context of mainstreaming. As this case study shows, Shoreditch Trust's exit strategy does not anticipate direct representation on the NDC or engagement with the LAA, because it is developing an income generation model for its sustainability.
- More generally, the LAA concept is useful in bringing together NDCs and their various LSP partners to focus on common objectives. In turn, this requires them to redefine their own corporate objectives and find new ways of working together to achieve these. It also requires all the parties involved to focus on funding regimes and how to approach them.
- A key message for central government concerns the difficulty for those on the ground to handle the fall-out of policies that have been developed incrementally. LAAs cut across the autonomy of NDCs and, although

with goodwill, effective relationships can be built, the ethos of NDC as a 'community-led' or 'influenced' initiative makes this more fraught.

- In relation to pooling funds for the LAA, there is probably always going to be greater resistance to pooling geographic funding streams than thematic ones and the difficulty will be intensified if other hotspots are emerging and the case for targeting the initial area seems to be weakening.
- Part of the original intention was that NDCs should be learning laboratories. It is worth encouraging NDCs to draw out more learning through promoting local exchange and dissemination.
- Greater guidance needs to be given on how NDCs fit within broader structures, particularly in terms of ensuring succession strategies complement and support the LAA.

Annex 1: The NDCs

Braunstone Community Association

Braunstone is situated on the western periphery of Leicester. It is one of a number of outer council estates located at some distance from the city centre. It is a largely 'white' estate within a city that is characterised by racial diversity and relative cohesion. Housing on the south of the estate dates back to the 1930s, while the north was developed later for families evacuated from city slums. It consists of 63 per cent social housing. The area has suffered from many of the place and people poverty attributes that characterise peripheral estates, including relatively high levels of unemployment and crime, along with poor levels of quality of life, education/skills and accessibility. NDC interventions have been particularly important in reduce crime levels and unemployment, as well as increasing the involvement of people in quality of life programmes.

Hathershaw and Fitton Hill Partnership

The NDC area covers the adjoining neighbourhoods of Hathershaw and Fitton Hill. Hathershaw, a mile from the southern edge of the town centre, has fairly high-density owner-occupied and private rented pre-1914 terraced housing interspersed with some 1930s council housing. Fitton Hill was a 1950s and 1960s overspill council estate with problems typical of estates of its era: many difficult-to-let properties, a high level of voids and inadequate service provision. Stock transfer has enabled the start of an improvement programme and Housing Market Renewal offers the possibility of further investment. Overall, there were high rates of work-limiting illness, poor skills and poor educational attainment reflected in lower numbers remaining in education after 16 and high numbers of NEETs. Community facilities and retail provision urgently required improvement. A number of mills were located in the area, many redundant and derelict but some with new uses. Now a developer has been selected to redevelop the 'Borough Mill triangle', a gateway site with the potential to transform the immediate area through a mix of new homes and modern office and retail uses. Whereas Hathershaw was ethnically mixed, Fitton Hill was predominantly white. The start of NDC coincided with civil unrest in Oldham, which indicated inter-ethnic tensions. The NDC Partnership has had to be sensitive to concerns about the allocation of resources between groups and neighbourhoods within the Borough.

New Cross Gate NDC

New Cross Gate is a small, high-density area in the north of Lewisham in south London. Post-war council housing makes up the bulk of the housing stock, with a culturally diverse population of about 10,000. Fast transport links to central London

and the Docklands business district put the area within easy reach of the capital's core labour markets. But unemployment remains higher than elsewhere in the borough, at 10.3% compared to 8.2% for the Lewisham as a whole, according to the 2001 census. Research in the first two years of the NDC's operation found low levels of skills and aspiration among residents. Relatively few people are self-employed – 9.2%, compared to 12.4% for London as a whole – and local perceptions are that there are low levels of business start ups and growth. After a hesitant start during its first two years, the NDC has emerged as a successful partnership. The Lewisham Local Area Agreement (LAA) has been the catalyst for closer links between New Cross Gate NDC and Lewisham Strategic Partnership (LSP). The NDC has been represented on the LAA Steering Group since its inception and there is senior officer representation at theme group meetings. The NDC has also contributed £50,000 to each of the four LAA blocks. All this has helped to raise the NDC's profile and add value to its programmes. It has also increased its credibility with other partners, who value the NDC for its expertise in community engagement, facilitating service delivery in the local area and capacity building community and voluntary groups.

Shoreditch Trust

Shoreditch is in the north-east London borough of Hackney, bordering Islington and the expanding financial area in the City of London. The area's traditional economy of furniture-making, leather goods and clothing manufacture has diminished. A predominantly small business economy was left behind. Many of these small and medium-sized businesses are clustered along major thoroughfares such as City Road, Old Street, Kingsland Road and Hackney Road. Others are based in areas gradually recovering from economic blight and neglect, like Regent's Canal and Hoxton Square. Shoreditch has a surplus of large, vacant commercial warehouse-type premises, some of which have been converted into luxury apartments that are beyond the means of the majority of social tenant households, many of whom are single parents and pensioners. Only 39% of the area's working population were in full-time employment in 2005, and unemployment is now double the rate of Greater London. Shoreditch, with its culturally diverse population, was selected in 2000 as one of the pathfinder areas for the New Deal for Communities. Shoreditch Trust NDC played a major role in the restructuring of Team Hackney, the local strategic partnership (LSP) and since then has been represented on the LSP's Executive Board. A number of major LSP partners also sit on the NDC's Board. This has helped to raise the NDC's profile in the borough, enabled it to develop strategic links with key delivery partners and ensured the NDC's active engagement in the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Annex 2: Acronyms

ABI:	Area based initiative
CCTV:	Closed Circuit Television
ERDF:	European Regional Development Fund
GOEM:	Government Office for the East Midlands
HMR:	Housing Market Renewal
LAA:	Local Area Agreement
LEGI:	Local Enterprise Growth Initiative
LSP:	Local Strategic Partnership
MBC:	Metropolitan Borough Council
NACRO:	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NDC:	New Deal for Communities
NEET:	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NRA	Neighbourhood Renewal Adviser
NRF:	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
NRU:	Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
PCT:	Primary Care Trust
SSCF:	Safer Stronger Communities Fund

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