

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

British Urban Regeneration Conference

‘Collaborating Across Sectors’

Plenary on Mixed Income Communities

Keynote speech

Introduction

- I’m delighted to be here and to be taking part in this session on Mixed Income Communities. It’s an opportune moment to consider why the development of Mixed Income Communities is a priority for this Government, as part of our drive to tackle disadvantage and support sustainable local communities.
- My colleague Ruth Kelly at the Department for Communities and Local Government set out earlier in the year why this is such a key element of our policy to regenerate some of our most challenging communities, following on from the commitment we made in last year’s Budget.
- As Regeneration Minister I always said that regeneration cannot be brought about by buildings alone.

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- But of course it is equally important to be ambitious and creative in considering how all three sectors can work together to support this vision – this after all is theme of conference. So my message to you today is to be as creative and ambitious as you can in using your energy and ideas to help transform our communities. As I often say, plush new buildings, or other physical change, on their own will never be enough to bring about the kind of improvements we need to see. If we are serious about transforming ethos and aspirations, we will all need to be genuinely enterprising in finding ways to empower the very hearts of our communities.

Background to Mixed Income Communities work

- We have ample evidence that for the poorest families, living in a uniformly disadvantaged area will mean that it is harder for them to thrive – economically, socially, educationally – than if they lived in a more affluent area. We know that the most deprived are, ironically, the most likely to be offered sub-standard services. As you all know, this can be due to a variety of factors:

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- Underperforming schools
 - Poor opportunities for employment
 - A substandard physical environment
 - High levels of crime
 - And often, a culture of low aspiration which conspires to compound the effects of poverty and sustain the cycle of deprivation.
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- There is no place for ghettos like these in modern twenty-first century Britain. None of us should feel comfortable with the reality that many parents are still bringing up their children, or elderly people spending their retirement, in an environment we would balk at for our families. None of us should tolerate the status quo when there is still such an association between childhood in a disadvantaged community and poor outcomes in later life.

 - That is why we want to help create regenerated localities across the country which can attract, and retain, individuals and families from a range of backgrounds and on a variety of incomes. We need to work together to create:

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- Communities based on a much wider variety of housing type, size and tenure – but all built to a high and sustainable standard;
- An environment where our citizens can feel, not only comfortable in their own homes, but involved in and supported by the whole local community;
- Well-integrated provision of education, health, transport and social services that are tailored around the needs of individuals, especially the most socially excluded. We are already supporting projects in Gipton – in Leeds – and Newham in London to ensure that this integrated provision is delivered on the ground.

Social Exclusion Action Plan

- Last month my Department, the Cabinet Office, published Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion. It focuses on how we can identify those families most at risk of deprivation and shape public services to intervene earlier before problems become entrenched and support and enable individuals to aspire and achieve.
- And the work that my colleagues in the Department for Communities and Local Government have been doing on neighbourhood renewal and building and supporting Mixed Incomes Communities goes hand-in-hand with our drive to tackle both people-based, and place-based, disadvantage.

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- What we want to do is empower these individuals and families to feel ownership and pride in their local communities. It is common sense that when any of us hold a real stake in our local environment, and can be actively involved in how it is run and managed, we will respond by respecting the places where we live and work, and making an active and construction contribution.
- And if we want to build and sustain the kind of communities I describe, we need to be more ambitious and more imaginative than we have been in the past by involving a variety of partners in doing this. This is where this Conference's theme – Collaborating Across Sectors – is so important.

Partners in this work

- I want to say something about the guiding principles set out in the Action Plan that mark our approach to people experiencing, or at risk of, severe exclusion. They relate closely to the various different roles which we will need to take this vision further in the future:

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- First of all – and I say this unapologetically – there is a clear and important role for central government – in our strategy for reducing social exclusion. We want to support and reward local government where it has been successful in tackling disadvantage in its communities, but we will intervene in those instances where too many areas and people are still being let down.
- But of course, local authorities and their partners are major players in the drive to create and support mixed income communities. There is a strong emphasis on local government identifying and spreading the best practice – and instances where planning and investment have paid off to create the kinds of communities we want to see, are excellent examples of such good practice. And so the clear strategic role of the Local Strategic Partnership in identifying the priorities for local areas, supporting effective multi-agency working, and acting decisively to realise their vision, is enormously important here.

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- And naturally, the Private and Third Sectors have a crucial and developing contribution to make. We know that Government cannot single-handedly drive the kind of deep-rooted changes we need to see – and nor should we be the only people aspiring to see these changes. As the Prime Minister, and my colleague Ed Miliband set out at the Third Sector Forum in the summer, we know that for vibrant local economies and thriving community involvement we all have to work together to create a supportive, yet stimulating environment. There are some outstanding examples of local social enterprise where communities or individuals have worked together to effect the kinds of changes they themselves knew were needed.
- One such example of social enterprise involvement in the local community has been the contribution of voluntary groups, focussed on regeneration, transforming underperforming schools. I am delighted to say that the Education Bill, currently going through Parliament, will support this kind of contribution by offering schools the opportunity to acquire Trusts, formalising their relationship with external partners to secure a high quality education for all local children. An example of this is Millfields Community School in Hackney, which as a consequence has seen families moving into the

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area and the school being at the heart of the community. We should all focus on the ultimate result: a transformed education for the children and families in the very areas where low aspirations have hampered education for decades

Conclusion

- Today's Plenary Session should be about celebrating our achievement so far in creating some successful Mixed Income Communities – but also in challenging ourselves to think harder, faster and more creatively about how we can make them not the exception, but the norm.

- So my message to you today is:
 - Let's make the most of every opportunity on offer for innovation, constantly looking to communities themselves to find the solutions they need to become integrated and sustainable;

 - Let us be ambitious for every community – aspiring for the security and the opportunity for every local area, that we would wish for our own;

 - And let's challenge ourselves to harness the creative energy that results when the three sectors

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come together – not always in agreement, but committed to a shared vision to tackle disadvantage and low aspirations wherever they exist.

- Thank you once again for welcoming me here today. I wish you well for the remainder of the conference, and everything you do. We need to come together in the future celebrating more success in mixed communities. There are huge challenges out there but we need to grab them.

[ENDS]