

# Learning to change neighbourhoods: Lessons from the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme

## Evaluation Report







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Programme*

Evaluation Report

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## Acknowledgements

The Evaluation Team would like to dedicate the following report to Rohan (Bob) Thornes (1969-2007), Resident Guide Co-ordinator, Burrowes Street Tenant Management Organisation, Walsall. Talking of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme, Bob commented:

“Personally, this is a whole new direction for me and it’s broadened my horizons ... but it’s feeling part of a family with a common vision that’s helped. Seeing the power of a few right minded people moving in the right direction is what has kept me going.”

Thanks also to all those from Guide Neighbourhoods, partner organisations and community groups who gave their time to developing this evaluation report and to Communities and Local Government and members of the Advisory Group for their support and guidance.

## Executive Summary

Background: The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme was funded by the Home Office (subsequently Communities and Local Government) and managed by Regenerate, part of the voluntary sector organisation Housing Justice. The Programme received £4.35 million and was set up as an action research project to encourage innovation in learning for neighbourhood regeneration. The Programme ran for 27 months from January 2005 to March 2007, and was then awarded £250,000 to continue the network for another year. Evaluation was built in at an early stage to maximise learning.

**The Programme:** Fifteen Guide Neighbourhood organisations were appointed in a rolling programme to disseminate their own good practice and to build the capacity of other fledgling organisations outside their own neighbourhoods. The aims of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme were to promote learning and make an impact on policy delivery at the neighbourhood level. The underlying principle of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme was that residents in deprived neighbourhoods can learn from one another about ‘what works’ in neighbourhood regeneration and apply those lessons at a practical level within their own communities. Key questions for the evaluation were how this ‘resident-to-resident’ learning could be translated into action and change at a neighbourhood level and how change could be sustained, engaging different generations and diverse communities of interest to build more cohesive and sustainable communities.

**Development:** The fifteen Guide Neighbourhoods were funded to provide support for less experienced client organisations by various means, including hosting demonstration visits, supplying small grant funding, and working with the clients – developing forward plans, mentoring and giving advice – to develop their capacity for action. An initial aspiration of the Programme was that local residents would be employed as resident consultants. This proved problematic for several reasons. Some key activists faced conflicts of interest as board members of their community organisation; others had care commitments, personal health problems or faced the poverty trap of insecure part-time work. However, Guide Neighbourhoods developed a diverse range of models for delivery, including employing community development workers, providing more specialised consultancy on community managed housing options, or promoting social enterprise.

Clients pointed out the value of having someone at the end of the phone to advise and support them. Being taken out of their immediate locality and meeting with others facing similar issues, through visits to Guide Neighbourhoods as well as in networking and conference activity, was judged to be an invaluable learning experience. The kite marking associated with membership of a national network and Communities and Local Government funding was felt by both guides and clients to be of positive value, even though there was no clearly defined quality accreditation process.

**Policy Impact:** Current Government policy, such as ‘Strong and Prosperous Communities: the Local Government White Paper’<sup>1</sup>, puts active citizenship, strengthening community organisations and cross sector partnership working at the centre of neighbourhood renewal, and also focuses attention on community cohesion. The personal touch of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme’s approach is shown to have motivated residents in client neighbourhoods to become active in their communities and to have inspired community groups to have the confidence to persist with their ideas, by seeing the

<sup>1</sup> Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities: the Local Government White Paper*, (White Paper CM 6939). The Stationery Office, London.

example of successful resident-led regeneration. Guide Neighbourhoods have worked beyond developing the skills and confidence of key individuals in neighbourhoods to building wider organisational capacity by supporting, often quite fragile, community groups to create a physical presence and change on their own estates.

Guide Neighbourhoods have also played a role in developing greater professionalism and effectiveness within client organisations. A number of Guide Neighbourhoods have acted as positive role models and encouraged client organisations to engage in strategic partnership. This has involved effecting introductions or brokering positive relationships with public agencies in cases where this has been difficult in the past.

Guide Neighbourhoods have addressed a range of community cohesion issues. They have attempted to address the exclusion of young people, older generations and disabled people. The learning from the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme highlights the need for diverse communities to challenge and learn from each other, have time to build trusting relationships and then address issues of common community concern.

Community empowerment outcomes for the Programme were often achieved through a focus on improvements in the quality of community life, such as environmental changes, community safety and neighbourhood management initiatives. The small grants allocated by Guide Neighbourhoods were a particularly effective way of encouraging risk and innovation in neighbourhood development. The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme's model of learning and funding from neighbourhood to neighbourhood proved effective in reaching hidden communities on 'forgotten estates' where little or no funding had previously been received.

In terms of neighbourhood management, Guide Neighbourhoods have facilitated more effective transfer of housing stock and better terms for the tenants involved. For example, client neighbourhoods revealed that their experience of support from Guide Neighbourhoods had speeded up the Tenant Management Organisation application process. Environmental projects to improve the visual look of neighbourhoods, often through planting flowers, supported and funded by Guide Neighbourhoods, have been effective ways of changing how people feel about their neighbourhoods and their confidence to achieve improvements. Community safety has been promoted through working with young people to engage them in a positive way, for example as 'junior wardens'.

## Learning

- The Guide Neighbourhoods offered a menu of learning opportunities that was shown to be effective in engaging residents in client neighbourhoods, with inspirational visits often forming a key starting point for longer term mentoring and consultancy support.
- This more in depth work was shown to have produced positive regeneration and empowerment benefits in those neighbourhoods supported. In some cases, these took the form of progress in achieving hard social outcomes; in other cases, it meant building good community governance and preventing fragile community groups from collapsing, thus avoiding a serious reversal in the regeneration of a neighbourhood.



- The features of Guide Neighbourhood support that client neighbourhoods particularly valued included: the personal experience and accessibility of residents and colleagues; their willingness to share learning, and the honesty with which they did so. Guide Neighbourhoods were described by some as “the human face of regeneration.”
- The Guide Neighbourhoods helped the client neighbourhoods to move beyond their (justified) anger and oppositional stance to recognise the value of building collaboration with public sector partners and understand the place of local action within wider policy contexts.
- Residents were central to, but not the sole providers of the learning process. Resident to professional learning became an important part of the Programme in terms of effecting change.
- The organisations involved as Guide Neighbourhoods were very diverse. This was both a strength (in that a broad range of learning was on offer) but also a weakness of the programme – in that it lacked, at times, a clear focus and profile.
- The findings reinforce those of previous regeneration initiative evaluations. Engaging and empowering residents is crucial – but it takes time and adequate funding if local residents are to participate in regeneration as equal partners. Equally, the increasing pressure on community organisations to deliver local services on behalf of statutory agencies alongside the emphasis on local level democratic structures; require longer term investment to build the skills and knowledge necessary for good governance and accountability at the neighbourhood level.
- National networks are immensely important to community activists and organisations in sharing experience, promoting learning and seeing the bigger policy picture, but they need a clear purpose and robust management and resourcing.
- Arms length management arrangements may result in disengaging Government from the programmes they fund and make programme leadership more difficult.

# 1 Introduction

“Many people feel powerless to do anything about the issues that affect their daily lives [...] For some, the organisations which take the decisions seem beyond their influence, so people are left with a diminishing sense of confidence and responsibility. Increasingly people feel that public authorities [...] are not interested in their concerns, let alone their opinions”<sup>2</sup>

“I think it does make you think that there is hope, that you can get the estate looking as how you would like it to look and to try and get everybody involved but it just takes time ... they’re [names Guide Neighbourhood] proving to us that it can actually happen so it like gives us a little bit of hope that stuff can change.” (client neighbourhood)

These two quotes, from very different sources, illustrate the essence of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme and the concept that peer learning and networking between residents has a significant contribution to make to successful neighbourhood renewal.

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme (2005-7) has evolved from earlier initiatives to promote resident engagement in regeneration. Its aim has been to extend the previous ‘Seeing is Believing’ model<sup>3</sup> of visits to communities in which local residents share their successes in renewing and regenerating their neighbourhood to a longer term approach of consultancy and mentoring support. This process aims to translate the inspiration and the enthusiasms of key individuals into learning for others (including community based organisations, regeneration practitioners and policy makers) so that they too can contribute to the building of sustainable community organisations and action.

The underlying principle of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme is simple. Residents can learn from each other about ‘what works’ in neighbourhood regeneration and apply those lessons in their own communities. Yet the initiative has a wider relevance to, and asks some more profound questions of, current policies across political parties:

- what is the purpose of resident to resident learning? Is it solely about the “involvement of local people in the physical regeneration of [their] estates”<sup>4</sup> – or is there a broader goal of enhanced community engagement generally, civil renewal, tackling issues of democratic deficit and building active citizenship in an increasingly diverse society?
- is the objective resident led regeneration – or is it about developing a culture and environment in which communities and neighbourhood organisations are **equal partners** with professionals and policy makers in managing devolved governance?
- is an emphasis on the individual citizen and their right to access quality services enough? What is the role for Local and Central Government in supporting the collective voices of marginal communities?
- should community and voluntary groups be funded solely for their capacity to deliver public services – rather than their ability to act as community advocates?

<sup>2</sup> Civil Renewal Unit (2005) *Together We Can: People and government, working together to make life better*. Home Office, London, p4.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, M., Zahno, K., Thake, S., Nock, M. and Jarman, K. (2002) *Exploring the Field of Residents’ Consultancy* (Research Report 382). DfES, London.

<sup>4</sup> Policy interview

And, crucially, how can:

- learning be translated into action and change at a neighbourhood level and how do we effectively share, often isolated examples of good practice in the field?
- models of learning at a neighbourhood level be translated into sharing lessons across communities of interest (such as refugee and migrant groups) which may not be geographically based?
- the experiences of residents and community groups influence the practice of professionals and policy makers?
- change be sustained over time, engage different generations and diverse communities of interest to build more cohesive, and sustainable, communities?

This report aims to address these difficult questions as well as meeting the key goals outlined in the initial Home Office Invitation to tender which indicated that the evaluation of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme should:

“be of an action learning nature and concentrate on recording and assessing the outcomes and effectiveness of the programme, and understanding where possible lessons to be learned. We would like an approach to evaluation that works with the Guide Neighbourhoods to support them in conducting their own self-evaluations, is able to take a view on particular successes and/or failures (and the reasons for these) and is able to take a view on the merits of the programme’s overall approach to the provision of learning for regeneration and renewal.”<sup>5</sup>

The key themes the evaluation was charged with exploring were:

- the sustainability of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme’s approach both at the local level for the individual organisations involved and nationally
- the effectiveness of the ‘menu of learning opportunities’ being offered by the Programme
- the impact on the individual communities benefiting from Guide Neighbourhood support as well as the Programme’s influence on local, regional and national policy development
- the learning for individual consultants and resident guides

In subsequent discussion with the Home Office/Communities and Local Government the major focus of activity shifted from an action research project to assessing change within client neighbourhoods. In short – what ‘hard outcomes’ could be attributed to the learning and support provided to groups in these areas by Guide Neighbourhoods. However, as the Home Office itself recognised, this shift in emphasis “will be constrained by the short timescale, when most real change will take place over a much longer time”.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Home Office (2005) *Guide Neighbourhoods Programme Evaluation: Invitation to Tender*. Home Office, London, 3?

<sup>6</sup> Home Office (2005) *Guide Neighbourhoods Programme Evaluation: Invitation to Tender*. Home Office, London. This has also been a concern for Regenerate/Housing Justice (the managing agent for the initiative who note “The main concern about the future remains, as it has since the beginning of the programme, that there is not sufficient time for significant impact to be evidenced.” (Regenerate (2006) *Guide Neighbourhood Annual Report to the Home Office/CLG*, June)

Demonstrating the initiative's direct contribution to achieving national Public Service Agreements and Neighbourhood Renewal Floor Targets has therefore been problematic in the timescales allowed. However, the ambition of the Programme and its participants is noteworthy. In developing the evaluation framework<sup>7</sup> and methodology<sup>8</sup>, Guide Neighbourhoods aspired to very high level outcomes; supporting client neighbourhoods to reduce crime, attract inward housing and related investment, enhance local environments and build sustainable social enterprises. What the evaluation team (guided by an expert reference group – see Appendix 4) have therefore attempted to identify is – how far Guide Neighbourhoods have facilitated progress against a range of policy objectives?

The challenge for the evaluation, then, is to assess the 'distance travelled' towards achieving those ambitious goals within the Programme. In undertaking this task, the honesty of Guide Neighbourhoods has been impressive. They have openly shared what has – and has not – worked in terms of promoting neighbourhood learning and change. It is an openness and honesty that those communities working with Guide Neighbourhoods have appreciated. The evaluation team hope that that these values are reflected in the following assessment of the weaknesses but also – more particularly – of the strengths of the different regeneration and participation models adopted by Guide Neighbourhoods.

Subsequent sections of this report describe the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme (Chapter 2) and place it within a wider policy context (Chapter 3). The attitudes and approaches to delivering and sharing learning are examined in Chapters 4 and 5 – and the impacts of the Programme in terms of neighbourhood change are then identified – along with issues and options for future action – in the final sections of the report.

In the spirit of the initiative, we have directly used the voices of participants wherever possible. Whilst Guide Neighbourhoods addressed diverse policy objectives using a variety of approaches, there should, as one resident guide noted, be a common agenda between those involved in building sustainable communities:

“There is a lot of jargon about regeneration...but really, as a resident, there is only one question. Is this an area I want my children to grow up in?” (Guide Neighbourhood)

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1 for an outline of the evaluation framework developed with representatives from Guide Neighbourhoods, and Appendix 2 for the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme shield.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 3 for details of the approach, methods and activities developed by the evaluation team.

## 2 The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme: An overview

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme was designed as one element of the Together We Can strategy, led initially by the Civil Renewal Unit in the Home Office. It was coordinated on behalf of Government by Regenerate, a project of Housing Justice, the national charity formed from merging Churches National Housing Coalition and CHAS in 2003. This approach of 'arms length' overseeing of funding not only reflects wider agendas in the management of Government funding initiative, but was a conscious decision to:

- establish an overall programme, with a discernable identity – rather than finance a range of disparate projects
- offer co-ordination which could create potential synergies between individual Guide Neighbourhoods and coordinate the provision of:

“a menu of learning opportunities for residents seeking to regenerate their neighbourhoods with experienced residents from strong, successful neighbourhoods (Guide Neighbourhoods) as the key providers”<sup>9</sup>

The initiative built on a pilot programme in residents' consultancy, funded jointly by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Department for Education and Skills and the Home Office, 2001-4. This focused on how residents with expertise in regeneration and community renewal and 'making it happen' could share their skills and experience with the residents of other neighbourhoods.

Two research studies were undertaken in this early period. 'Exploring the field of residents' consultancy'<sup>10</sup> was a baseline UK and international survey which identified the range of activities that could be described as residents' consultancy and a second report<sup>11</sup> looked at the eight projects funded through the pilot and identified the market for residents' consultancy. In the initial report, residents' consultancy is described as:

“Initiatives through which residents of areas undergoing regeneration share, or market, the skills they have acquired through the regeneration process. At its essence is learning through shared experience.”<sup>12</sup>

In total, some £4,350,000 was allocated to the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme with a view that its participant organisations would host, over 28 months, 385 'seeing is believing' visits, offer ongoing support to 321 community organisations and training for 84 groups as well as develop a range of shared resources. Learning opportunities provided by the programme were to be both local/neighbourhood based – including visits to successful neighbourhoods, consultancy services and tailored training – and were to have a national focus with the development of toolkits, publicity materials and handbooks. In addition, Guide Neighbourhoods were allocated a 'small grants fund' to enable client neighbourhoods to purchase a range of professional support, advice and resources (of between £500 and £10,000 per neighbourhood).

<sup>9</sup> Home Office Briefing, December 2004 (p3); Internal Document on The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme Proposal

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, M., Zahno, K., Thake, S., Nock, M. and Jarman, K. (2002) *Exploring the Field of Residents' Consultancy*, Research Report 382. DfES, London.

<sup>11</sup> ODPM (2004) *Evaluation of the Residents' Consultancy Pilots Initiative*, Research Report 10. ODPM, London.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, M., Zahno, K., Thake, S., Nock, M. and Jarman, K. (2002) *Exploring the Field of Residents' Consultancy*, Research Report 382. DfES, London, pii.

There were originally nine neighbourhoods involved, with a further five joining the programme over late 2005 and early 2006 (See Table 1 for further details). In addition Waltherton and Elgin Community Homes was accepted as an associate member and further work was commissioned (initially by the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations and subsequently by Regenerate) to strengthen and develop an active network of London-based Guide Neighbourhoods.

**Table 1: Guide Neighbourhoods by region**

Region	Guide Neighbourhood	Number per Region
<b>London</b>	Poplar HARCA/New Mill Consultants Waltherton and Elgin Community Homes – WECH (Associate Guide Neighbourhood from March 2006)	1 (plus Associate)
<b>South East</b>	Neighbours4U – Kent (from January 2006)	1
<b>South West</b>	Pembroke Street Estate Management Board – Plymouth	1
<b>West Midlands</b>	Balsall Heath Forum, Castle Vale Community Housing Association – Birmingham Perry Common (from February 2006) – Birmingham Burrowes Street Tenant Management Organisation – Walsall	4
<b>East Midlands</b>	Leicester North West Community Forum (from July 2005)	1
<b>Yorkshire and Humberside</b>	Royds Community Association – Bradford Goodwin Development Trust – Hull (from March 2006) Stubbin Neighbourhood Association – Sheffield (from March 2006)	3
<b>North West</b>	The Eldonian Group, INclude – Liverpool Seedley and Langworthy Trust – Salford (from March 2006)	3
<b>National</b>	National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations <sup>13</sup>	1

Guide Neighbourhoods can be characterised by their diversity. This applies in terms of:

**Location** – ranging from peripheral estates (Castle Vale) to inner city communities (INclude). Further, there are ‘clusters’ of Guide Neighbourhoods in the West Midlands (4) and Liverpool (2) whilst the Programme is not represented in other regions (e.g. North East and East

**Demographics** – with some located in predominantly white working class neighbourhoods and others in multi-cultural areas (Balsall Heath Forum) or with newly arrived communities (Leicester North West Community Forum and Poplar HARCA/New Mill Consultants).

**Size of neighbourhood** – whilst Pembroke Street in Plymouth is an estate of just over 140 households, Balsall Heath covers a whole City ward – and INclude works across the post codes of Liverpool 1 and Liverpool 8.

<sup>13</sup> The National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations offered a network of resident guides based mainly in the London and North West regions.

**Host organisations** – range from long established agencies such as Balsall Heath Forum, through to relatively new community groups with no history of prior funding (Stubbin Neighbourhood Association, Sheffield) and from those employing one part-time member of staff (Federation of Tenant Management Organisations) through to Castle Vale and Poplar HARCA which, as housing providers, are substantial local employers or have a considerable capital portfolio of community owned assets (Goodwin Development Trust, Hull).

**Expertise** – varies from those organisations offering a broad range of skills and knowledge (e.g. Balsall Heath) to those providing more specific expertise (e.g. tenant management; Burrowes Street). (See Table 2 for further details). Indeed, a number of Guide Neighbourhoods have been at the forefront of developing and delivering ‘new’ policy agendas including social enterprise development (the Eldonian Group), neighbourhood management (Castle Vale Community Housing Association) and community management of assets (Goodwin Development Trust). The learning from these innovative responses to neighbourhood regeneration is explored further in case study materials in the following chapters and portraits of each Guide Neighbourhood are available in Appendix 5.

The starting points for individual Guide Neighbourhoods involved are also very different. Whilst a majority are located within community managed housing initiatives and have focused on physical regeneration, others (Royds Community Association and Leicester North West Community Forum) have a more ‘traditional’ community development base of ‘starting where people are at’.

“In my experience ... you have got to get the housing right first, somewhere decent to live. Local people feeling they have a say in their housing. Until you get that right, people will not get involved in other things.” (Resident guide)

“Housing might be the issue. But it might not. It could be crime, could be drugs, could be things for children and young people to do. So we listen and then work with what local people want to do.” (Resident guide)

**Table 2: Guide Neighbourhoods – main areas of expertise<sup>14</sup>**

<b>Guide Neighbourhood and Core Business</b>	<b>Community Engagement and Personal Development</b>	<b>Organisational Capacity and Leadership</b>	<b>Diversity and Cohesion</b>	<b>Influence and Partnerships</b>	<b>Financial Sustainability/ Social Enterprise</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Balsall Heath Forum</b> Community development						Health Initiatives
<b>Burrowes Street Tenant Management Organisation</b> Estate management						
<b>Castle Vale Community Housing Association</b> Neighbourhood management						

<sup>14</sup> Areas of expertise were identified in an initial scoping audit by the evaluation team in 2005 and, for later participants in the programme, via exit interviews.

<b>Guide Neighbourhood and Core Business</b>	<b>Community Engagement and Personal Development</b>	<b>Organisational Capacity and Leadership</b>	<b>Diversity and Cohesion</b>	<b>Influence and Partnerships</b>	<b>Financial Sustainability/ Social Enterprise</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>The Eldonian Group</b> Social enterprise in education/housing						
<b>Goodwin Development Trust</b> Community development						Managing community assets/ asset transfer
<b>INclude</b> Neighbourhood management						
<b>Leicester North West Community Forum</b> Community development						Internet development
<b>National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations</b> Estate management						
<b>Neighbours4U</b> Community development						Involving faith groups
<b>Pembroke Street Estate Management Board</b> Estate management						
<b>Perry Common</b> Estate management/ community development						Youth engagement
<b>Poplar HARCA/New Mill Consultants</b> Estate management						Resident owned business/ employment
<b>Royds Community Association</b> Regeneration/ project development						
<b>Seedley and Langworthy Trust</b> Community development						
<b>Stubbin Neighbourhood Association</b> Community development						Youth engagement
<b>Walterton and Elgin Community Homes</b> Estate management						



Following the initial nine who submitted a joint proposal to the Home Office in 2004, a further five Guide Neighbourhoods were selected through an application process in which they outlined the type of learning they were offering (e.g. governance for community managed housing projects, organisational development, capacity building and involvement of residents) as well as the format of the learning such as visits and tours within the neighbourhood, training sessions and consultancy support.

The extent to which this diversity – and the short timescales for delivery, particularly for those joining the programme in 2006 – was both a strength and weakness of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme is explored in subsequent chapters.

### 3 The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme in policy context

“We need to ensure that local communities have the powers they need to respond to challenging economic, social and cultural trends, and to create cohesive, thriving, sustainable communities capable of both fulfilling their own potential and of overcoming their own difficulties, including community conflict, deprivation and disadvantage [...] Empowering local communities is central to achieving our wider objective of democratic renewal.”<sup>15</sup>

Neighbourhood working has a long history. The past 40 years have seen a range of area based initiatives – often supported by ring-fenced and time limited funding (e.g. Inner City Partnership, City Challenge, the Single Regeneration Budget and New Deal for Communities). More recently, policy across the main political parties has placed a stronger emphasis on developing devolved structures, linked to Local Area Agreements at a constituency or district level, as mechanisms for decentralising service delivery and decision making. These include neighbourhood forums, citizen juries and standing consultative committees.

Equally, there has been a fundamental shift from the concept of area based regeneration initiatives (such as City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget) to ‘mainstreaming’ responses to community needs and a more co-ordinated use of existing finances through pooled budgets and inter-agency planning (e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships).

Neighbourhoods have therefore come to be seen as important in plans to improve service delivery and in addressing democratic deficit, modernising government and building community cohesion in an increasingly diverse society. Working at neighbourhood level re-connects services with the communities they serve, builds public trust, and encourages active citizenship, accountability and good governance.

The commitment to turn round poor neighbourhoods and reduce dependency so that “*no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live*”<sup>16</sup> has formed the foundation for further developments including a number of flagship programmes. Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders, Neighbourhood Street Wardens and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund were introduced with this community focus.

The recent Local Government White Paper<sup>17</sup> confirmed the importance of working closely with citizens and communities. It also re-committed Government to continuing support for the empowerment of local people and communities and to building on Together We Can<sup>18</sup>, an initiative started by the Civil Renewal Unit, to enable people to engage with public bodies and influence the decisions that affect their communities. This noted that the neighbourhood remains a significant space for people to come together and take action around the issues that most concern them, especially in less prosperous areas, where

<sup>15</sup> Open letter from the Prime Minister to Ruth Kelly on her appointment as Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (9 May 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Social Exclusion Unit (2001) *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan*. Cabinet Office, London, p24.

<sup>17</sup> Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities: The Local Government White Paper*, (White Paper CM 6939) The Stationery Office, London.

<sup>18</sup> Civil Renewal Unit (2005) *Together We Can: People and government, working together to make life better*. Home Office, London.

people have fewer choices about where they live and the services they use. This continuing focus on the neighbourhood goes hand in hand with broader concerns around democratic and civil renewal<sup>19</sup> and Communities and Local Government has retained responsibility for three key elements of 'Together We can' namely: active citizenship, strengthened communities and partnership working.

Rapid policy shifts have been consistently underpinned by two key principles: the recognition of community development as a long term change process and the importance of the shared learning required to implement both new ways of working and sustainable regeneration. That commitment to capacity building at community level was enshrined in the policy document 'Firm Foundations'<sup>20</sup> and re-affirmed in more recent Communities and Local Government papers<sup>21</sup>. These recognise that:

“... community leaders do not get the support and encouragement they need [...] professionals are often not equipped to operate effectively in poor neighbourhoods and [...] civil servants lack a full understanding of the communities they are trying to influence.”<sup>22</sup>

Building on the 'Report of Policy Action Team 16', which identified key gaps in professional skills and knowledge, developing new ways of learning about 'what works' in neighbourhoods and regeneration was seen as essential.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, 'Firm Foundations' and the 'Active Learning for Active Citizenship' initiative<sup>24</sup> emphasise the importance of experiential learning, that is the process should “start from people's immediate needs and life experience” and offer a “menu of learning opportunities”<sup>25</sup> that go beyond formal/ accredited courses and include coaching, mentoring and consultancy support.

Implementing this vision is what the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme is all about. Government has recognised that in order for local residents to play a leading role in the regeneration of their own neighbourhoods, some financial support is needed to help them do this. The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme aimed to contribute to the development of good governance structures at the neighbourhood level, the passing on of specialist knowledge (for example, on community managed housing) and perhaps most significantly the building of community confidence through inspiring local residents. The Programme is building a learning network between neighbourhood-based 'community anchor organisations'.

<sup>19</sup> Civil Renewal Unit (2005) *Civic Pioneers: local people, local government working together to make life better*. Home Office, London.

<sup>20</sup> Civil Renewal Unit (2004) *Firm Foundations: the Government's framework for community capacity building*. Home Office, London.

<sup>21</sup> Communities and Local Government (2006) *The Community Development Challenge*. Communities and Local Government, London.

<sup>22</sup> Social Exclusion Unit/Policy Action Team 16 (2000) *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. Report of Policy Action Team 16: Learning Lessons*. SEU, London, p6.

<sup>23</sup> Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2002) *The Learning Curve: developing skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal*. ODPM, London.

<sup>24</sup> Mayo, M. & Rooke, A. (2006) *Active Learning for Active Citizenship: An evaluation report*. Communities and Local Government, London.

<sup>25</sup> Civil Renewal Unit (2004) *Firm Foundations: the Government's framework for community capacity building*. Home Office, London, p16.

However, Guide Neighbourhoods not only have expertise to pass on to other neighbourhood-based organisations, they also have lessons for ‘professional’ practitioners and policy makers. Indeed, there are a number of areas in which Guide Neighbourhoods can contribute to the Government’s aim of ‘Strong and Prosperous Communities’ and the implementation of the Local Government White Paper<sup>26</sup>. These include expertise relating to the management of assets, the distribution of small grants, community governance structures, the reclamation of run down housing and disused public land and involvement of the wider community (see Appendix 6 for a summary of the initiative’s policy relevance).

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has found itself operating within a fast moving policy context and in a changed government structural and administrative environment with the reconfiguration of the Home Office and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2006. Its focus has, however, remained allied with the key principles which have underpinned those policy shifts – namely, how can learning be translated into action and change in neighbourhoods.

<sup>26</sup> Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities: The Local Government White Paper*, (White Paper CM 6939.) The Stationery Office, London.

## 4 “Experts through experience?” Guide Neighbourhoods: approaches to learning

“Access to high quality and appropriate learning opportunities [is important] to equip people for active citizenship and engagement. These will range from formal courses, through mentoring to informal sharing of ideas and experience. All must be grounded in people’s own experiences, and be seen to have direct practical value.”<sup>27</sup>

“You can read umpteen articles and go to conferences but there’s nothing better than examples and role models.” (Client neighbourhood)

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has evolved into a complex and multi-level initiative which has responded to – and in some cases anticipated – changing policy contexts. Whilst retaining many of the principles of the original Residents’ Consultancy initiative, the Programme has been characterised by a greater degree of complexity – in the approaches taken to promoting learning, the range of techniques and in acknowledging who needs to be involved in the processes of learning for regeneration and active citizenship. One resident guide, reflecting on the views of others around Guide Neighbourhood development, commented:

“Something I have learned from the programme is that it’s not only, or even in some places mainly, about ‘resident to resident’. It’s more learning that is from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and learning to change neighbourhoods.”

As well as ‘horizontal’ learning (between neighbourhoods and community based organisations), there was substantial evidence of ‘vertical’ learning – between residents, professionals and policy makers. Indeed, some Guide Neighbourhoods actively encouraged the involvement of local professionals and agencies as well as residents in their activities as:

“it widened the opportunities we could offer groups for learning...so if they were interested in health, we would go to the healthy living centre or maybe we would visit the environmental (project) or people would want to talk to the partnership board and find out about joint-working.”

Castle Vale, reflecting a model adopted by others such as INclude, the Eldonian Group and Goodwin Development Trust, noted:

“Building the confidence of residents is important. But they need to be confident in talking to the professionals. So we bring them together so that the professionals learn from the residents as well. And we encourage visits from students and those studying [for professional degrees]. It’s not strictly Guide Neighbourhood work, but we feel it’s an opportunity to shape or influence their ideas about regeneration before they start to practise.”

<sup>27</sup> Civil Renewal Unit (2004) Firm Foundations: the Government’s framework for community capacity building. Home Office, London, p11.

For Perry Common, joint professional/resident visits were seen as an essential stage in moving to greater resident autonomy and independence:

“Sometimes, if you’re just starting out on regeneration and bringing communities together ... you are really at the beginning and do need like that comfort that a professional is with you. You soon learn to put them in their place, and spell it out to them, you know. But at the beginning it’s a comfort to have a professional with you.”

This idea, that learning needs to happen across and between different stakeholders in regeneration, rather than purely ‘resident to resident’ was the subject of intense debate between Guide Neighbourhoods. Equally contested were differing views on the core purpose of the Programme and the capacity of ‘new’ Guide Neighbourhoods to deliver against ‘resident to resident’ learning goals – with some participants feeling, as one Guide Neighbourhood commented, that this “had originally been about building grass root organisation and neighbourhood democracy but had been taken over by a narrower professional regeneration agenda”.

From these substantial differences, the common ground which emerged was the recognition of the importance of “lived experience giving credibility... and of confident, skilled and knowledgeable residents having a real voice and being listened to”. The diversity of Guide Neighbourhoods made it difficult for some external agencies to “see what was different [about the initiative]...how is what they do different to PEP [Priority Estates Projects] or TPAS [Tenant Participation Advisory Service] and other consultancies?” For others that lived experience – either as a resident or neighbourhood organisation – was what made Guide Neighbourhoods distinctive. Speaking of Goodwin Development Trust, one client neighbourhood commented:

“[They] are different from CVS [Council of Voluntary Service] type infrastructure function – they do it themselves and therefore have this knowledge rather than just provide a service. They are a community anchor organisation and there is the real benefit of talking to a practitioner based organisation, rather than infrastructure organisation. People can see it happen in action. Advice and consultancy [are] more grass roots based.”

The attitudes and beliefs which underpinned Guide Neighbourhoods approaches to learning also varied. For some:

“Resident consultants are experts through their experience. We’ve been there, done that and bought the t-shirt.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

for others:

“We are not experts. Certainly not experts on everything. We are learning neighbourhoods and we are still learning all the time.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

“We’ve been going 12 years now but just because we’ve been going that length of time doesn’t mean you know everything and certainly from my involvement, the meetings that I’ve had and the people that I’ve spoken to it’s certainly that there are many things out there that can be done and are being done that we may not have picked up on.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

Indeed, Goodwin Development Trust stressed the value of “learning from client [neighbourhoods]”, whilst South Acton Residents’ Action Group (a member of the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations) described itself as “a group that knows a lot but still has a lot to learn” and felt that this approach meant that “we are more partners than teachers of others”. Members of the group described how they had shared their expertise on tenant management with other West London groups but Acton Town Tenants’ and Residents’ Association “runs its own community centre. We don’t but we would like to – so we can learn from them.” As a result the model being developed across a number of estates in the area involved members of different tenant and community groups sitting on each others’ management committees to share and broaden their experience, ideas and expertise.

In addition to the different levels of learning and the philosophies which informed the various approaches adopted by Guide Neighbourhoods, it is important to reflect on why people became involved (both in guide and other neighbourhoods) and to seek out learning opportunities. For some, the motivation was a mix of **altruism** and personal satisfaction:

“I just want the best obviously for our estate you know and if it means putting a lot of work into it then ...” (Client neighbourhood)

“...you know it’s nice helping people when they come into surgeries here and we can help them you know you get, you get a lot out of it, you feel good about yourself for helping someone.” (Client neighbourhood)

For others **‘enlightened self interest’** was a key factor:

“When I told my mother where I was moving to, she said ‘better change your post code’. I couldn’t do that ... but I could help change my community.” (resident guide).

However, for a majority of those interviewed, the reasons they became involved were rooted in feelings of neglect, **being dismissed or patronised and justifiable anger**:

“We’ve been forgotten ... the repairs don’t get done and ... there are just no services here, nothing for the kids to do.” (client neighbourhood)

“The planners came into [names estate] with physical regeneration plans that involved demolition and rebuild on green-field sites and treated us like ... it’s your fault ... this is an awful place and only we can make it better. They ignored the fact that there were things we liked about our community, the parks, some of the housing which needed refurbishment and proper maintenance rather than demolition. It took a long time for them to take our ideas seriously and to recognise that we lived here and knew what we wanted.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

“I’ve worked in housing now for nearly 25 years and for most of that time [...] I’ve always been on the back foot as have tenants and I think it’s something that for so long tenants have been brow beaten into thinking they’re second class citizens at best, whereas there’s things like this. It actually gives people some belief in themselves and confidence in themselves that they’re not just lagging behind everybody else and they’re only there because they haven’t got the alternative but it’s, they’re as valuable as the next person or the next street.” (Client neighbourhood)

For some, the local authority had been, or remained “the enemy ... [who] only listen when you shout and then shout again louder”. (Client neighbourhood)

These comments help us to understand some of the outcomes achieved by Guide Neighbourhoods. As one local authority officer commented: “The trouble is, whatever we do, they (tenants’ and residents’ groups) are stuck into opposition mode.”

The experience of resident guides within Guide Neighbourhoods was invaluable in demonstrating the importance of resident participation and how conflicts between groups and agencies could be resolved or at least managed. However, in cases where there were evident tensions between communities and professionals, working with neighbourhood groups to overcome mutual antagonisms has taken time – as has moving residents and professionals on from “seeing the problems to sharing the solutions.” These issues are explored further in the following chapters, which examine the overall impact of the programme (see also Case Study 2: Birmingham Networking Events).

Whatever its diversity, the main purpose of the initiative was to share experiences, skills and knowledge with other communities. It is, however, important to recognise that the Guide Neighbourhoods network – because of the different histories, starting points and strengths of each neighbourhood – became a learning system in its own right. Individual resident guides repeatedly cited the “life changing” aspects of being involved at a wider national level:

“I’m much more confident now ... I’ve got new skills: research; working with groups; facilitating meetings; consultation; action planning; presentation skills and I can see the bigger [policy] picture.”

Resident guides who were volunteers had, however, to balance the skills gained, which often resulted in increasing demands to be more active in their own communities, delivering Guide Neighbourhoods work and personal (often care) commitments. Commenting on volunteer activists in one client neighbourhood, a local community development worker noted:

“ ... volunteering in the area that you actually live – it can create a completely different relationship between you and the people that you live with. As they see you gaining in confidence and in skill they approach you more and more for this information and that information and that kind of barriers becoming blurred stuff that happens as you become more active in the community ... sometimes its just shut your door and say leave me alone or say only talk to me when I’m available and that’s at certain times.”

Further, there were different approaches to supporting the learning of resident guides across the Programme. In Perry Common this involved both formal and informal methods, through an intensive and collective system of peer learning – for example using away days to review learning from the Programme and to refine visits. In others, resident guides had access to formal training and were encouraged to attend and contribute to the national networking events co-ordinated by Regenerate:

“Professionals meet like that all the time and forget that residents don’t get the chance. I’ve learned so much from meeting people ... and making friends who you know you can phone up when you hit a problem or need some ideas.” (Resident guide)



These opportunities for informal learning, through joint visits and a range of national and regional networking events, again emerge as a key mechanism for learning for the individuals and groups involved:

“I’ve got a lot from meeting people realising others have got the same problems ... I’ve got more confident, [it’s] brought me out of myself ... I’m a different person from two years ago.” (Resident guide)

In other cases, Guide Neighbourhoods adopted more formal ‘apprenticeship schemes’, employing either residents from other estates (Royds Community Association) or a tenant from a neighbouring area who had started on a New Deal work experience placement (Burrowes Street TMO).

At another level, the Programme also contributed to the development of the participant organisations. The majority of Guide Neighbourhoods reported that network membership and “the credibility that goes with having (central) Government funding” had enhanced their status and capacity to develop more positive relations with local authorities and other key statutory players locally.

This has particularly been the case in regions with a ‘cluster’ of Guide Neighbourhoods (Liverpool and the West Midlands) and the capacity to collaborate and share expertise within a local authority area had also enabled Guide Neighbourhoods to “build some momentum” in these relationships. In Birmingham, for example, Guide Neighbourhoods are beginning to play a key role in advising on neighbourhood management pilots and worked together to support Hodge Hill Community Based Housing Organisation on environmental improvements. In Liverpool, by working together, the Eldonian Group and INclude have had access to £200k for a 15 month joint Canal Rangers project. At a regional and sub-regional level, therefore Guide Neighbourhoods have been able to improve their effectiveness by working collaboratively, which have not always been evident in the Programme nationally.

This is where the diversity of the Programme, as well as being a source of potential tension, has been particularly beneficial. As one participant noted:

“Despite being a well-established community-led initiative, visits and successes of others have led to new approaches being adopted and the confidence to try new ideas.”

Burrowes Street in particular saw a value in joint guide/client neighbourhood visits to other Guide Neighbourhoods – to “get new ideas and show we are all learning. There are always new ideas and it’s useful to see them and think ‘would this work for us?’”. Again, this operated at a number of levels. Guide Neighbourhoods adopted a system of ‘cross-referral’ where they felt that partners in the Programme had more appropriate expertise. For example, Neighbours4U in Kent arranged for The Friends of Hillyfields (Gillingham) to visit Perry Common to view environmental projects as this was not an area of local knowledge.

In terms of different models of working at a community level, the value of being introduced to social enterprises (INclude and the Eldonian Group) and Development Trusts (Goodwin) was particularly challenging and “opened up new ways of thinking for us. Different ways of meeting needs without relying on grants;” (Guide Neighbourhood). At a very practical level groups in Walsall were having “problems getting alley-gating schemes in Walsall – but saw a successful scheme in Hull and learned from that”. Others cited developing new skills in “tendering; business planning; contracting out; (developing) new partnerships and seeking out new opportunities.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

Indeed, such ‘internal’ visits between Guide Neighbourhoods have acted as a key motivator “for us to keep going ...visits [were] a reminder of what our estates were like and the reasons for keeping them good” and an opportunity to reflect on and reinforce promising practice across the Programme:

“The problem solving workshop (at the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme network event) was incredibly useful actually. Just really nice to get a framework for analysing problems and you know it’s stuff that we do all the time ... but it’s good to be in something where you get a nicely presented framework and you are sharing ideas, problems ... and solutions. You can get so blinkered and isolated ... so whatever the content, the networking is a good opportunity and we don’t get that often.”

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has, therefore, played an important role in the personal and organisational development of participants groups. However, the primary purpose of the initiative has been to enable successful “resident-led regeneration ... [to be] linked to the generous sharing of know-how with other communities on the road to transformation”<sup>28</sup>

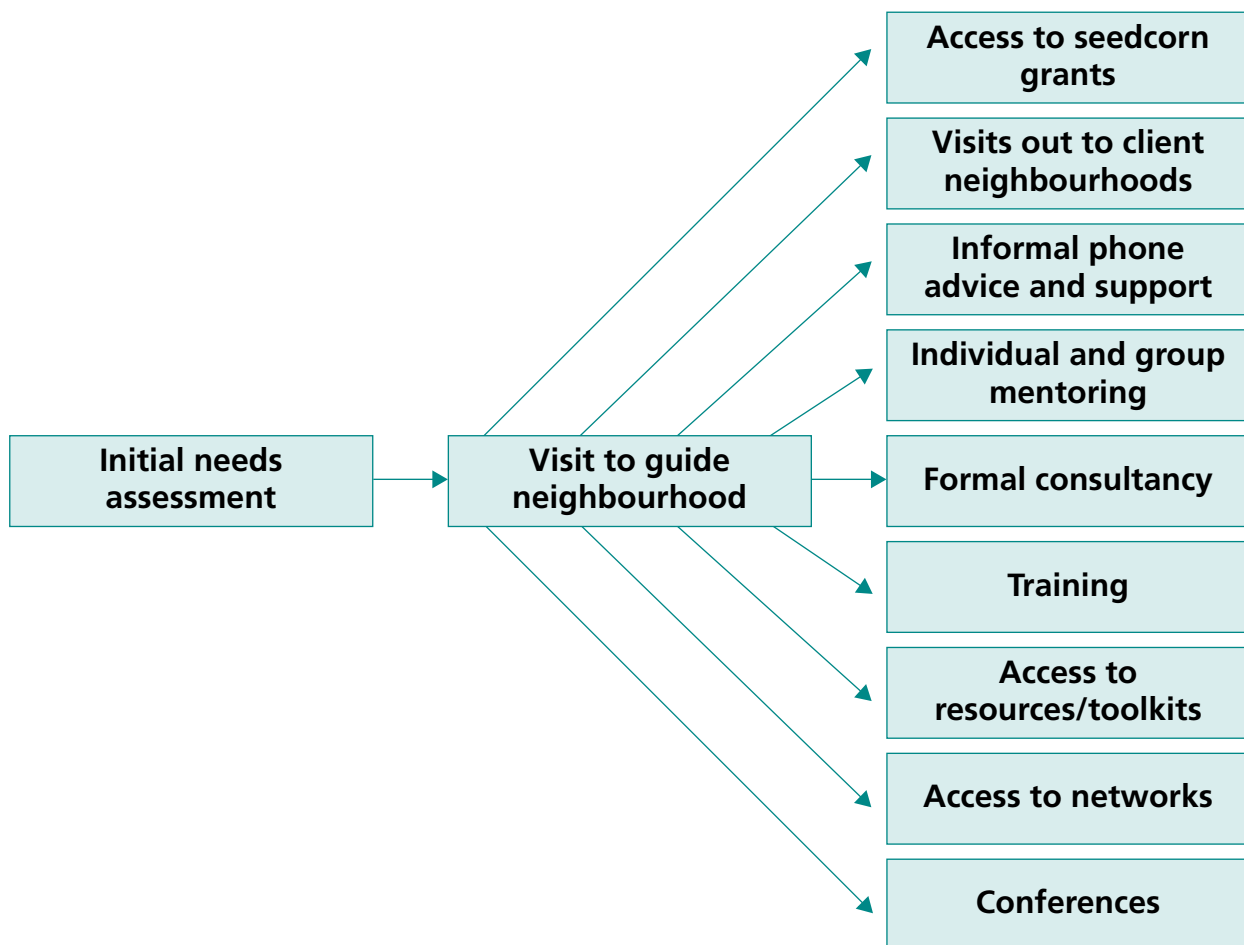
How, then, has the knowledge of Guide Neighbourhoods been transferred to other communities, other neighbourhood groups and professionals?

<sup>28</sup> Guide Neighbourhoods Programme National Conference (2007) Villa Park, Birmingham.

## 5 “From Neighbourhood to Neighbourhood”: strategies for delivering learning

As with the earlier ‘Seeing is Believing’ initiative<sup>29</sup>, the starting point for sharing experience and inspiration has been visits by representatives from community and neighbourhood based organisations to Guide Neighbourhoods. However, the resources available through the Home Office and subsequently Communities and Local Government enabled Guide Neighbourhoods to offer a broad menu of learning opportunities, summarised in the chart below.

### The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme learning menu



### Visits ‘in’ to Guide Neighbourhoods

Regenerate monitoring reports to the Home Office/Communities and Local Government indicate that:

- there were between 152 and 177 visits to Guide Neighbourhoods involving over 3,000 people between April 2005 and March 2006
- a further 258 community groups were involved in visits to the expanded network over 2006-7 with Guide Neighbourhoods offering additional visits out to 93 groups

<sup>29</sup> Taylor, M., Zahno, K., Thake, S., Nock, M. and Jarman, K. (2002) *Exploring the Field of Residents’ Consultancy* (Research Report 382). DfES, London.

Although Guide Neighbourhoods noted that “visits were slow to build,” the Programme has over-achieved on this set of output targets. Even then, the final monitoring figures may be an underestimate as the data reflected different interpretations of what constitutes a ‘visit’ and final Programme monitoring data was not completed by all Guide Neighbourhoods. Whilst some have included only visits into their neighbourhood from other resident led groups, other Guide Neighbourhoods have counted work with groups in their own/ immediate locality and visits by senior policy makers and/or Partnership Boards (where residents are a minority). Certainly some Guide Neighbourhoods have undertaken activities which, whilst they cannot strictly be counted against Home Office/Communities and Local Government contracted outputs, have brought substantial ‘added value’ to the Programme – for example, developing the Residents For Regeneration (Europe) Conference in September 2006 (Birmingham), offering trans-national learning opportunities (Neighbours4U in partnership with groups in Spain and Poland), hosting visits by residents’ groups from Europe (Castle Vale/Balsall Heath), presenting to students on regeneration degree programmes and overseas policy makers (Castle Vale), and other conference related activity (the Eldonian Group/INclude).

Visit activity has, however, gradually increased over the two years of the Programme – and this reflects the time required to build both regional and national profiles, translate initial enquiries into actual visits and difficulties in ‘marketing’ the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme concept. Indeed, feedback consistently indicates that the original concept of ‘Seeing is believing’ is sound and Guide Neighbourhoods have used visits as a powerful tool for achieving their original goal of inspiring others.

The evaluation team reviewed feedback forms from visits across the Programme (see ‘Sample feedback from visits to Guide Neighbourhoods’). These are uniformly positive, particularly in instances where care and attention has been taken in advance to match the content of visits/presentations to visiting community needs (see Case Study 1).

### Sample feedback from visits to Guide Neighbourhoods

“From our point of view [the visit] was a tremendous success, alongside an invaluable exercise. A key factor of the day was the opportunity for [our] residents to talk with [yours] about their experiences and initial concerns on embarking on a lengthy regeneration programme, and the benefits to the community on successfully coming out the other side. The opportunity to share pitfalls, alongside positive benefits is something that is best experienced by hearing and seeing first hand.”

“We were... just took around one of areas where residents actually took the community and cleaned up a pathway and put flowers in it and everything in the garden. Funnily enough as we went to see that lady was just coming out with her gloves on to clear the garden and that was showing that they took the responsibility and was saying it can be done and to take the responsibility of your own area and these residents done it and they came through a lot of issues for them to get motivated to do that.”

“Like a lot of residents, we were keen to hear from the horse’s mouth what the advantages and disadvantages of a Tenant Management Organisation [TMO] were and to see the results of residents being involved in the delivery of the housing service. We wanted to create a TMO that not only would deliver excellent services but would care for our community the way that [yours] does.”

“Everyone was very impressed [by the visit] and went away with food for thought. Personally I was glad to hear that new things are still being developed – the youth council sounds great.”

“Presentations were informative and gave the group a good understanding of a remarkable regeneration story ... The residents conveyed their pride and enthusiasm for the achievements and positive outcomes and it was especially important to see for ourselves the transformation of the living environment ...”

“There are some exciting developments for our group which I would like you to be aware of, not least because I have no doubt that we will be seeking your advice on some of these matters in the not too distant future ... These include acquiring premises for our estate to use as a community centre ... I appreciate that we are in the very early stages in what will be a long and protracted process ... and are acutely aware that we will need support along the way.”

“We were inspired by the visit because it demonstrates that residents can do it and if people want change in their area – its residents that know what will work.”

“We will be telling everyone of our visit and encouraging people to come on more visits because “seeing is believing!” When you can see it you know you can do it!”

One weakness in the Programme has been that routine visit feedback has not been consistently collated or summarised and the data held could have been a particularly useful marketing tool both for individual Guide Neighbourhoods and the Programme as a whole. Yet, as Guide Neighbourhoods themselves have noted, “it’s sometimes difficult to know what people take away from a one-off visit and whether, or how, they will use what they have seen.”

## Case Study 1

### Perry Common: tailoring visits to visitors

Before each visit, the Guide Neighbourhood Co-ordinator and guides meet together to discuss the focus of the visit, what issues are going to be covered, how they are going to be addressed and who is doing what. This team meeting is informed by information gathered from the client neighbourhood before the visit.

“When we set a date, then I get them [client neighbourhood] to fill in the questionnaire. They choose what themes they want and prioritise that. I also ask a set of additional questions, which are things like, ‘what size is your community?’, ‘what is the mix’, ‘what are the current issues in your community?’ They fill that in so then feed that back to the team.”

“Because, at the end of the day, it might be that it’s not suitable for them to come to see us, but we could say, ‘well, actually, you’d be more suited to see Castle Vale’.”

Once a visit is confirmed, the team allocates a guide who becomes responsible for that particular visit and is the point of contact for the client neighbourhood (All guides have been issued with mobile phones for this purpose). There is also a team de-briefing after each visit, where evaluation forms are gone through and any issues arising are discussed and acted upon, where necessary.

Making time to de-brief after each visit has allowed Perry Common to develop their visit structure, to focus further into the needs and requests of the visiting group. For example, Perry Common now delves further into the detail of what client neighbourhoods are expecting from their chosen theme/s.

“I just clarify before the visit exactly what they’re expecting. [...] I think it’s asking more questions than we did previously on the actual theme. What they expecting out of that theme, rather than it just being on open questions and answers.”

The team have also devised a ‘Visit Checklist’, which lists the tasks to be completed by the designated guide. By following this checklist, guides ensure that not only administrative tasks are completed but also each client neighbourhood receives the ‘personal touch’ of a welcome call, a pre-visit call and a follow-up call.

## Visits ‘out’ to client neighbourhoods

Visits ‘in’ to Guide Neighbourhoods became, ideally, a basis for building longer term relationships with other communities. Visits ‘out’ to client neighbourhoods (93 in 2006 – not recorded in 2005) have been a useful tool in both developing relationships and reinforcing the messages from presentations given within individual Guide Neighbourhoods. Several interviewees commented on the value of ‘cascading’ the learning from a visit to a Guide Neighbourhood across wider local networks. Speaking of a follow up presentation from Burrowes Street, CHIBAH (Co-operative Housing in Brighton and Hove) noted that:

“About six of us went and were really impressed ... but when we got back all enthusiastic ... people were like ‘yes, so what, really’. Then we got [them] down to a meeting. There were about 60 there, residents, [council] officers and it was only then when they saw and heard it for themselves that they believed us. It’s given people a new energy.”

This was a common theme from other neighbourhood groups who had used visits from Guide Neighbourhoods as a way of building their membership and creating enthusiasm and commitment and a means of “not just working on the issues but building a relationship and trust that means people really do start to believe they can change things.”

For Neighbours4U, visits out were a key mechanism for delivering Guide Neighbourhoods work in dispersed, mainly faith, communities across Kent, whilst the Eldonian Group used visits in and out as a means of building a longer term consultancy relationship with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and potential social enterprises in the area:

“We learnt from the people themselves; there was an empathy and a willingness on both sides. Eldonians were forthcoming and open; they came over to Redcar and spent the time. Their past experiences were an eye opener – what worked, what didn’t, conflicts of interest etc.”

In turn, the emerging London Resident Guide Network used exchange visits across the network and with client neighbourhoods as a means of promoting skills across and between groups – particularly around issues of community governance and housing management.

## Consultancy support

As with visits and exchanges, the provision of consultancy support and services by Guide Neighbourhoods was slower to build than anticipated.

Regenerate monitoring data indicated that over 2005-6, Guide Neighbourhoods were offering support to 120 groups. In 2006-7, a further 93 client neighbourhoods received advice, mentoring and consultancy. This total figure of 213 is lower than the anticipated target (321 groups). Again this may be an under-estimate as a number of Guide Neighbourhoods offered advice and support by phone and informal visits that were not considered to be consultancy services. In addition, interviewees suggested a range of challenges, linked to the slow build of initial visits, in developing consultancy services:

## Understandings of the consultancy role

This applied both to resident guides’ interpretations of their own role – as well as the understandings of the communities worked with. Being paid for providing consultancy services gave people credibility with professionals they felt they had sometimes lacked as a community activist. But there was a concern about “being paid changing (my) relationship with local residents –being seen as a consultant and not really ‘one of us’”

“I think some residents find it difficult to understand that they can use a consultant who is also a resident – it’s not what they are used to. It’s usually something they have to pay for, if they have ever had any opportunity to use consultants ... and for some there seems to be an ‘if it’s free, can it be any good’ attitude.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

## Time

Burrowes Street, along with others, noted that there was at least “a three to six month time lag” between an initial visit and any request for follow up support or consultancy, whilst Poplar HARCA/New Mill Consultants commented on the importance of “building the relationship before they [client neighbourhoods] might ask you to do some work with them.”

This also applied to pressures on and competing priorities for, those active in client neighbourhoods. Goodwin Development Trust worked closely with the committee at High Green Development Trust (HGDT). Trustees felt it would be difficult to take up the action plans suggested as this required a “steep learning curve that members would have to go through” whilst facing what were perceived as more pressing concerns:

“There is a lot going on for HGDT at the moment. Taking over the lease of the building from the council and developing a business plan for the redevelopment of the building. We may be ready for change a few more years down the line.”

Similarly, groups in Wisewood, talking of their involvement with Stubbin Neighbourhood Association in Sheffield noted: “We caught the enthusiasm – the vision of safer estates with a difference. We put it on hold while we get the stock transfer sorted out.”

## Key messages

The messages conveyed by Guide Neighbourhoods and resident consultants could be seen as ‘difficult’:

“It’s a slow process. I think we are honest about this. Changing (your neighbourhood) takes time. But some people just want quick fixes and don’t want to hear (that).”

“When we say we had ten years and £X million to regenerate this estate ... visitors sort of look at you and you can see them think ‘well, if we had that kind of money, we could improve our estate’. The thing is to convince them that it is not just about the money.”

“You say ... it’s taken us 15 years to turn things round and their [visitor] faces sort of drop....15 years! But maybe that’s what Guide Neighbourhoods are about ... it took us 15 years, but with our help, you can do it quicker.” (Resident guides)

The nature of neighbourhood groups worked with:

“A lot of the groups we are working with are really small. No more sometimes than one or two people just setting out. One of them gets ill ... or something happens [in the family] ... then you may have used a lot of time to support them, but you are back to square one ... Some groups are really weak and vulnerable ... it’s not like you are [working] with strong organisations, with money and assets in the bank. They can be starting from no-where ... so when one person leaves you have to start out all over. But you can’t just work with successful groups.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

In these cases, a number of Guide Neighbourhoods devoted substantial consultancy time to developing community based organisation – but, due to circumstances beyond their control, without long term positive results.



One NFTMO guide described work on a large estate in the north of England undergoing regeneration. At the start of their involvement there were two residents’ groups – neither particularly strong and both competing for possible regeneration resources:

“We spent 18 months working with them. We got the groups to come together and they were making real progress. Together they had a voice and were making a difference in how [regeneration] money was being spent locally. But then the Chair left and they had really held it together ... so the group split and are at logger-heads ... so 18 months [work] and we are right back where we started.”

## Different local political contexts

A number of Guide Neighbourhoods engaged in consultancy activity within their own local authority area “as we know the politics and the players.” For others, this was more problematic as some statutory agencies were reported as initially reluctant to refer potential neighbourhood groups. Some Guide Neighbourhoods felt that the marketing strategy developed by Regenerate lacked a national profile which could facilitate enquiries from other sources. ‘Out of area’ consultancy was also reported as problematic at times. The Eldonian Group worked intensively with Aylesbury New Deal for Communities on their exit strategy, however: the Aylesbury NDC resident board members did not see the direct applicability of the Eldonian Group’s approach, or the social enterprise options presented to the Board:

“The majority of activists are elderly and retired and don’t want to take on the responsibility/work of managing the estate or running social enterprises. They have a view that it is the Council’s job to do this – they just want them to do it better! ‘Why should we maintain the lifts?’” (Client neighbourhood)

Despite these difficulties, the consultancy element of the Programme has developed – and its impact is explored in detail in the following chapters. It has, however, evolved at a number of different levels.

Firstly, there has been the approach adopted by Royds Community Association – of offering ongoing community development support to neighbouring groups in Bradford – from undertaking initial needs analyses through to advising on how to implement action plans. Secondly, some Guide Neighbourhoods have focused on more specialised and technical consultancy. The National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations has worked closely with a range of groups to explore community managed housing options and issues of good governance in housing management. Poplar HARCA/New Mill Consultants have developed a relationship with Nene Housing Association and have been advising on their housing decant policy. The Eldonian Group and INclude have used their expertise to promote social enterprise models as a sustainable response to community need and Leicester North West Community Forum have developed the potential to advise other localities on community based information technology based networks. Thirdly, several Guide Neighbourhoods, including Castle Vale, described their role as “less being consultants [...] More being about brokering relationships between [community] groups and their local authority.”

## Ongoing mentoring and support

However, from the perspective of client neighbourhoods interviewed, access to ongoing advice, support and encouragement has been as, if not more, important than the capacity of Guide Neighbourhoods to deliver formalised consultancy – with the accompanying reports and recommendations for action. Interviewees described the Programme as “the human face of regeneration”:

“You phone some (agency) and ask for advice. You don’t get through or they never get back to you. It’s not like that with [names resident guide] ...always a call back, always some ideas ... or if they can’t help, always the name of someone who can.”

“I’ve got their personal numbers, if I’ve got a problem I can phone their home and they’ll be here and have a coffee with me, you know which I think is nice. It’s nice.”

This may not seem a particularly ‘ground-breaking’ approach – and has certainly not been seen as consultancy by those client neighbourhoods interviewed. The provision of ongoing email/telephone advice which has enabled some client neighbourhoods ‘fast track’ local action and, for others, been critical, in:

“Keeping us going and giving us a way to go. Without their advice, without them phoning up and saying ‘okay, how’s it going, things okay, that sounds good, have you thought of’ ... well, we’d have given up long ago.”

## Training

In addition to visits, formal and informal consultancy Guide Neighbourhoods established a Training Working Party and invested substantial time in planning an initiative wide training programme. This was originally ambitious in scope – both in terms of the range of topics to be covered and the geographical spread of potential events. As with consultancy, progress on this has been patchy. It has not been possible to develop an overarching training schedule that was Guide Neighbourhoods specific – or distinctive:

“I think, in the end, we were not sure how what we were doing was different. It would have been good – a way of marketing Guide Neighbourhoods and generating income, maybe for the future. But we weren’t sure ... was what we were planning different from other [regeneration training/consultancy agencies]. And then there was the confidence thing. People were really good as resident guides, or had a lot of experience in their work [...] but that does not always make for a good trainer. [It] would have taken a lot of time to get people from showing what they did in their community to getting them out there and training others ... and we did not have that time.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

Individual participants in the Programme did, however, develop more localised training or signpost neighbourhood groups to other training providers (e. g. Priority Estates Project’s Residents as Workers initiative). Goodwin Development Trust, for example, provided courses for local groups in Hull on management committee responsibilities. The National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations has also been able to extend potential member training on housing governance. Neighbours4U in Kent has offered a series of seminars on organisational capacity, community development and business planning.

Indeed, a number of both Guide Neighbourhoods and clients were sceptical about the value of formal training sessions, and asked questions of where this fitted with the overall aims of the Programme in terms of visits and on-going support:

“Training doesn’t work. It’s seeing what’s working and then working from that.”

“Hand-holding is what’s needed ... being there for people and sharing ideas ... not telling them things. Often people don’t need training ... it’s changing all the time so they need up-to-date advice.”

Even Neighbours4U, as the organisation offering the most local training noted “formal training didn’t seem to work that well, but [to] mingle and talk to each other did”. In Hull, rather than providing formal courses, a client neighbourhood commented that “[Goodwin Development Trust] attended most of our meetings; moved us from being a community action group to a company, and now [we are] almost there as a charity.”

Networking, one-to-one mentoring and conference activity, therefore, appeared to be more successful approaches to sharing Guide Neighbourhood learning – both across Programme participants and beyond. Yet again, such events happened at a number of levels. The value of internal networking sessions, organised by Regenerate, for individual resident guides and their organisations has been explored in previous sections. These resulted in a national conference in Birmingham in March 2007, co-ordinated by Goodwin Development Trust and attended by over 200 delegates from across England.

### **Guide Neighbourhoods National Conference March 2007**

#### **Participant ‘Vox Pops’**

What I have learned is ...

“Start on the simple things ... and then go on from there. Don’t just see the problems ... look at what’s good and build on that.”

“Ideas, lots of ideas [...] especially about how to involve young people.”

“Keep going. Others have [had] the problems we do in our community. But they kept going and the place is the better for it.”

“Ways of getting people [residents and professionals] into a ‘can do’ attitude.”

“New ideas ... we know about community wardens ... but the idea of youth wardens, that was new and I think we will try this.”

“Networking ... it’s important. I’ve spoken to loads of people and don’t often get the chance to do that ... so I’ve got some [phone] numbers [...] people who said they could help and I’ll use those. We don’t feel on our own any more”

At a regional level, Guide Neighbourhoods also used the opportunities offered through Home Office/Communities and Local Government funds to promote the Programme and work towards developing sustainable local support networks. This involved innovative approaches to thinking about the structure, content and purpose of such events (see Case Study 2) so that, rather than involving formal presentations, they focused on the sharing of ideas and mutual encouragement.

## Case Study 2

### Birmingham networking events: strategies for sharing learning

“When you meet other people, it changes your life”

Over 2006-7, the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations, with support from West Midlands’ Guide Neighbourhoods, ran three ‘mini-conferences’. The first of these was essentially a showcase (attended by over 70 delegates from 17 community groups) to raise the profile of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme. Forty participants in later events were supported to develop and present their own case studies and “share ideas, problems, come up with solutions and think about how they could continue to support each other.”

Participants commented:

“These [events] have helped us move a long way. We realise that we are not alone. Whatever your community there are some common problems ... and if we work on these together we are stronger ... It’s not just shouting ‘everyone is against us’ [...] we have come to see there might be partners we can work with and come up with those solutions. But ‘we are not alone’ is the message that will keep us going.”

“We did not know what we achieved ... till everyone [at the event] celebrated our success. We stood up proud ... maybe for the first time.”

Two key themes to emerge from events:

“It’s not just about telling the authorities what they should do for us, but helping them see what we can do for them”

“We all need more mature relationships with officers ... it’s been a safe place to be open about things ... but we have to move on...”

In supporting resident learning, the quality of the event venue is important. Each of the three Birmingham network conferences was held in a local hotel. This contrasted with participants’ usual experiences of “being in some grotty community centre [...] We felt valued and like we had something worthwhile to say...”

The idea of ‘cascading’ learning between neighbourhoods was also seen as a critical factor:

“It’s not like they [Guide Neighbourhoods] knew everything. They weren’t teachers ... we were all learning together. So we shared ... and gained confidence ... not like we know it and you don’t. Been to too many [events] like that before”<sup>30</sup>

There are plans to sustain this network in the future as “when you meet other people, it changes your life. You are not alone ... and together we are stronger, that’s what you realise.”

Birmingham Network events focused on resident to resident learning. Individual Guide Neighbourhoods have also been involved in both promoting the Programme with policy makers and professionals at national regeneration conferences and highlighting their particular approach to regeneration. Neighbours4U has run a series of events, including the trans-national ‘GROW Programme’ on resident enabling networks and workshops on

<sup>30</sup> The London Guide Neighbourhoods network has adopted a similar approach to sharing learning, with ‘client’ neighbourhoods invited to network meetings.

the role of faith based organisations in community development. Goodwin Development Trust has co-ordinated a national conference exploring the role of values in community sector delivery of public services whilst the Eldonian Group have facilitated discussion at the Social Enterprise Coalition national conference, the RENEW Masterclass on succession strategies and have contributed to the Liverpool Social Enterprise Academy ‘Fit to Bid’ programme.

Working jointly with INclude, the Eldonian Group also organised a seminar entitled ‘Getting a piece of the action – Social Enterprise and Local Services’ held in May 2006 drawing together learning from national innovations in the field and exploring how community based organisations could take advantage of new procurement and social enterprise opportunities.

Conference related activity has played a role in raising the profile of the Programme – and has been particularly useful as a tool for building grass roots networks involved in community managed housing (Birmingham). However, activity has been fragmented and the work of individual Guide Neighbourhoods at a local and regional level has not consistently contributed to raising awareness of the Programme as a whole at a national policy and practice level. This issue is addressed in the final section of the report.

## Grants

In addition to offering visits and ongoing consultancy, Guide Neighbourhoods have been able to offer seedcorn grants to community based organisations to stimulate activity and implement innovative project ideas.

The impact of this small grants programme is examined in Chapter 6. However, establishing and delivering seedcorn grants systems has involved critical learning for both Guide Neighbourhoods and grant recipients. Again, different Guide Neighbourhoods adopted a range of approaches to grant distribution from targeting monies to groups they were building a consultancy relationship with, through to openly advertising their availability through Councils of Voluntary Service and other local network publications.

For all these variations in approach, common learning themes emerged. For client neighbourhoods this involved recognising the value of on-going support in the grant giving process. For Guide Neighbourhoods themselves the scheme raised their awareness of the requirements of funders and the importance of transparency in management decision making.

## Key themes

Guide Neighbourhoods offered a wide range of learning opportunities – opportunities which ranged from informal advice through to consultancy and the distribution of small grants. For all this diversity, three key themes emerge in supporting learning at a neighbourhood level. Firstly:

“It’s important to start with the familiar – what people know – their own neighbourhood – and build on what people know.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

Secondly, building trust takes time – but is invaluable when this can be linked to ongoing support rather than one off events or visits – and that, as trust is built, honesty is a key factor:

“What I like ...is they tell it like it is. There is no spin. It’s warts and all. This worked, but also this didn’t. We achieved this ... but it took time and was difficult. Regeneration has become about ‘quick wins’... so inspiring people when you are also saying ‘it’s a hard struggle and can take a long time’ that’s difficult and is really much more honest.” (Client neighbourhood)

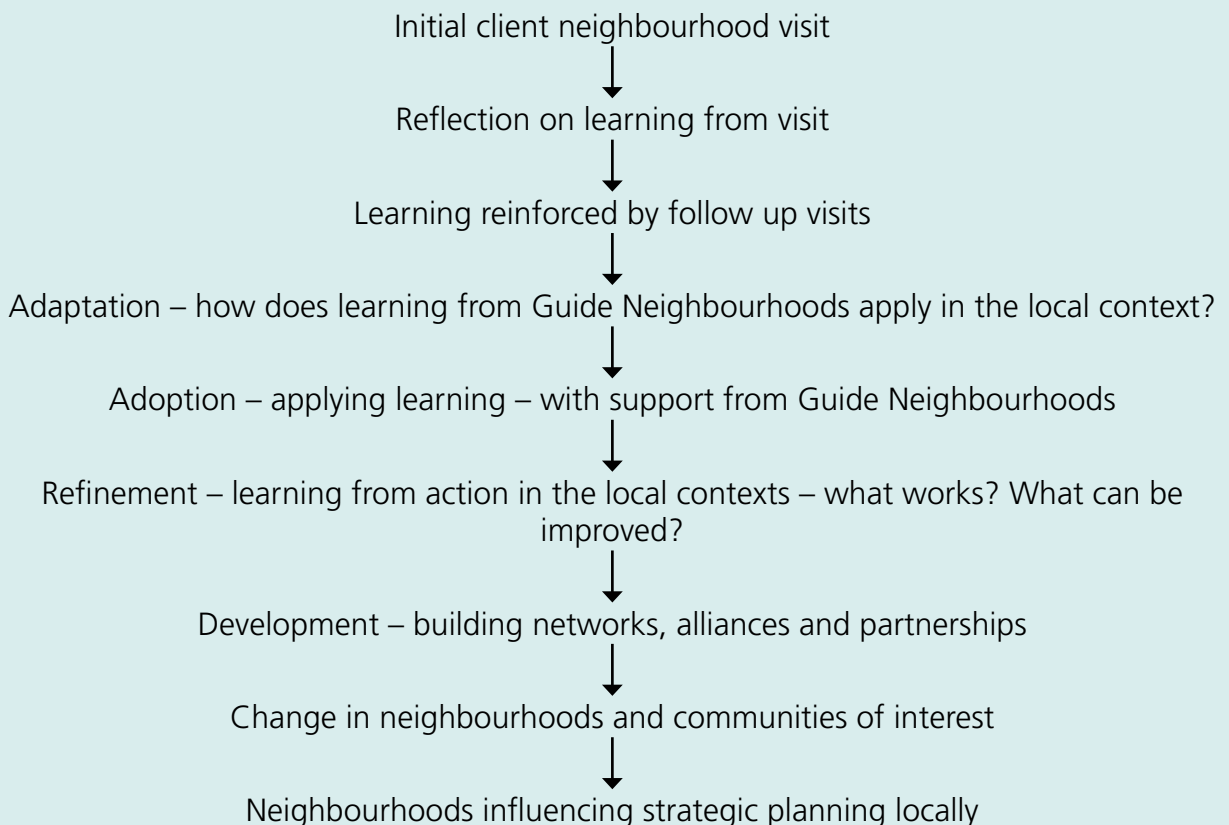
And finally...collecting stories and celebrating success is crucial in both building belief in communities that things can change – and sustaining that momentum. Perry Common held a ‘Celebrating the Success of our Friends’ event in April 2007 which not only enabled those receiving seedcorn grants to share the experiences and successes but it also provided a forum which a forum where groups could celebrate hard work, success and feel re-energised. Or, as one neighbourhood organisation commented at a Birmingham Network event:

“We had felt alone for a long time ... it was only when all those people got up and applauded that we suddenly realised we were not alone and what we had achieved.”

### Guide Neighbourhoods as adult and community learning

“Guide Neighbourhoods [Programme] has shown that some community groups are very fragile and difficult to “penetrate” ... Traditional approaches do not always work. Guide Neighbourhoods provided an organic approach which groups are comfortable with.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

There is substantial literature on informal learning and its importance in opening up opportunities for access to more formal learning and routes to qualifications<sup>31</sup>. Less is known, particularly at a neighbourhood level, about the transfer of learning into action for change. This has been at the core of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme – both in terms of the initiative as an action research project and in its outcomes. The steps in this neighbourhood learning process are illustrated below:



<sup>31</sup> Coffield, F. (2000) The Necessity of Informal Learning. The Policy Press, Bristol

A particular contribution of the Programme to developing learning for neighbourhood change has been the use of narrative approaches to building community understanding, cohesion and “make communities visible and valued”. INclude in Liverpool supported ‘Stories of Steps’ from the Herculaneum Steps to develop a shared history of the neighbourhood. In London, South Acton Residents’ Action Group used a similar approach to inform regeneration planning – by ensuring “that [the community] story was written by us, and heard by others ... and our experiences and what we know and like about [Acton] could not just be dismissed.”

How, then, have the skills and knowledge of Guide Neighbourhoods informed change and transferred into action, at a wider community level?

## 6 From learning to action? The outcomes of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme

“What they achieved is absolutely out of this world because when I walked round the estate ... I noticed that there was no rubbish. I noticed that there was no dogs running around, no graffiti and I noticed that it felt quiet and peaceful and people tend to their gardens ... and then there was the [traffic] calming measures on the roads and things like that but it – all came together in a nutshell.” (client neighbourhood)

In assessing the outcomes of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme, and the extent to which the learning involved translated into action in neighbourhoods, it is important to re-inforce the three key policy areas the initiative relates to directly:

- **Active citizens:** people with the motivation, skills and confidence to speak up for their communities and say what improvements are needed
- **Strengthened communities:** community groups with the capability and resources to bring people together to work out shared solutions
- **Partnership with public bodies:** public bodies willing and able to work as partners with local people<sup>32</sup>

The evaluation framework, developed with Guide Neighbourhoods, (see Appendix 1) sets out the parameters for assessing the Programme’s impact. These include community empowerment, resident engagement, organisational capacity, community cohesion, increasing influence in partnerships and sustainability. Each corresponds to the core elements of the civil renewal agenda. In addition, the framework aimed to address quality of life indicators in the client neighbourhoods, such as the impact on the local environment, housing improvement, neighbourhood management, community safety and social enterprise. Again, these relate directly to Governmental policy themes outlined in Chapter 3.

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has been primarily reviewed in terms of its impact on the client neighbourhoods worked with. However, it should also be acknowledged that, by participating in the initiative, substantial change and development has taken place within Guide Neighbourhoods themselves...

In theory, the Programme impacts on neighbourhoods as a whole. In reality much of the influence is on organisations in neighbourhoods and more specifically on those who play a catalytic leadership role in the neighbourhood or within communities of interest. Yet the clients the Guide Neighbourhoods have worked with over the past two years are often quite fragile organisations (or more properly community groups) consisting of a handful of individuals, and sometimes lone ‘active citizens’ seeking to establish more of a profile. Therefore distinguishing between change for individuals and for client neighbourhoods is not always possible.

<sup>32</sup> Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities: the Local Government White Paper*, (White Paper CM 6939). The Stationery Office, London.



This chapter begins by looking at the impact of the Programme on the development of the Guide Neighbourhood organisations themselves, and particularly on the transition from community activist to paid regeneration professional. It then goes on to explore the changes the initiative has supported in client neighbourhoods and looks at what they have done to promote active citizenship, encourage resident involvement and self-esteem, and to strengthen communities by building the capacity of neighbourhood organisations and enhance their engagement with partnerships. The chapter ends with a focus on the impacts on quality of life in the neighbourhoods.

## Supporting the transition from community activists to regeneration professionals

An important aspiration of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme was to enable volunteer resident guides to make the transition to paid employment. This proved problematic for a number of reasons. Such a move would have required some key activists to resign from the management board of their organisation; for others (See Appendix 7 Case Study) there was the difficulty of balancing employment with care commitments, personal health problems or the perceived risks of taking short term, insecure, work.

Individual Guide Neighbourhoods adopted a range of strategies to address issues of recruiting and supporting resident guides. Royds Community Association employed two community consultants who worked intensively in the Goitside neighbourhood in Bradford (see Case Study 3). Poplar HARCA set up an arms length social enterprise (New Mill Consultants) employing tenants whilst Burrowes Street took on a New Deal placement. Seedley and Langworthy Trust paid local resident guides on a sessional basis per visit whilst others have either commissioned (Perry Common) or directly employed (Balsall Heath) community development workers.

The development of individuals has happened at all levels across Guide Neighbourhoods and both volunteers and paid workers felt that the Programme had developed their capacity, skills and knowledge:

“It’s given me confidence and clarity and because everybody sort of regards me as the leader here, I’ve been able to bring that confidence and clarity to other people”.  
(Resident guide)

This combination of learning from those with more experience, and those with different experiences was seen as a crucial strength of the initiative, which residents involved in networking events described as “a really good learning curve.” The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme also helped to overcome feelings of isolation in some, smaller, organisations and enabled them to relate their local work to a wider understanding both of resident engagement and its role in civil renewal and regeneration:

“Before [the] Guide Neighbourhoods [Programme] we were much more insular, it was more about our streets and our neighbourhood and you know what was happening round the corner. We didn’t have ... maybe that knowledge but we didn’t have that focus. It was almost something like ‘oh Government are doing that and they’re looking at these ways of dealing with the antisocial behaviour and it may or may not have an impact on us’. But what we’ve realised as a programme, it absolutely had a huge impact on us. As residents and as a local community we’ve got to be plugged into those things”.  
(Resident guide)

### Case Study 3

#### Royds' community consultants

Royds Community Association recruited two community consultants, who were residents on neighbouring estates, to work intensively in the Goitside area of Bradford. The consultants have been well supported and supervised; and have undertaken training in community development, presentation skills and media relations. They have also received some mentoring support to contribute to Royds' private consultancy wing and develop consultancy skills. Training the community consultants as researchers was seen as pragmatic in terms of their future employment and they have both gained ongoing employment – one as a housing development officer with a Neighbourhood Partnership and the other with Royds Community Association delivering outreach employment advice.

As part of their role, the community consultants have been involved in discussion and negotiation with senior officers from the local authority and City Centre URC. They also made a presentation to the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme conference that was well received. They have had training in market research and are currently doing some consultancy work in Blackburn. They are now known and plugged into Royds' existing network, have made contacts and are respected in the Bradford area. Together they have drawn down funds from Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) to develop an independent market research business.

The community consultants identified the benefits they derived from the Programme as including learning in the following areas:

- Consultation and face to face work
- Confidence building – talking to people and building relationships
- Interviewing techniques and data analysis
- Communicating at all different levels – residents, businesses and officers
- Administration of grants, including setting up the awarding panel
- Connecting with funding, other groups and partnership working.

## Organisational impacts within the Guide Neighbourhoods themselves

At an individual level, a common theme throughout the evaluation has been the extent to which the Programme has enabled personal development and the capacity of activists to apply their learning in practice. Beyond this, Guide Neighbourhoods have themselves changed as a result of the initiative. Organisations have reported an increased professionalism, ability to engage beyond both their own communities and at a more strategic level.

“I also think with the Guide Neighbourhoods [Programme] there's a sort of discipline in it and there's nothing like being accountable to someone, because we've always said 'we don't get paid for it, so if we don't like it we'll pick up our ball and go home.' But when there's a lot of money, it does focus the mind.” (Resident guide)

Clearly, being part of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has facilitated changes in practice. Balsall Heath Forum, for example, have abandoned the idea that they could impose their model of development and moved to a more flexible and negotiated approach in their work with community organisations:

“When we first started on this road it was more of a how does our model fit with them maybe, and what we realised actually is no it’s not the model that fits it’s aspects of the model that are workable. I suppose in a sense it’s been that kind of learning curve and the fact that when we’re organised in our structure and the groups we’ve worked with have had no formal organised structure.”

Royds Community Association has increased the scope of its work as well as the range of involvement models used: “We’ve our first business transaction – we’re changing how we see helping others and valuing what we do”. It has updated its marketing material, reflected on what it can currently offer and is developing its own sense of a track record and impact within, and beyond, the immediate community. Similarly, Goodwin Development Trust found that “the Guide Neighbourhood Programme made us think in a focused way about how to share information, what information is useful, and to consider our outward face – e.g. our website shows GDT as an inward focused organisation.”

In addition, the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme ‘kitemark’, with Government support, has been seen as helpful in building credibility in relationships with power-holders, such as local authorities:

“We were getting money from Central Government, so they [Local Strategic Partnership] started to take us seriously. We were treated like partners maybe for the first time – rather than being accepted at the table reluctantly.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

This has had a knock-on effect on the wider organisational working of Guide Neighbourhoods and their capacity, individually, to plan for longer term sustainability:

“It’s not just a coincidence, since all that’s happened in the Guide Neighbourhood [Programme], we’ve never got a business plan ... we’ve got a lot of things that we didn’t have before ... It’s easier now to look and think ‘So hang on, so what are the required outputs?’ How can we fit the criteria, how can we then reapply? You know we spend less time arguing with people I think.” (Client neighbourhood)

This applies, however, to more than just funding. The organisations involved have been able to reflect on achievements:

“Yes, we have improved the estate. The housing is better, the environment is better, people now want to live here and repairs are done more quickly. What is difficult is continuing to meet the expectations residents now have of us [as a housing management board].” (Guide Neighbourhood)

and how to engage “the next generation” in community governance:

“Experience takes time ... but the question is ‘who will come after us?’ Who will manage the estate, who will make sure people have their say?” (Guide Neighbourhood)

## Reaching 'hidden communities'

A major achievement of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has been to spread knowledge and skills into 'forgotten estates' where there has been little history of community activism or regeneration investment. Key themes which emerged from client community interviews were:

"We thought we were alone, forgotten"

"We were doing things and getting no-where. It was like we were lost in some big system. What [the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme] has done for us is give us a position we never had. We felt like the lost estate, but now we can go to the council and say we are part of something national [and that] they [the Programme] are helping us and that seems to mean something to the officials. They listen to us now".

Reaching these estates has been a real success for the Programme. Indeed, it reinforces the value of resident to resident learning and the importance of empathy based on experience. Guide Neighbourhoods often described their own origins as 'forgotten areas' and highlighted both the long term struggle to bring about and maintain change:

"They made it real for us. They helped us realise how far we had come on our own, who we needed to work with. But there will be setbacks. We know. But we now know what these might be and how we can keep going through them, through the hard times." (Client neighbourhood)

This has, however, also been a difficulty for the Programme. Working with community groups who have no history, or no track record with statutory bodies, takes time. It has therefore only been towards the very end of the Programme that positive outcomes are beginning to emerge for those small, fragile, groups Guide Neighbourhoods have been working with over the past two years.

## Promoting active citizens: resident engagement and self-esteem

Much of the impact on client neighbourhoods has, therefore, been in encouraging and inspiring community groups to become active or their leaders to have the confidence to persist with their ideas, by seeing examples of achievement. The personal touch of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme's approach can be motivating "someone believing in you and seeing you face-to-face not just as a form".

"The training spurred me on more, confirmed our views and gut reactions, and made us see there was a light at the end of the tunnel in dealing with [names authority] the City Council". This has led to the idea of "working with the City Council not against them". (Client neighbourhood)

Journeying out of the neighbourhood together as a group can develop a strong sense of solidarity among community activists or citizens active in their neighbourhoods. "Trips bond the group together like a family, we care about each other, [this] wouldn't have happened without Guide Neighbourhoods" (Client neighbourhood)

Further, it has enabled community groups to place, often small scale actions, within a broader policy context. The values of seeing exemplars of regeneration, meeting others with the same concerns and attending network meetings cannot be underestimated in terms of building personal and group confidence to tackle difficult issues and “recognising what we are doing here (environmental improvements) is part of a much bigger picture. Didn’t think about this till we all met, but it does all add up.”

“We’re all tribal, but now we are starting to build a wider sense of community. We are not alone, we all have the same problems and are not the only ones who suffer, it is just the emphasis which is different ... It made me less impatient, made me less territorial or tribal. I am looking outside my own box”. (Client neighbourhood)

“I think I may have floundered by now without Neighbours4U’s help. It has broadened my vision, I came here as an administrative person and we are now making a difference to the church buildings and the community. My outlook is now broader due to the visits, [Guide Neighbourhoods Programme residentials] about what we can do with our buildings for example because I have seen what little space other Guide Neighbourhoods work in [Pembroke Street]. I have lots of ideas”. (Client neighbourhood)

This is reflected in the strategies used to support the establishment of new community groups, Balsall Heath Forum has been working with residents in Tyseley (Birmingham) to see whether people are interested in forming a tenants’ group. At this stage this is about the participants gaining the confidence to attend meetings and represent their area rather than creating a formal, autonomous, community organisation. Group meetings started in December 2006 and encouraged children’s participation as a means of building parental engagement with 100 children entering the competition to name the group (The Residents Team of Tyseley) and design logos, “if the kids are involved then the parents will realise there’s something happening and they’ll get involved” (Client neighbourhood)

In Kent, similar stories of the importance of building the confidence of individuals as a basis for establishing formal community organisations emerged:

“I started up this organisation myself. Since starting the group and [working with] Neighbours4U it has made me more confident and able to talk to others about the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme. I didn’t know about the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme before Groundwork told me. I have grown in confidence with Neighbours4U. I’ve been asked to be vice chair of the Medway Greenspace group. [Neighbours4U] asked me to advise about other organisations they could team up with. Now the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme is known all over Medway. It has been stupendous and also a two way process”. (Client neighbourhood)

## Keeping going – encouraging

Guide Neighbourhoods have been instrumental in supporting the initial development of neighbourhood organisations. Yet more than this, they have played a key role in re-invigorating those groups which felt they “were on the verge of giving up ... had lost direction and members.”

The work of community groups trying to improve their area can feel like a long grind. Celebrations are an effective way of re-energising community groups used by Guide Neighbourhoods. Perry Common held a 'Celebrating the Success of our Friends' event in April 2007 which not only shared the experiences and successes of those who had been allocated seedcorn funding but also provided a forum in which client neighbourhoods could reinforce each others successes and learning. The focus was on client neighbourhoods, but they in turn commented on and valued Guide Neighbourhoods in terms of personal, named contacts and their accessibility:

"I think the relationships we've built up with residents and Perry Common are invaluable because we know they're there and they're there for us and they've been through this process and they don't mind you ringing them asking for advice whenever."

The theme of a more personal and accessible relationship with Guide Neighbourhoods as advisors, supporter and funders ran through the comments of many of the clients. For example, the personalised nature of support provided by Castle Vale had been instrumental in establishing a momentum to the work of the Lyndhurst Forum.

"He's ... fantastic with us he really is, he's always there for us. He's always encouraging us and he's always advising us. He never tries to take over don't get me wrong but he's always there to advise us and help us, because they've been through it all, Castle Vale have been through it all."

For struggling groups, access to flexible advice and support was "what made a difference in us keeping on".

## **Strengthening communities: developing organisational capacity in client neighbourhoods**

Just as many small businesses fail in the start-up phase, so do many community groups. "If you look back ... like when Pembroke Street first was set up 20 years ago as a group, you know purely voluntary group ... at that time within Plymouth and within this area there were dozens and dozens and dozens. And we're really the only one that's [survived]."

The nature of the clients supported by Guide Neighbourhoods is that they are small and fragile groups that generally have quite a low organisational capacity. This was also a starting point for a number of Guide Neighbourhoods – a factor which helped build trust and empathy.

"An awful lot of people who are involved in residents' groups, interest groups, they tend to come and go and people fall out with one another. A lot of them tend to be predominantly made up of older people, and that inevitably brings like health problems ... people move, get jobs. Yeah. Or they fall out. It seems to be a common thing that happens, people either realise that they can do things they didn't think they could do, and then they go off and get jobs ... [or] they're elderly and the strain of doing something that goes beyond just talking, they realise it's too much for them, and they pull out for that reason. We (Guide Neighbourhoods) have all been there." (Guide Neighbourhood)

This means that the work of Guide Neighbourhoods in supporting clients was a slow and delicate process and one where success is by no means guaranteed.

“There is a value in working individually with client neighbourhoods and we’ve had some really good results, but I think as well possibly the resident to resident approach actually kind of gets things working. Certainly the grants have helped that, ‘because obviously it’s a concrete thing that people have been able to purchase or get’”. (Guide Neighbourhood)

Guide Neighbourhoods have therefore worked beyond developing the skills and confidence of key individuals in neighbourhoods to building wider organisational capacity. Where the Programme has had a particular impact has been in supporting emerging organisations to have a physical presence and profile on their own estates. Lyndhurst Neighbourhood Forum and Roman Way have, or are working towards, establishing a ‘shop front’ presence and Seedley and Langworthy Trust have been assisting Duckinfield Community Forum in developing a one-stop facility (see Case Study 4).

## Case Study 4

### Duckinfield one stop shop

Duckinfield Community Forum wanted to establish a drop in ‘one stop shop’ on the estate and had been offered the use of premises by New Start Housing Association. They needed advice and funding in order to take up the offer and get their project off the ground. As a Guide Neighbourhood, Seedley and Langworthy Trust (SALT) have provided visits, ongoing support and advice and seedcorn funding for the group. The Forum is now on the verge of receiving the keys to the shop and developing activities there for the whole estate.

By visiting SALT, the committee members began to learn about the ups and downs of getting a project off the ground:

“They talked about the problems they had had – ideas that worked and hadn’t worked. We learned how they had begun and how they had communicated their ideas.

We also learnt that the ideas you set off with – your dream – isn’t always what you end up with but others come up along the way. We’re now thinking about setting up a baby equipment exchange and a book exchange.”

The ongoing support and advice from SALT have enabled the Forum to keep going and to develop their project:

“Every time we think ‘we can’t do this’ they come up with something. We wouldn’t have come this far without them – funding, expertise and knowledge. SALT have put us in touch with the right people – we’re going to meet someone who will help us with the legal side and explain about trustee liability etc. They’ve talked us through the pros and cons re becoming a charity.

They’ve helped us with funding – they helped us work out what we need to get started; they helped us with the forms and to work out how much we needed to pay up front – equipment, insurance etc. and how to prioritise this.

They help us in practical ways as well – we can’t afford to get builders in but we need to screen off some space for offices and debt counselling and they can get hold of some for us. They told us where we could get special deals on equipment.”

The relationship with SALT has also given the Forum a sense of what is possible:

“It’s been good to see what works – what’s been done in their area. It’s been turned around. Every town has problem areas and decent people [...] Somebody’s got to do something. If we can bring the children up to have respect and to participate they may feel they have a stake in the area. We can hope.”

Guide Neighbourhoods have also played a role in shifting organisational cultures and practices and increasing the professionalism of client organisations. Lyndhurst Neighbourhood Forum, for example, have taken on board ideas from Perry Common and Castle Vale and applied these in organising their own forum:

“the whole attitude, the way we hold our meetings, I mean the ideas on how to look after the estate, lots and lots and lots of ... We had a fun day here. We had one last June which was again an idea from Guide Neighbourhoods.”

Balsall Heath Forum have been working with Mirpuri Community Development Trust on quality procedures, building on their committee, and supporting them in moving to new premises. This, as with other Guide Neighbourhoods, has involved developing the competencies of often small organisations in building alliances and partnerships both with other voluntary and community groups as well as key statutory players.

## Partnership and influence

A number of Guide Neighbourhoods have therefore acted as positive role models for encouraging client neighbourhoods to engage in partnerships.

“I also think the real meaning of partnership working is clearer now as well, because I think the Guide Neighbourhoods [Programme], it is an example of a partnership, and it helps you to understand what a partnership should be like”. (Client neighbourhood)

In a number of instances (for example with Pembroke Street, INclude and the Eldonian Group) this has involved negotiating introductions between community groups and key statutory agencies – or brokering new, more positive, relationships where these have been historically difficult. The picture is, however, uneven. Such brokerage takes time. It is less easy to provide clear evidence of clients building sustainable partnership working – particularly amongst smaller ‘hidden communities’. Further, positive partnership working is closely related to local organisational cultures and histories and there was a continuing concern (expressed by National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations resident guides) that articulate residents’ groups still “get labelled as trouble” by local authorities and this makes reaching solutions to neighbourhood management problems harder.

Nevertheless, there are clear indications that for some of the client groups Guide Neighbourhoods support has enabled them to feel, and be seen as, more professional. They are being taken more seriously and are better able to build relationships with the statutory sector – rather than remaining in the mode of ‘oppositional politics’:

“We used to shout about the Council ... the Council this, the Council that ... What we have learned is it’s much more complex than that. It’s not just the Council. You want to get street lights fixed, you have to go and find who has the contract ... and then who that contract has been subbed [sub-contracted] to ... and then how you get things done in a big long chain like that. It’s frustrating and it’s frustrating for tenants ... who you have to explain to again and again ... it’s not just the Council ... it’s not that easy to get things done sometimes.” (client neighbourhood)

At a more formal level, in Goitside, the Royds Community Consultants have been working from the bottom up to engage the community and help the neighbourhood partnership to become constituted. They are now looking to involve the neighbourhood partnership manager from Bradford Vision and a community development worker from a local church (see Case Study 5).



## Case Study 5

### Goitside Partnership

Goitside is on the very edge of Bradford City Centre and as such has a large number of businesses in the area. It has a residential population of around 1,300, of which 53% is Pakistani and 35% is white British. Although a relatively stable community in the past, the area is now characterised by newer residents moving in – mainly economic migrants and asylum seekers. This is a red-light area and there are issues around drug use.

The Goitside Partnership was very business sector dominated and Royds Community Association was approached to help build relationships so that residents would also gain from local development and investment.

### Community consultancy

In Goitside, the community consultants have been involved in:

- Mapping the area to identify residential areas
- Investigating the demographic profile to identify employment and deprivation levels
- Networking and making links with the residents' group (Chain Street)
- Signposting Chain Street towards funding opportunities and access to a small grants fund used to carry out English and literacy classes
- Supporting the Chain Street re-launch event
- Networking/liasing with agencies e.g. University Estates Dept, Police, PCT
- Raising awareness of Goitside Partnership, carrying out a survey of businesses in the area and encouraging more involvement
- Making contact with sex workers via local organisations and encouraging links to the Goitside Partnership
- Connecting the residents' group into local training programmes
- Developing the business plan for the partnership
- Supporting an application for seedcorn funding to establish the Goitside Development Trust

### Impact

There is clear evidence that the programme has enabled support for a group who were previously excluded from decisions being made in the area where they live. A small grant of £5,000 enabled the group to purchase computer equipment and set up classes that bring other residents into their offices, and for the first time residents have been involved in discussions with senior officers from both the local authority and the City Centre Urban Regeneration Company.

### Case Study 5 (continued)

An important aspect of this work then has been the strengthening of Chain Street Residents' Association in order to engage with the Goitside Partnership. The group identifies the following benefits:

- greater access to information
- increased influence and access to decision makers

"Without Royds we probably would have packed up; the [community consultants] have brought others to the table. [The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme] has provided someone to do things and enabled the Partnership to move from talk to action. People would have drifted away if nothing was starting to happen."

- ongoing support and encouragement

"Learning I am not alone – I can ask and get an answer. If I have a problem I can ring them and talk and they'll come down; they'll listen to me and help me" (Chair, Chain Street Residents' Association)

- access to small grants to increase training facilities in the office base to attract more residents
- area profile and statistical information that can be used in funding applications
- more balanced and representative membership of Partnership "so that our voices will be heard above the clamour"
- support with forward planning – Business Plan and Away-day – "Royds provides a vehicle to advise us and take us there"
- small grants money to pay away-day facilitator, incorporation fees etc.

Royds Community Association helped Goitside Partnership to become constituted to strengthen and develop the Partnership. They presented the Partnership with a business plan and supported them through the process of becoming incorporated as a legal entity. They are now established as a Development Trust and are included, to some degree, in the regeneration plans for the area. Concerns have been expressed over the ending of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme, as they had not been aware that the support from the community consultants was coming to an end and did not feel prepared for this.

Developing partnership working through Guide Neighbourhoods has extended beyond purely local/neighbourhood based approaches. Goodwin Development Trust has been instrumental in raising the awareness of key statutory players of the potential of community ownership of assets to transform communities (see Appendix 8: Learning Sets). Equally the Eldonian Group have played an important role in the development of an authority wide social enterprise strategy in Redcar and Cleveland, whilst INclude have invested in supporting community groups and statutory partners to establish consortia to bid for investment in Liverpool which would not have been open to any single agency.

## Policy and quality of life impacts

Building individual and organisational capacity has been a key achievement, of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme. Further, those groups worked with have begun to engage in more strategic partnership arrangements beyond their immediate neighbourhoods which, in the case of black communities in Liverpool, has facilitated inward investment. Yet, in a sense, these are ‘soft’ outcomes – rather than the ‘hard impacts’ of neighbourhood change and the language of Neighbourhood Renewal Floor Targets.

Given the limited time available to the Programme, it would be unreasonable to expect ‘headline news’ in terms of impact – and this is indeed one of the important messages from the Programme – that “quick wins can end up as long term losses if they are not part of a process.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

Yet it is possible to identify key policy areas where the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has made a difference both in terms of the speed of policy implementation and the enhanced quality of life in a number of client neighbourhoods.

## Neighbourhood management and housing

Neighbourhood management is a key theme in governmental policy initiatives, including Neighbourhood Renewal Pathfinder Programmes, the promotion of Tenant Management Organisations, stock transfer, and the introduction of Neighbourhood Wardens and Neighbourhood Policing.

These are all areas in which Guide Neighbourhoods, particularly those responsible for housing and community asset management have a long track record and there is evidence that this experience has enabled client neighbourhoods to ‘fast track’ local developments. The outcomes achieved by Guide Neighbourhoods in the field of neighbourhood management are mainly in facilitating the more effective transfer of housing stock and better terms for the tenants involved. Support from experienced Tenant Management Organisations and community managed housing initiatives (such as Burrowes Street, Poplar HARCA/New Mill Consultants, the Eldonian Group and Perry Common) has focused on preparing tenants for applying, speeding up the process of transferring stock to community control and developing good governance systems as well as providing support through the decanting and refurbishment process.

One fledgling group in the South West which has been putting together an application for community managed housing options felt that “we have been able to do the job of developing a TMO professionally not like amateurs”.

Client neighbourhoods working on housing management issues re-emphasised the role of Guide Neighbourhoods in enabling them to ‘fast track’ action, revealing that their experience of support from Guide Neighbourhoods had speeded up the Tenant Management Organisation application process. In Roman Way (Birmingham) the results were even more dramatic. They moved from exploring TMO status to winning the vote on feasibility and possible option appraisal within six months and felt they could not have done this without support from Burrowes Street and the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations. In London, Havelock Independent Residents’ Organisation and Acton Town Tenants’ and Residents’ Groups also acknowledge the support of South Acton Residents’ Action Group (SARAG) in that:

“The fact that it took them [SARAG] six years has helped as we have done it in 2 (achieved TMO options vote) because of learning from what they did wrong as well as their successes. They warned us of pitfalls. Without that [support] it would probably have taken us at least six years as well, maybe more.”

Castle Vale has taken a broader focus and is looking at wider neighbourhood governance and strategy – working in Neighbourhood Management pilots in the Hodge Hill, Washwood Heath, Bordesley Green and Shard End areas of Birmingham. Due to their success in the area, they were asked to work on neighbourhood management. “The Councillors ... actually called a meeting with us just to sit down and look at what we could do within that area”.

Guides have continued to make a unique contribution to good governance once community managed housing and neighbourhood management structures have been established. Their resident background and experience, for example, allowed criticisms of poor management of TMOs’ lettings policies to be heard:

“Professionals had told us [residents] what we were doing wrong ... but no-one believed them. It needed another [resident] group to tell us ... this is how it is; this is what you can do. This is what you can’t.” (Client neighbourhood)

Indeed, it is to their credit that a number of Guide Neighbourhoods have not avoided addressing particularly difficult issues in housing refurbishment and regeneration. Both New Mill Consultants, the social enterprise set up by Poplar HARCA to deliver the Guide Neighbourhoods work, and Pembroke Street have worked with a variety of clients to prepare them for the process of decanting when their housing is scheduled for demolition and rebuilding or major refurbishment. Whilst it is difficult to quantify the outcomes of this intensive work in policy terms, feedback from interviewees indicates that the decant process became more manageable, humane “and involved less conflict than we thought.”

## Diversity and community cohesion

Developing a positive approach to diversity and building community cohesion remains an important plank of Government neighbourhood policy both within the Local Government White Paper<sup>33</sup>, particular funding streams (e.g. Connecting Communities) and in the emerging new regeneration governance structures such as Local Area Agreements. Two areas of diversity are of particular significance for community cohesion in many regeneration areas – race/ethnicity and age/life course, with the problems of social exclusion often focusing on young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds<sup>34</sup>.

Guide Neighbourhoods have worked on a range of community cohesion issues. They have attempted to address the exclusion of young people, older generations and disability groups as well as cultural diversity. Further, they have tried to do so in a coherent manner. A common criticism of community cohesion strategies has been that (particularly with young people) they create a series of artificial situations to ‘bring communities together’ – bussing pupils between schools being one example. The learning from Guide Neighbourhoods highlights the need for diverse communities to challenge and learn from each other, have time to build trusting relationships and then address issues of common community concern.

<sup>33</sup> Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities: the Local Government White Paper*, (White Paper CM 6939). The Stationery Office, London.

<sup>34</sup> Cattle, T. (2005) *Community Cohesion: a new framework for race and diversity*. Palgrave, Basingstoke.

Although different Guide Neighbourhoods have variable experience and capacity to lead in this area. This was evident from a capacity building workshop at one of the Guide Neighbourhood Programme network events where ideas of diversity and multi-culturalism were debated vigorously.

Indeed, one of the ironies of successful Guide Neighbourhoods is that many have established stable communities (e.g. Burrowes Street and the Eldonian Group) in which minority communities may be under-represented. Nevertheless building cohesion has been a focus for several of the Guide Neighbourhoods' work.

In Bradford, Royds Community Association has supported the Filipino Community Association. This group provides a forum for the Filipino community, assists people to act on their issues and concerns and coordinates with other agencies to improve access to services and to promote and develop the Filipino culture and identity. The group aims to promote unity, cooperation and cohesion among members of the community so that they can be active members of society. The group was awarded a grant to cover costs for some annual events as well as rental of premises. Royds Community Association has played an active role in developing the group and integrating its activities into communities in the Bradford area, as they are getting little support from elsewhere. Equally, Stubbin Neighbourhood Association in Sheffield have been active in tackling racism both within the locality and in the communities they work with – and Burrowes Street (see Chapter 6) have consciously used seedcorn grants to sustain fragile, but emerging, black and minority ethnic organisations in Walsall.

Many of the groups in Bradford funded with seedcorn money by Royds Community Association are involved in building links between different cultural communities – supporting an inter-faith women's group; Asian Poetry Recording group; African Caribbean Achievement Project; Pak-Kashmir United Forum; Bradford Community Environment programme (working with the Bangladeshi women's project); African refugee access to health services. Some of this work may be picked up through the Diversity Exchange – a programme coming out of Bradford Vision (Local Strategic Partnership) which has grant funds attached.

However, the concept of community cohesion has tended to focus on issues of race and cultural identity. As a result, wider issues of social cohesion – e.g. disability and age have tended to be over-looked – despite these being key policy themes 'in their own right' (Russell Commission<sup>35</sup>, "Every Child Matters"<sup>36</sup>). This is reflected in one of the client neighbourhoods raising the point that young people are "not the enemy".

Engaging young people has become a key activity of both Guide Neighbourhoods themselves and informed their work with clients. Working with young people was one of the positive effects on the Lyndhurst estate of their involvement with Guide Neighbourhoods Programme.

<sup>35</sup> Russell, I. (2005) *The Russell Commission Report: the national framework for youth action and engagement*. Cabinet Office/HMSO, Norwich.

<sup>36</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Every Child Matters*. DfES, London.

“The whole outlook of us as a forum. We’ve been able to take on what we’ve learnt and put it on the estate. The whole thing has changed. Come on this estate a couple of years ago, if you parked your car, there’d be no wheels on it. I mean it ... you can check. Look, we’re closer to the kids; we’re closer to the elderly. We’ve got more things going on in the estate. We’ve got toddlers groups, we’re now fighting hopefully to have a bit of ground given to us so we can have a park for children to play, all great. Seriously we have come a long way thanks to [the] Guide Neighbourhoods [Programme] and ... and a lot of forums in the future will tell you that.”

In Plymouth a client visiting Pembroke Street also took away lessons on inter-generational community cohesion:

“After seeing what has been achieved with young people [in Pembroke Street], the older generation [in our group] has improved its attitude towards young people. Pembroke Street have been very supportive and suggested positive steps, which has led to getting new people involved and feeling positive, [3-4 new committee members who are 16-21] plus single mums are now stopping us in the street to find out what we are doing.”

A delegate to the national Guide Neighbourhoods Programme Conference in Birmingham (2007) came:

“... to get the young people more involved in the community work because when adults take over we decide for the young people. Let them decide; if it’s possible for their decisions to come through then we back them up

The Greenhouse Project in Liverpool brought four organisations together to draw up a Community Business Plan, including the plan for a new building. Young people have been very engaged in this development, with 200 taking pictures of what they liked in the area to inform a creative workshop to develop plans for the redevelopment of Tiber Street. Young people were also encouraged to volunteer to be part of a group to take ideas forward. In Birmingham, Perry Common supported the development of an inter-generational community choir in Quinton. Again, this may seem like a small step, but as one older and previously isolated resident commented:

“It’s amazed me really, because I thought about what the word ‘**community**’ is ... really ‘**people**’ [...] and it’s amazed me that all these people who’ve never met before. Some people know a few, but I didn’t know any of them ... and within six months, we’ve got this wonderful sound.”

Balsall Heath Forum has learnt from the break-up of the original client neighbourhood residents’ group in Acocks Green that it is important to develop relationships within a community and social interaction across groups as well as concentrating on particular issues. This is borne out in their support for a cross-cultural women’s group in the same neighbourhood:

“I think the women we have got involved are really good women ... they’re English and they’re Asian. Because in Acocks Green the Asian community has started to move in and there is some little bits of resentment and there are people, like the ladies involved, who see it as ‘well actually our neighbourhood is changing but what are we doing to accommodate change?’ So you’ve got a nice sort of cohesion ... before now at the [school] gates they’d say ‘hello’ and go, if that was at all what they did, whereas now actually they’re meeting.”

Community diversity is often a feature of neighbourhoods facing social and economic difficulties with high population turnover – the urban ‘transition zone’ identified by the Chicago School urban scholars<sup>37</sup>. The London Guide Neighbourhoods expressed the feeling that, given the transitory and changing nature of migrant communities in the East End, policy asked them to “build sustainable communities in a transit camp” and that bringing extremely diverse communities together required additional resources and reflection on the methods adopted to achieve cohesion in neighbourhoods in a state of flux – as well as re-considering the overall goals of community cohesion policy,

Yet, despite these difficulties, real achievements are evident. In an area of rapid demographical changes, the Kurdish community is moving into areas of Hull and changing the make-up of the local school. Goodwin Development Trust gave Hami Kurd a small grant to hold a multicultural event for 270 people, with an important impact on the local community:

“I don’t know if we built trust. But people were talking together and at least we helped in understandings. It’s not everything but it’s a start.” (Resident guide)

Forms of disability can also often lead to high levels of hidden social exclusion. Neighbours4U have been providing mentoring and a small grant to what was originally a ‘one man band’ who has used it to provide expressive arts activity sessions for severely disabled people, bringing them and their carers out to benefit from social contact as well as self-expression. Results have often been dramatic, with professionals reassessing medication needs and the skills of the disabled people involved. To expand this impact on the quality of life of these service users the funded client is now setting up a social enterprise employing others to help him, with business advice and support from Neighbours4U.

## Environmental improvements

A number of the Guide Neighbourhoods have used the advice and support given, as well as their seedcorn small grants, to help their clients to change their local physical environment in ways that raise the community’s self esteem. Visible environmental change has often been seen as a ‘quick fix’ in regeneration initiatives. However, Guide Neighbourhoods have used this approach not as a ‘one off’ but as part of a process of linking environmental improvements to other policy areas, such as estate management and community safety (see Case Studies 6, 7 and 8).

<sup>37</sup> Burgess, E.W. (1967) ‘The growth of the city: an introduction to a research project’, in R.E. Park, E.W. Burgess and R.D. McKenzie (Eds) *The City*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. (Original work published in 1925)

## Case Study 6

### From flower planting to active community

Roman Way is an isolated estate in south Birmingham comprising a mix of high-rise blocks and 1960's low rise flats and housing. Members of the Tenants' and Residents' Group initially described feeling "on our own and really struggling to get people interested and get things happening ... although there were big [regeneration] projects happening all around us".

Roman Way has over the past year worked with three Guide Neighbourhoods – Burrowes Street, NFTMO (Bloomsbury) and Perry Common. Involvement with the Burrowes Street and the NFTMO was seen as critical in building resident involvement in the moves towards TMO status. Work with Perry Common however, "has made a real difference about how people feel about the estate". The Chairperson of the Tenants' and Residents' Association explains:

"Flowers might seem a small thing. But at the end of last year, we planted bulbs with the children and we have done litter picks with them. We got them those yellow safety jackets so they felt really important and official when they talked to [local authority] officers and other officials ... like a real big boost). So we planted flowers, got rid of litter. Small thing as I said. But there was a message. It said to older people, children are not the problem ... they feel safer and are coming out more. They talk more and are getting more involved – although it's slow. The message just from having flowers, litter bins, cleaning up is that we all care for where we live – kids even pick up the litter now – we can do something and it can last! People outside the estate also comment – so we are not 'a dump' – "we can really see it's better". Even the local authority is taking us more seriously. That's the message from flowers!"

From a fragile community group "without a way to go", Roman Way has developed to the degree where it has plans for a community resource centre on the estate and is moving towards potential TMO status.

The Guide Neighbourhoods have been particularly effective where relatively little money is needed but the local authority is unable or unwilling to become involved. In the case of the Seedley and Langworthy Trust, a grant of £350 combined with organisational support and action planning enabled one local group to establish sustainable environmental improvements:

"One of the client neighbourhoods has waited seven years for the space in front of their housing, the communal space, to be weeded and for the council to come and resurface that area. ... You know seven years is a long time if you're looking out on rubbish every single day... So that particular group came down and looked at the alleyways and some of the community gardens. They asked the council whether there was funding to do that and there wasn't ... We supported them doing a community plant-up, ... we have a pop up gazebo and everybody was invited to come down, and it was a really like rough day, it was raining, but I mean there was a lot of people that got some good photographs. And people like planted up hanging baskets, and then we had probation services, we arranged for them to come down and put the brackets up. And basically it was a nice planting up session and it just enabled us to sort of talk to some of the other neighbours. Because we'd had three ... I think three residents that were really active about you know wanting to sort of change that space, but we'd not had up till then an opportunity to talk to the other you know dozen or so people".



## Community safety

It is difficult to demonstrate that Guide Neighbourhoods have enabled client groups to reduce headline crime figures within their communities. Again, however, there is evidence which indicates that progress has been made against community safety objectives.

Kingstanding Neighbourhood Forum has set up a Community Watch scheme after an initial presentation by Perry Common at a Forum meeting:

“So they came along and, and everybody seemed really keen on everything that they’d got to say that evening and then the Community Watch [...] that’s up and running now and I believe it’s more successful than the Perry Common one!”

Kingstanding Neighbourhood Forum used Perry Common as a model for their Community Watch, including producing leaflets using the same format, and Perry Common found funding for mobile phones and ‘junior warden’ jackets. Other client neighbourhoods have expressed an interest in developing the Perry Common approach as a means of engaging young people. This has been a theme adopted by Roman Way, who involved local young people in both bulb planting and community clean up schemes as a way of “building bridges ... and saying young people are not all bad ...I’m not sure if crime has gone down, but more people are coming out [of their houses] and talking to each other. So it’s a start”. West Midlands police are now using the estate as an exemplar of what can be achieved through neighbourhood policing and community involvement.

Lyndhurst Neighbourhood Forum found noticeable changes in the levels of residents’ feelings of community safety as a result of starting up football teams in Lyndhurst estate.

“You’ve got to get them off the corners instead of standing there ... if you had come up here maybe a month ago the place would be saturated with beer cans, you know get the kids off the street. I’m not suggesting for a moment we can make it perfect ... but we can give them something to believe in and let them be proud of their neighbourhood, your neighbourhood. Your football team represents it.”

Lyndhurst Neighbourhood Forum have also learnt from Perry Common about using a community watch approach and have now put this into practice, working alongside community safety officers. A group of three local residents patrol the estate at night.

“We just go around, walk around check, particularly the elderly people ... just knock at the door and check they’re ok. They don’t answer the door we knock at it, just knock back and we know they’re ok. We do that. It’s enjoyable.”

By working closely with the police, Burrowes Street has developed new ways of joint working which have a wider relevance to community safety and addressing serious crime:

“We have recently had drug trading over there [names estate] whereby the information was coming in and obviously people wanted to remain anonymous for possible fear of reprisals I assume, which is understandable. At the end of the day we got the job done [arrests were made]. It took a little bit longer because we had to incorporate other tactics as opposed to taking direct evidence from residents for those fears, but we worked together with the management team, we did our own surveillance and other forms of police tactics and touch wood we’ve certainly got very good changes out of it. It’s a different way of doing things but, depending on what happens in court, we got a result.

Without the experience [of working with the TMO] we would have gone about things in the usual way – and maybe not got evidence. It's slower, yes – but we got things done ... and I think they [Burrowes Street] can help us think about neighbourhood policing and do it well ... because it's new and quite frightening for some officers."

Indeed, a common theme from across client neighbourhoods, and the approaches taken by Lyndhurst, Kingstanding and Roman Way, is that focusing purely on crime may actually increase community fears and that building relationships and improving the local environment are vital starting points for enhanced community safety.

"So there were lots of groups. But they were small and not really active and certainly not listened to. So we are now running a Neighbourhood Watch and work on Local Agenda 21 (environmental partnership). It's one group – not been easy – but there are more people active. It's no longer just negative crime things. We are looking at our local environment. How this can be better and safer. It's one group, but more active members and they (Police/Elected Members) have to sit up and take notice."

However, success also brings criticism and reinforces the importance of neighbourhood groups and their partners maintaining good communications across communities:

"People round here used to complain they never saw a police officer. Now we have them on the beat and you see them regularly... so now people say they are living in a police state!" (Guide Neighbourhood)

## Conclusions

It is important to remember that the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme started out as an action research project. There were few initial expectations that those involved could support real change in client neighbourhoods or that individual guides would be able to demonstrate how they were contributing to the achievement of Neighbourhood Renewal Floor Targets. Yet distance has been travelled – even by fragile community organisations in the early stages of identifying and addressing local needs. Much of this has been achieved through informal support and advice – the building of long-term personal relationships – rather than the delivery of more remote, one-off, problem focused consultancy services.

The outcomes achieved by Guide Neighbourhoods have resulted from the combination of resources they have been able to offer their clients – demonstration visits, training, ongoing day-to-day advice, sometimes in-depth consultancy and participation in network events. A particularly important tool in effecting change has been the seedcorn grants, which Guide Neighbourhoods have been able to offer in a unique way, supported by advice and the other resources available through the Programme. The impact of the seedcorn grants is addressed in detail in chapter 7.

## 7 Tools for change: The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme seedcorn grants

In addition to offering visits, ongoing advice and consultancy, Guide Neighbourhoods were able to offer seedcorn grants to community based organisations. These aimed to stimulate neighbourhood activities and innovative project ideas. Some 84 grants were distributed – although as some monitoring returns are incomplete due to the late payment of final seedcorn monies – this may be an under-estimate. The amount of the grants ranged from a minimum of £500 to a maximum of £10,000 per organisation. The grants were promoted and administered locally by a designated grant officer from the Guide Neighbourhood. Decisions on seedcorn applications were made by a funding panel of at least three members of individual Guide Neighbourhood's management groups who were also charged with monitor spending and grant outcomes.

The seedcorn programme has been a successful element of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme with a total allocation of £729,821 over two years (£380,000 in 2005/6 and £349,821 in 2006/7). By the end of the current Programme, not all of the allocated money had been spent and some Guide Neighbourhoods found it was appropriate for their clients. For example, Poplar HARCA/New Mill Consultants has not spent its allocation as the London tenant organisations they worked with could access similar developmental funding through their landlords.

Different Guide Neighbourhoods adopted a range of approaches to grant distribution – from targeting monies to groups they were building a consultancy relationship with, through to openly advertising their availability via Councils of Voluntary Service and other local network publications.

For all these variations in approach, common learning themes emerged. For client neighbourhoods this involved recognising the value of on-going support in the grant giving process:

“They were not like your usual funder. You apply, get the money and tell them what you did with it. They gave us advice throughout, helped us re-do our [bid] so it was stronger. Advised us throughout the project and helped us think about what it had done and how we might get other funding to develop the idea ... before you might get some advice, but no-one could follow it through, so what they have done for us is very constructive.”

One small neighbourhood group commented that the seedcorn grant had been “difficult to spend ... you say that something will cost £150 and you get it for £120 and so on ... but they kept advising us ... so if you have this much left, maybe you could also do this ...?”

This chapter examines the impact of this small grants programme.

## Allocation

As noted, a variety of different strategies were used to allocate seedcorn money in different Guide Neighbourhoods. For example the Eldonian Group focused their efforts through three large 'investment' grants (£10,000 each) to promote the maximum impact on the capacity of some organisations to develop social enterprises. Others, such as Neighbours4U were prepared to give the minimum grants more widely in order to reach the smallest organisations and active citizens. Seedley and Langworthy Trust developed a two tier system with a fast track for grants below £1,000 and a more detailed process from the bigger grants of £1,000 to £10,000. Others (such as Burrowes Street) adopted an outcome based system – holding back 10% of total allocations until recipients had reported on spend and outcomes.

## Process

Responses from clients across a range of Guide Neighbourhoods showed that the seedcorn allocations procedures were seen to be transparent and easy for clients to follow. Recipients particularly appreciated the additional advice and support available from Guide Neighbourhoods after funding had been allocated. An important aspect of the seedcorn process was supporting the clients to produce action plans extending beyond spending the immediate grant. It was not only the money itself, but also the planning associated with the awards that had an impact on the organisational capacity of the clients, especially in small and fragile organisations. Successfully applying for seedcorn monies gave a discipline to clients – having to do an action plan, working to a timetable and being accountable.

## Policy impacts

Small grants have had a range of impacts – from providing access to ICT to increasing the profile and general professionalism of some organisations through to more concrete policy outcomes. Where they have been a particularly useful mechanism is in enabling environmental improvements.

## Environmental improvements

The following case study examples take environmental improvements as their starting point – but demonstrate how seedcorn grants can have positive outcomes in a variety of policy domains – in terms of safety, resident engagement and community cohesion through youth inclusion.

## Case Study 7

### Conker Island

The Kingstanding Neighbourhood Forum (KNF) were hoping to develop the area known by local children as 'Conker Island' – "We identified the island as our main trouble hot spot from the neighbourhood tasking meeting"

Perry Common allocated a £10k seedcorn funds to KNF. The grant was mainly to cover environmental improvements to 'Conker Island' – bulb planting involving local schools; renovation of the centre of the island, taking up an old 'Coat of Arms' and removing loose bricks to make it safe; a plan to involve the local Youth Inclusion Project to redesign the 'Coat of Arms', installation of four benches in order to attract young people away from shop fronts and encouraging them to congregate in the centre of the island. The balance of the funding was to support community consultation and a feasibility study to be used to attract further funding.

A community consultation open day was held on 28 October 2006, and bulb plantings took place on two days in early November and involved all six local primary schools and the planting of 5,000 daffodils. The schools were also given questionnaires to encourage children to talk about what else they would like to see on the island, and children designed and drew pictures, some of which have been displayed in one of the schools. 180 questionnaires were completed for the community consultation. Meetings were held between representatives of key organisations in which the results of the community consultation were discussed. The Local Strategic Partnership were then asked to draw up a design to include fencing, solar lighting, a children's play area, a multi-use games area and litter bins. The aim is to use this master plan and costing to access further funding to complete the redevelopment of 'Conker Island'.

The support provided by Perry Common included: giving advice by telephone; tracking down useful telephone numbers; and even getting hold of tools for the environmental improvement work. However, the seedcorn grant also acted as a 'jumping off' point:

"you can definitely say that the money we've had has definitely inspired us to go on and do different projects and carry on what we've started [...] we've got the buzz for it."

Young people are actually using the benches on the island as opposed to being in front of the shops, church and houses around the island – which residents found intimidating.

"The impact straight away is you can go down and look at that island ... there's daffodils up. The centre of the island has been made safe [...] What is good about working together like this is it creates a sense of community and for some of our younger volunteers it is their first taste of active citizenship".

Similarly Oscott Residents' Association, with the support of Castle Vale, undertook an environmental project with the primary focus of enhancing a local traffic island.

"They used to park on it because there's a number of take-aways around there and kids hanging around at the bus shelter and it was just generally grotty to look at and quite problematic in terms of people setting light to the ... there was some recycling bins people were always setting light to those."

“What we wanted really was to, it looks, it looked sad, it looked untidy, it looked uncared for and loads of kids hanging round doing nothing, they’re just being generally aggravating and what we wanted to do was kind of foster a sense of ownership really which is why we were keen with the kids and ... we’ve carried that through.”

The Association engaged with local residents to find out what they wanted for the traffic island and have actioned this – including providing a mature tree as a living sculpture, relaying turf, and raising kerbs to ensure that the island does not return to being used as a car park. Children have been involved in the process, taking part in a colouring competition for which a local councillor awarded the winner a prize. Two pedestrian crossing points are also being installed and kerbs are being dropped to take into account access for wheelchairs and children’s buggies.

A successful environmental project supported by Neighbours4U in Kent displays a similar range of outcomes, with resident engagement also a major component of its local impact (see Case Study 8).

### Case Study 8

#### Hillyfields Community Park

“I think we are the first park project for Guide Neighbourhoods to be involved with. We are refurbishing the park to improve the environment and hoping to have a knock on effect on community safety. It is a good neighbour project – involves the school, health centre, community project. The park is the central hub of the community.

We got £1,500 from grant A and £8,500 from grant B [90% of the full £10k grant available]. There was a lot of press coverage about receiving money and where it came from. £1,500 was spent on the Hillyfest event, leaflets on the parkwash scheme, publicity. The £8,500 was partly spent on an Easter event at Hillyfields which included an egg hunt, performers, a skate park, circus performance all with an Easter theme. In the future the money will also be spent on the allotment and garden community project.”

Seedcorn money has helped create a community park in the middle of an urban area. Hillyfest was reported as “the first time anything happened on this land. This land was initially planned for houses but we fought to have green space. People were amazed at the event and children were enthused about it. The local population were amazed as this is the only green space we are able to do this kind of thing on. We have opened up an apple and pear orchard which Groundwork are helping with. We are aiming for a gardeners’ group. We have had an arts and recycling event and a waste project. We have had consultation on a new play area which 1,000 people turned up to. At these events the police, local authority and other public bodies attend. For the first time children are talking to these public body authorities which is helping alleviate anti-social behaviour. These events really help to bring the community together”.

Perry Common were also able to use seedcorn money, in tandem with other forms of support, to connect changes to the environment of a client neighbourhood to community consultation and engaging local residents – again with a particular focus on the involvement of young people – over plans for further regeneration of the neighbourhood (see Case Study 9).

## Case Study 9

### Wyrley Birch Neighbourhood Forum

Wyrley Birch is a 1960s peripheral estate that sits in a relatively isolated position within the Kingstanding ward of Birmingham. Initial contact between Wyrley Birch Neighbourhood Forum (WBNF) and Perry Common Guide Neighbourhood was made two years ago, but their relationship has really developed over the twelve months, starting with WBNF undertaking a visit to Perry Common, and their subsequent joint visit to the National Wildflower Centre in Liverpool.

As a result of WBNF's successful bid for seedcorn funding, they have undertaken community consultation activities, including holding Christmas parties for children (for whom 80 individually-tailored Christmas presents were purchased) as a way of aiding resident engagement:

"We needed to get a consultation in so we thought 'well, the kids will come to the party, the parents are going to bring them', so that's the opportunity that we can capture them at the same time and plus some of the kids came and put their views in as well."

The Forum also engaged younger and older residents in the consultation process through consulting with schools and the local Help the Aged group. The 10,000 bulbs planted on the estate was undertaken with the help of local schools (as well as members of Perry Common), and careful consideration was put into where the bulbs were planted, ensuring that older residents of the estate had a view of bulbs from their windows.

An important aspect of undertaking the work on Wyrley Birch was not only improving the visual environment but also trying to involve as many residents as possible in planning the estate's development. Forum members are proud of where they live and "want the best" for their estate. As a result they decided to commission 'Welcome to Wyrley Birch' signs as well as three community notice boards to aid communication across the estate. Local schools were involved in the design for the welcome signs:

"There's no sign to say 'This is Wyrley Birch'. We're just stuck in the middle of everything round us. We wanted to feel we are Wyrley Birch and that's why we opted for a welcome sign."

WBNF recognise that what they have gained from seedcorn funding is not just applicable to the estate but has also impacted on the Forum itself. The supportive nature of this type of funding procedure has given the Forum the confidence to put in bids for other monies – which they would not have considered doing previously. They have gained in confidence both as a group and as individuals. Two Forum members explained that, with support:

"... I even did an assembly at my children's school ... it (working with Guide Neighbourhoods) gave me confidence to get up in a hall full of children and teachers and that, and even though I know them.... to go in front of them and do an assembly it's quite scary but I did enjoy it."

"... I was able to pick up the phone and have a conversation with somebody from the environment [department of the council] and knowing what you're talking about and knowing what questions you want and what answers you want, I think it's a confident boost definitely."

### **Case Study 9 (continued)**

#### **Wyrley Birch Neighbourhood Forum**

A local councillor recognised the importance of the development work undertaken in their ward as part of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme:

“Small programmes like this tend to get overlooked sometimes; the money may only be a small amount but hopefully the relationships that have been built between the community groups in different parts of the ward will continue – and if there’s a next time round for Guide Neighbourhoods maybe we will have more than one in Kingstanding!”

### **Resident engagement**

Resident engagement is not always linked to positive policy change. It can be a means of dealing with potentially negative events. In the case of the Devonport Bullring (see Case Study 10) seedcorn money was spent building resident engagement and morale in going through a difficult transition of decanting from an estate to be demolished, and giving voice to residents’ own sense of their history – what were the real strengths and weaknesses of their estate in the past and how that could this understanding contribute to avoiding past policy mistakes in future.



## Case Study 10

### Bullring: coping with the decanting experience

The Bullring had gained the reputation of being the worst estate in Devonport and therefore in Plymouth. The Residents' Group was set up in 1989, and a survey of resident opinion was undertaken in 2002/3. Residents were given an informed choice between demolition and refurbishment. The tenants voted for demolition, which, because of delays, became a 'mythical future'. In January 2006 decanting started and the Residents' Group thought it could either be a very negative experience or a positive one. The group was provided with a community flat, as well as advice sessions on the process provided by council staff.

The decanting process worked more quickly than had been expected. By the time they had permission for the community flat, too many people had been lost to the decanting process to make it work, and they scaled down the advice surgery.

However, the Resident's Group shifted its focus to producing a documentary on the positive aspects of the Bullring (i.e. the sense of community there had been there) and interaction grew among the remaining tenants, partly due to the activities of the Residents' Group. Using the small grant from Pembroke Street Guide Neighbourhood they employed a worker; they conducted interviews with a number of people and organised an exhibition with photos as well as text to go to schools and regeneration offices. The research showed that the Bullring was the 'great new hope' for social housing in Plymouth in 1963 – not system built, attractive and an interesting design. The exercise raised questions about whether re-building would repeat the mistakes made in the 1960's – of placing too many vulnerable people in the area without sufficient support.

The new scheme is to replace the 82 flats with 43 dwellings mixed between houses and flats, of which only 11 will be social housing. Very few of the people decanted wanted to return to the estate. It could have been a very depressing time as the estate closed down and prepared for demolition, but the project made a 'proper closure' for the neighbourhood. The major challenge is changing the reputation of the estate. Showing the history of the community through resident voices helped to turn that around.

## Organisational capacity

A major way in which Guide Neighbourhoods were able to strengthen the capacity of neighbourhood groups was to award them seedcorn money to spend on developing their offices. Northfield's (Birmingham) seedcorn bid was for computer equipment to aid better communication, improve their organisation's capacity, and to 'professionalise' their operation.

Pembroke Street and Neighbours4U also funded office equipment to improve the organisational efficiency of their clients. Similarly, Burrowes Street's grant to Clayhanger allowed them to improve their newsletters:

"The newsletters have got better in the fact I can now do all weird and wonderful things and put pictures on and everything. We had a digital camera as well which has enabled us to put photos onto the newsletters and, they're getting better every time. They started off as an A4 sheet with just writing it all down and last summer we put pictures on and it was two columns and this year we're double sided and people say how good it looks."

Receiving the seedcorn grant from Castle Vale acted as a catalyst for Oscott Residents' Association getting a bank account and developing a reputation for being able to manage a project.

“From my point of view, the residents' association has grown as a result of it [working with Castle Vale]. Previously you would have thought the Oscott Residents' Association was really just a group who met on a Saturday and now it's so much more than that and I think, you know, its really raised the profile [...] It has it acted as a catalyst for the residents' association but also because of [Chair of Oscott Residents' Association] links with the other group [community disability group] it sort of spurred them on as well, so in terms of capacity it's done a sterling job.” (Community development worker)

## Community cohesion and diversity

In terms of diversity, seedcorn money has been spent on projects not only addressing culturally specific needs but also on supporting young people, faith communities, as well as women and disabled people.

Royds Community Association has awarded a number of seedcorn grants aimed at promoting community cohesion in diverse neighbourhoods in Bradford. The African Caribbean Achievement Project, which provides positive role models, mentoring in schools and after school support was awarded £1,500 for their social integration project. The project was aimed at young people who are socially excluded – bullied, felt different or lacked confidence. It was set up in consultation with young people, who were saying they “had too much school” and wanted an opportunity to chill and socialise. Isolated young people, who lack confidence and struggled with language barriers were identified, coached and encouraged to interact. The seedcorn grant paid for one-off activities (e.g. a party for young people) which are hard to fund any other way, and helped in young people learning how to run a project, provided positive role models and developing skills in reaching isolated young people.

The African Refugee Health Access and Support Project in Bradford was awarded £6,900 to run a drop in centre for young people This aimed to reduce crime by addressing bullying, harassment, drugs and gun crime in discussion workshops. The ongoing relationship with the Guide Neighbourhood, once again, was an important part of the delivery of seedcorn grant goals. The community consultant visited the project three times and brought the Chair of Royds Community Association to visit which made them feel “the day to day touch”, where “other funders forget you and let you struggle. When young people see someone from a funder coming to participate it gives them motivation – gives the message that the group is a good thing. It's not just about money. It widens their horizons.” The project wants to establish a wider network and keep in touch with Royds.

The Interfaith Women's Group accessed a small grant, which was used to fund a trip for 50 women and children from Bradford to the Dales. This was used partly as a social occasion – but also to bring women together and learn about different cultures. It also provided a view of farming life in England and raised environmental issues, as well as providing an opportunity for women to get out of the city and relax. The trip involved a lot of thought and planning in order to make it purposeful and ensure that participants were mixing with each other and learning about different cultural practices.

The group took photos and these are being used in a number of ways to share the work of the group e.g. a display at Methodist synod. The grant fits into a context of regular contact between groups and often proactive work by the community consultants, signposting to other organisations and sources of funding. There has been mutual learning between the group and the community consultants. The seedcorn money has enabled activity to take place and Guide Neighbourhood support has overcome isolation, built better understandings of diversity and improved the group's linkages with other organisations.

In Salford, Seedley and Langworthy Trust have been working with asylum seekers using the the Primary Care Trust's Horizon Centre. Initially this was informal support to meet social needs. Subsequently Seedley and Langworthy Trust facilitated basic IT classes, access to leisure activities and, more recently has advised on the establishment of an independently constituted group for refugee and asylum seekers – The Welcome Group.

Lyndhurst Neighbourhood Forum found that receiving a seedcorn grant from Castle Vale changed attitudes between generations on the estate.

“They give us funding to get football kits and all equipment for the kids and it's had a tremendous impact on the kids here because now they've got something to believe in and ... when I went to talk to them 'I said right this is what we're going to do'. I found the whole attitude had changed. It's so different ... kids that nobody wanted to know a few months ago have actually been able to join in and help ...”

In Plymouth, Pembroke Street have been supporting Morice Town Community Forum with advice and visits, and is using seedcorn money to support the development of a community flat, which “is to be a youth space, with access for education and meeting space”. As a consequence of the initial support provided by the Guide Neighbourhood “it is now snowballing, with public health offering money, and we are applying to the Local Network Fund for youth provision”.

Leicester North West Community Forum too have used seedcorn money to set up action groups to give young people a voice in two neighbourhoods, and engage them in a story telling project in a third.

Disabled people have benefited from new services funded through seedcorn money in Neighbours4U (£1500) and on a more substantial scale from Goodwin Development Trust's £10,000 grant to Danny's Dream (see Case Study 11).

## Case Study 11

### Danny's Dream

Danny's Dream was established in 2003, but has lacked the support structures to enable the group to move forward. Danny's Dream is a vision of hope for vulnerable young adults with severe physical disabilities and/or learning difficulties who face social exclusion because of a lack of suitable facilities and support to enable them to be integrated into mainstream society. Danny's Dream want to improve the quality of life for these young adults and in the long term hope to develop a Centre of Excellence in Hull, providing accommodation, social and leisure facilities which are truly inclusive – thus attracting both users with complex needs and others, and promoting genuine social inclusion.

Danny's Dream approached Goodwin Development Trust in December 2005 for assistance in becoming a charitable company. Following Goodwin's support in drafting memorandum and articles of association, Danny's Dream is in the process of registering as a company and applying for charitable status. The group are now in a position to start their first major project – the Live your Life Personal Assistance and Family Support Service. Goodwin Development Trust has assisted in the recruitment process to enable them to employ their first co-ordinator. Assistance included drafting the job description, person specification and application pack and providing interview training for the panel. This new member of staff will enable the project to move forward but will also assist Danny's Dream in accessing other funding to grow and develop further. In order to provide the group with practical support in the early days, Danny's Dream's new co-ordinator has been offered a hot desk at one of Goodwin's premises so that they can make use of existing business support structures.

Danny's Dream was the first group to apply for a grant through Goodwin Development Trust's Guide Neighbourhood Seedcorn Grant Scheme. £10k was approved as a start up grant to get the Live your Life scheme off the ground. As the money could be spent on things for which it is often difficult to get funding, Danny's Dream spent it on insurance, training and solicitors fees to help set up the company – without these would not be able to run the Live your Life Scheme.

Seedcorn money has, therefore, been an extremely useful tool enabling Guide Neighbourhoods to 'kick start' or maintain community activity – particularly with highly marginalised groups. Crucial to this success has been the ability to link grant making to ongoing developmental support – often beyond the time involved in developing and delivering a particular seedcorn initiative. Small grants are not, however, a panacea. They do not guarantee that small organisations can grow and become sustainable – however valuable their contribution to local communities.

## 8 “Not just a box of tricks”: lessons from the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme

“The trouble is... people see the physical side of regeneration, not the processes ... they see the clock face and not the mechanisms behind it...what makes it work.” (Resident guide)

“Involving residents is not just a box of tricks. It a process ... and often a hard one. But if residents don't have a voice, if they are not listened to, then there isn't a solution, just more problems.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

This report started by locating the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme within the recent policy context. Yet, as the current phase of the initiative draws to a close, there are further policy and structural shifts which are certain to happen – with the restructuring of the Housing Corporation, the implementation of the Local Government White paper and the Quirk Review on asset transfer to communities. Other key developments include:

- moves to increase understanding and skills around local governance as one remedy for the ‘democratic deficit’ evident through the low levels of involvement in formal representative processes;
- the formation of city-regions as well as the continued commitment to, more localised, neighbourhood specific arrangements (including neighbourhood charters);
- the promotion of third sector delivery of services and the creation of programmes which are managed by Non Departmental Public Bodies/ third sector organisations and rely on commissioned projects to achieve government objectives<sup>38</sup>.
- a regionalised ‘Together We Can’ programme of civil renewal, community engagement and partnership development between agencies and communities at all levels

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme and approach has a lot to offer to such developments – through the learning from its attempts to create a learning network of resident based organisations. Individual Guide Neighbourhoods have specialist knowledge to contribute (for example on community managed housing and asset development) and offer a model of resident focused solutions to community renewal.

This final chapter, then, examines the effectiveness of what has been offered through the Programme, draws some insights as to the particular contribution of Guide Neighbourhoods and identifies learning for the future implementation of the civil renewal agenda.

### The Guide Neighbourhoods offer – inspiration and learning

All the neighbourhood based organisations within the Programme have particular expertise, built on many years experience, to share with others. Different methods have been adopted to enable this learning transfer – visits ‘into’ the Guide Neighbourhood, visits ‘out’ to the client neighbourhoods, informal training sessions, mentoring and consultancy advice being the most common.

<sup>38</sup> Home Office (2004) *Think Smart... Think Voluntary Sector! Good practice guidance on procurement of services from the voluntary and community sector*. Home Office, London.

Visits have been a mainstay of the Programme. Indeed many of the Guide Neighbourhoods were already engaged in setting up visits before entry to the formal Programme. As described earlier, while many visits followed the format of a presentation – often by residents – a tour of the neighbourhood, and a question and answer session, there has also been an attempt to ensure that the visits were tailored to the needs of those visiting. Pre-visit questionnaires and meetings have proved useful in identifying the involvement of the most appropriate people and agencies from the host Neighbourhood – or allowed for referrals across the Programme in cases where particular expertise was not available locally. For example, several client neighbourhoods were signposted to Goodwin Development Trust for learning on community managed assets. Perry Common emphasised the care taken to tailor content and presentations to the clients needs: “I mean we could do the same spiel every time but that doesn’t get the job done does it?” (Resident guide)

This tailored approach requires investment and time, however, which was not always recognised when Guide Neighbourhoods were first completing their action plans and work programmes.

Visits, though initially slow to build, have proved to be popular, especially in raising aspirations and confidence. Residents are able to see possibilities and what can be achieved as well as being able to understand the commitment and sheer hard work involved in bringing about neighbourhood change. The financing of visits has enabled residents to travel further afield than would otherwise be the case and this has contributed to “a wider forum than would be available otherwise” (Guide Neighbourhood). Indeed, many of the Guide Neighbourhoods themselves also talk of learning from the visitors, seeing them as part of a two way learning process.

Visits on their own are not always enough though – the ‘seeing is believing’ concept is only a part of the picture. The familiar story that “a lot of people who come to visit ask to come back” illustrates that visits provide an opportunity for people to “discover the potential of what can be achieved more generally” (client neighbourhood) rather than the specifics of, for example, running a tenant management organisation. INclude saw visits as networking rather than the provision of hard information and pointed out that some things, such as neighbourhood management, are hard to grasp through one visit. Goodwin Development Trust felt frustrated that they didn’t have more time for following up visits; resource constraints meant that consultancy support was only available to a small number of much more local organisations. Clearly time constraints within the Programme were a factor here, as well as the need to meet visits ‘outputs’.

Visits do make a difference and whilst there is much more to learn, the enthusiasm that comes from seeing something first hand is hard to replicate any other way as Board members from Aylesbury New Deal for Communities Board pointed out:

“NDC Board members who didn’t attend the visit couldn’t relate to the Eldonians experience – they hadn’t picked up on the ‘inspirational’ aspects of it ... it appeared to be a different area with different problems and priorities.”

Training, in the formal sense, didn’t really take off – there was never a national series of training events provided by the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme. There was however, a great deal of informal training provided through the Programme – mainly in the form of advice and mentoring support. Safe space in which to discuss problems as well as successes was highly prized and one of the selling points of neighbourhood to neighbourhood learning is that ‘they tell it like it is’.

Client neighbourhoods valued learning from people who been ‘through it’, getting tips on what to do/what not to do, what to look out for. They were supported to ‘keep going’ even when things did not go well the first time:

“My visit to [Burrowes Street] – really inspired me. But they were honest. They said it’s a long struggle. If you are serious about a better place to live there is nothing quick – it’s years and it’s a struggle – but you can see that it’s worth it.” (Client neighbourhood)

The modelling role of Guide Neighbourhoods (for example in presenting examples of good local governance) has been a significant aspect of the Programme, even though it has not always been a conscious element of the relationship between guides and clients. For example, one client neighbourhood cited better meetings as a result of seeing how two Guide Neighbourhoods organised theirs. Building practice based on watching how someone else does it requires a great deal of trust.

Many client neighbourhoods spoke of relationships which built trust through access to responsive advice and support – rather than a more focused or formal consultancy where specific goals are to be met or issues addressed. The personal experience shared through the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme’s approach, alongside the personal touch – “there is always someone at the end of the phone” (client neighbourhood) – provide the winning element. The Guide Neighbourhoods understand that it takes time for people to believe in themselves; the client neighbourhoods recognise that working with people “who do it every day, every week, all the time, is invaluable”. Confidence is built because those ‘learning’ can see their mentors “practising what they preach”.

## The Guide Neighbourhoods reward – learning into action

We all learn all the time – as policy makers, practitioners and residents develop new solutions to problems in a rapidly changing society. Guide Neighbourhoods are no exception. Several Guide Neighbourhoods promoted their relationships with client neighbourhoods as partnerships rather than as an ‘experts to learners model’. This process affirms the progress and achievements of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme. It has brought new learning opportunities, particularly in developing transparency in community governance and building accountability in community groups and local partnerships. It has also enabled both guide and client neighbourhoods to become more confident and outward looking and enhanced their capacity to relate local action to the wider policy agenda.

This development of this more “outward looking face” is significant. Goodwin Development Trust, like many of the other Guide Neighbourhoods, was already sharing its learning before entry to the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme but being part of a formal programme encouraged them to focus on the work more self consciously and has enabled others to develop longer term, supportive relationships beyond ‘one off’ visits.

Another significant development was the resident guides aspect of the Programme. Although this was a factor in the earlier Residents’ Consultancy pilot, and anticipated as the unique selling point of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme, it was beset with difficulties from the start. Funding came through the Programme to pay residents to share their experience but the organisations experienced difficulties in recruiting neighbourhood guides/resident consultants. Schedule 1 (Housing Corporation Guidance) precludes the members of housing boards receiving financial remuneration from their involvement in housing management. This prevented the recruitment of key local activists with the most

experience. In addition, a number of potential local recruits in receipt of benefit were reluctant to accept short-term/part time employment which, it was felt, offered little job security and impacted on their benefits.

A range of strategies were adopted to overcome these barriers. These included:

- Housing Board members resigning their positions to take up paid Guide Neighbourhood work;
- sessional payments for some neighbourhood guides on an occasional basis so as not to impact on benefits payments;
- recruitment of professional co-ordinators to resident consultancy posts whilst building a pool of local volunteer guides, local residents working on an occasional/as required – but voluntary – basis;
- paying community groups for the services of one of their volunteer members.

Different Guide Neighbourhoods took differing approaches to this issue – the two dominant ones being the use of unpaid residents’ and/or the employment of activists as ‘trainee’ workers. Both of these approaches have had benefits – an opportunity for residents to reconnect and play a central role in the work of the organisation (this often becomes more difficult as organisations grow and take on more paid staff), an opportunity to reach further into communities and build new networks as a result of activist involvement and to build the skills base of activists.

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has, however, been about more than inspiration. At the core of the Programme has been the ambition both to “turn learning into action” and “tell it like it is.” It is this honesty of approach (“warts and all”), together with the enhanced capacity to offer ongoing support that has been particularly valued by client neighbourhoods. They have been able to apply learning and bring about real change and enter into decision making in more informed ways.

## Starting with the familiar

One of the main selling points of the Programme, if not the main one, was the availability of guidance from peers. Neighbourhoods that had achieved change could share their experience with others. Responses from many client neighbourhoods illustrate the validity of this rationale and visits linked to ‘before’ and ‘after’ photographs worked especially well:

“What was really was impressive (was) that all these people... were fighting to get out of the area, they lived in really bad conditions...now people want to live there, there is a waiting list and when you see the photos (of what it used to be like) and then walk round, you can really see what these people have achieved.” (client neighbourhood)

Conveying this level of enthusiasm is a direct result of residents talking to other residents, and is at the heart of what the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme is all about:

“The satisfaction of seeing groups starting to believe in themselves, that they can make a difference and I think that has been one of the biggest things for me. We’ve had groups here we’ve been and seen groups and, and they start off saying I couldn’t do that but by the time you come to the end of the presentations or whatever they say well hang on a minute if you’ve done it why can’t we do it?” (Resident guide)



The National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations resident guides stressed the need to start with the familiar, what people know and their own neighbourhood and to build on this. This isn't however, an easy approach to take for a Guide Neighbourhood that is being visited by a group of residents from the other end of the country and as one Guide Neighbourhood noted:

“Showing people the imperfections and not just the gloss is hard work”

Guide Neighbourhoods themselves point out the dangers of relying on the ‘inspiring visit’ approach. Concern has been expressed about the model, recognising the need to understand local politics before ‘playing the expert’ – plus an acknowledgement that what visitors see might be a completely different type of estate, with a different history of community activity, different demographics and in a different city. Thus, the community development rhetoric of ‘starting where groups are at’ is not always the case in the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme’s approach. Sometimes, groups go on visits at the start of an initiative in their neighbourhood but are not always at the level of development to do anything with the learning. What they see looks great but what do they do with this inspiration they feel? As one Guide Neighbourhood noted:

“Can’t be too ambitious on others’ behalf – they need to go at their own pace.”

## Home and away – the pros and cons of where to share learning

One of the benefits of the Programme, as mentioned above, is that residents have been able to visit another neighbourhood at no cost to themselves. The Guide Neighbourhoods have been able to share their learning a long way from home, again at no cost. This has created a breadth of networking across the UK between residents and like minded people – an opportunity often lacking to those not in paid jobs that allow access to conferences. This also has the advantage of ‘going in clean’ – there are no preconceptions of the Guide Neighbourhood Programme by local politicians or local authorities. The Eldonian Group, for example, have found it beneficial to be working outside their home patch as they are not constrained by the local authority perception of them as “just another community group”. In addition, sometimes Guide Neighbourhoods have had an uneasy relationship with their own local authority. Indeed, they may be Guide Neighbourhoods because, frustrated at the lack of support and action by anyone with a degree of influence, they have taken matters into their own hands and developed resident focused solutions. There were, for instance, examples where local authority officers selected Guide Neighbourhoods to visit without any knowledge of the ones on their doorstep.

But there can be disadvantages to this working ‘away’ too. Knowledge of the local political situation can be helpful to client groups, and Guide Neighbourhoods did find themselves, on occasion, working in unfamiliar contexts. For example, in the work on social enterprise development work the Eldonian Group carried out with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, the local authority saw the geographical distance as “a bit of an issue” and was interested in exploring a local base for the Eldonian Group.

## Resident to resident, resident to worker, worker to resident ...

Although the resident to resident approach was a driving force behind the Programme, many Guide Neighbourhoods have in fact chosen to work beyond this model. The Eldonian Group, Castle Vale and INclude for example, brought in partners (local authorities, primary care trusts etc) on visits as a way of modelling partnership working and to help make the work more sustainable. Equally, Guide Neighbourhoods recognise that it's not just about inspiring residents but officers and other power holders.

NFTMO resident guides have described what they felt was a brokerage role between local authorities and community groups – trying to identify “blockages” on both sides and look at solutions. Joint resident/officer visits were therefore seen as important in helping people arrive at agreement. As Burrowes Street commented:

“Our role is to help people, residents and professionals think about their accountability.”

The message from several Guide Neighbourhoods then seems to be, ‘the solution is not just about you’ as residents. But how far is this from the resident to resident learning ethos of the programme?

There were very different views about this within the Programme. The brokerage role is an accepted one, as is the value of officers coming to visit. But in several Guide Neighbourhoods the concept of residents providing the learning was also challenged as the programme evolved.

As noted, there were several reasons for this, not least the fact that many of the active residents were Board members and therefore unable to take any payment. They were, therefore, unable to take on the role (albeit very part time), of being the resident guides. In several neighbourhoods then, local residents were recruited – often as ‘trainees’ in effect. Whilst this was a positive move in many respects, it had consequences for the programme – whose learning was being passed on? There is no criticism of the work undertaken but there is a question of how the new workers could pass on the kind of inspiring resident expertise that was the central tenet of the programme. In fact, this tension was exposed early in the initiative when Guide Neighbourhoods were trying to identify an agreed purpose. There was a disparity between those who talked of multi-stakeholder neighbourhood to neighbourhood learning and those who were committed to the purely resident to resident dimension.

## A spread or a cluster of Guide Neighbourhoods?

The distribution of Guide Neighbourhoods has been uneven. There are several in some regions (e.g. the West Midlands) and none at all in others (for example, the North East/East). This is largely due to the ad hoc nature of the Programme's development and the initial selection, or possibly election, process which relied largely on pre-existing personal networks. Whether this has been a problem or not though is a different matter. Indeed there has been a lot to learn from the way the programme developed in terms of geographical coverage as it provided an opportunity to see how the distribution of Guide Neighbourhoods had an effect had a spatial impact. Certainly the cluster effect in the Midlands and Liverpool bears the fruits of added value. The neighbourhoods in the West Midlands have worked closely together, not only to ensure that they ‘passed on’ clients to each other but have also jointly organised three regional events which have proved to be very successful in attracting and ‘inspiring’ participants. In Merseyside, the Eldonian

Group and INclude have arranged joint events which led to establishing a partnership and enabled them to access £200k for joint work on the Canal Rangers project:

“The conference opened the doors to working together ... This wouldn’t have happened without [the] Guide Neighbourhoods [Programme].”

## “It ain’t what you do: it’s the way that you do it...”

What has been the ‘offer’ of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme – has there been any unifying factor, any such ‘thing’ as a ‘Guide Neighbourhood’? On the one hand, Guide Neighbourhoods worked across many different issues – from housing to young people to social enterprise development. Some of the neighbourhoods prioritised the resident experience; others offered technical expertise in their own right (National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations) or through working with a range of other partners. Some promoted particular regeneration models – for example Development Trusts and social enterprise. This was criticised by some in the Programme as offering too narrow a focus and a ‘one solution fits all’ approach. Some neighbourhoods were sceptical of what external agencies could offer, others embraced the involvement of, for example, private sector property developers.

Yet, the responses from the majority of people with whom the Guide Neighbourhoods worked are similar. All talk of the enthusiasm and infectiousness of the Guide Neighbourhoods, whether they are talking about the support from the relatively professionalised Eldonian Group or a small organisation such as Stubbin Neighbourhood Association. There is no doubt that Guide Neighbourhoods “help people feel good”, as the Duckenfield client neighbourhood commented about Seedley and Langworthy Trust. Guide Neighbourhoods, particularly those engaged in tenant empowerment, have been able to help residents fast track their way to tenant management. Indeed, one of the overriding factors in the relationship between guides and clients across the board is the sense of trust – taking support and advice from someone who is “doing it, not just advising on it”. (Client neighbourhood)

It’s important to remember that this is not a one-way street. The Guide Neighbourhoods themselves have benefited from the programme in a number of ways – from:

- opportunities to give residents a key part to play in the transfer of expertise
- the confidence that comes from being part of a national programme and the doors that open as a result. For example, the Eldonian Group say it attracted the attention of local authorities and may have given the organisation “more clout” locally
- the resources to visit other Guide Neighbourhoods
- the national network of Guide Neighbourhoods

This last point on networking opportunities has been particularly significant, especially bearing in mind the diversity of the participating organisations. As the report has evidenced, an added value has been Guide Neighbourhoods learning from each other. Whilst not initially a central feature of the Programme, this indicates the importance of national opportunities for neighbourhoods to network, share solutions to local issues and build a body of resident knowledge which can contribute to wider regeneration policy and practice.

## Guide Neighbourhoods – a part of the bigger picture

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme, as an action research initiative, has shown that neighbourhood based organisations have a significant role to play in the implementation and development of ‘The Learning Curve’<sup>39</sup> and understanding ‘what works’ in regeneration. They have also played a practical role in developing active citizenship and good governance. They are not a cheap alternative to other forms of support and expertise but they are a viable and equal option. Guide Neighbourhoods vividly illustrate the distance that can be, and has been, travelled even by small community groups – and that is as significant for practitioners and policy makers as it is for residents.

So why is the concept of resident to resident, neighbourhood to neighbourhood, learning still below the radar of many policy makers and funders? Perhaps, the relatively small scale nature of the Programme has not helped. This evaluation shows examples of really good practice but often in isolated pockets and some established Guide Neighbourhoods expressed concern that newer members of the network either did not share the original vision of resident to resident learning – or lacked the organisational capacity to act as exemplar groups.

Further, the absence of a formal quality assurance across the programme has not built external confidence that the expertise on offer is of the best available. Some Guide Neighbourhoods have proposed a kite marking model, based on a three star system relating to levels of capacity and expertise. This is being developed by the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations (NFTMO) as they establish a network of ‘Guide TMOs’

Promotion of the Programme has been an issue throughout. A key theme was the amount of time it took to ‘market’ the Programme and the difficulties of translating initial enquiries into visits/consultancy work.

“I think from the very beginning of the programme it lacked the co-ordinated marketing effort that it really needed” (Guide Neighbourhood)

Certainly some Guide Neighbourhoods thought that Regenerate, as the managing agent, would have a central ‘dating agency’ function whereby guides and clients would be matched and networked. Others felt that a regional ‘axis’ would have worked better than a national network – “the idea becomes diluted nationally” (Guide Neighbourhood) – as it could have focused more on promotion at regional agency level. Yet suggestions to make regional strategic links to help to profile the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme as a valuable contributor to regeneration policy were made at almost every national coordinating meeting – but were never followed through. Equally, there have been concerns that the Programme has not been ‘sold’ to those who were looking for evidence based practice (e.g. New Deal for Communities projects) and despite marketing resources provided through the sponsoring government department, the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme failed to get enough national recognition. One difficulty was the very diversity of the participating organisations and the different approaches they took to implementing their contributions. As one Guide Neighbourhood commented:

“I knew what we offered ... but not what (the Programme) was selling.”

<sup>39</sup> Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2002) *The Learning Curve: developing skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal*. ODPM, London.

As the Programme has now reached the end of its current funding phase, there are concerns about its short term nature. Indeed, those involved in establishing the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme have acknowledged that the mistake “was to push the Programme through without a clearer exit strategy”. The length of the Programme from start to finish, just over two years, was tight for all and some Guide Neighbourhoods only became participants in 2006, leaving them little time to deliver their work programmes – let alone get to grips with thinking about sustaining the work. Even those involved from the start and who were engaged in the previous pilot, such as Burrowes Street and the Eldonian Group, highlighted that this type of work takes time. Further, there was and inherent (if un-anticipated) time lag between organisations initially visiting a Guide Neighbourhood, seeking further support/consultancy and then being ready to start work on changing their own neighbourhood:

“May be three-six months ... This was not recognised in the original funding proposal or in the time allocated to Guide Neighbourhood initiative”. (Guide Neighbourhood)

Others Guide Neighbourhoods noted that they were:

“Just getting going and the funding ends.”

“I think [the] Guide Neighbourhoods [Programme] has achieved such a lot in a short time and it makes me wonder what we could achieve if it was carried on for say a five year plan. I think it would grow and grow and grow and it’s just a shame that it isn’t”.

## Moving on

Many of the individual Guide Neighbourhood organisations will continue the practice they have built. The comment below reflects the intention of several guides:

“We did it before [the] Guide Neighbourhoods [Programme] money came and we’ll do it afterwards.”

Others say they can continue in a limited way – but that without the additional funding they will have to charge for their services or severely reduce them.

There is evidence that some Guide Neighbourhoods are looking for new funding to continue this way of working – e.g. through the Lottery or European funding. Birmingham based organisations are exploring a collaborative approach to attract local resources (particularly local authority funding to support neighbourhood management pilots) and offering their services on a sliding payment scale, depending on the type of organisation they are working with. Poplar HARCA/New Mill Consultants will continue to offer consultancy on a fee paying basis – but face all of the difficulties of a new small to medium enterprise operating in a highly competitive market. The community housing based neighbourhoods aim to become Section 16 agents advising on housing management and stock transfer options (but will face many of the same issues in terms of competition with well established agencies) whilst, as noted, the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations has secured Housing Corporation support to develop a network of ‘Guide TMOs’.

Guide Neighbourhoods have, therefore, had to move from set up, through to delivery and exit in a short period of time. Further, in the word of one interviewee they “faced the funding cliff of money in March and none in April;” (policy interview) Whilst the Programme was originally intended as a short life action research project, there is important learning in terms of funding for sustainability – lessons not learned from previous regeneration initiatives. Namely, that tapered funding, whilst difficult to manage, focuses organisation’s attention on longer term business planning and that exit or succession strategies need to be built into the original funding proposal, regularly reviewed and revised. As a whole Programme, such planning (though encouraged through a Forward Strategy Working Group) was never implemented. Some Guide Neighbourhoods will survive – though this depends more on their strength and stage of development of the host organisation rather than the benefits of participation in the Programme per se. What is clear, however, is that the momentum built (particularly over the last year of funding) will largely be lost.

## Guide Neighbourhoods – a developing network?

“There are two gems to the Guide Neighbourhoods [Programme] agenda – inspirational visits and the strategic development of the Guide Neighbourhood network” (Guide Neighbourhood)

The network of Guide Neighbourhoods has been significant, though troubled at times. Housing Justice has organised six co-ordinating events since July 2005, most of them residential. There have also been strategy, training and events working groups. Without the co-ordinating meetings many of the more geographically isolated groups would have found it difficult to feel part of a Programme, and it has enabled the smaller organisations to make useful links and to see the bigger picture. Residents from Seedley and Langworthy Trust for example have got involved in a range of policy initiatives:

“I think we’ve tried harder to link in with national strategies so along with some of the resident guides we did go down to the Respect launch. You know we found out a bit more about the Respect agenda which possibly if we’d not been involved in the programme we may or may not have done really, we may have not prioritised it. We got involved with Together We Can... But I don’t think that that would have happened had we not been a Guide Neighbourhood”

The feeling for residents of “being a part of something bigger” cannot be underestimated:

“You always get the feeling when you come back from the meetings that you would get, say if someone in the family gets married. All of a sudden you’ve extended your family.” (Resident guide)

However, Guide Neighbourhoods have not always been so encouraged by the organisation of national networking events – in terms of their purpose and structure. Some felt that these became business and reporting sessions (issues which could have been addressed more effectively in other ways) and that opportunities to share ideas and learning were therefore lost. Crucially, residents reported feeling undermined by some of the professional/paid workers “they talk in a way we don’t understand”. While the quality of venues for networking residentials gave an important message about the value of the network, there were concerns about the amount of money spent on them – especially at a time when resident guides were being made redundant.

Monies to continue the networking function have been made available, at least in the short term, and the challenge for Guide Neighbourhoods is how to make most effective use of this. There appear to be different perspectives on how this should happen – some keen to maintain the ‘national family’ and others wanting to strengthen regional networking. It is likely that some of the larger Guide Neighbourhoods and especially those with a number of paid workers will find it hard to prioritise the time to develop the Guide Neighbourhoods concept – when they can access a whole range of other national networks e.g. the Neighbourhood Management Network. The smaller groups involved (such as Stubbin Neighbourhood Association) and unpaid residents will miss out on an opportunity to meet nationally that is rarely available to them. There are also concerns that once the core funding has gone, Guide Neighbourhoods will see themselves in competition with one another for funding and be less willing to work collaboratively.

What the neighbourhoods will lose as the central Government funding of the Programme ends is the ‘badge of approval’ that comes with being part of a government programme. This branding has been important to organisations – some treating it as a quality mark.

“I think there’s some value in keeping that brand because I think it gives those projects a status.”

Some of the criticisms of the network, around a lack of clearly defined focus and common purpose, hold true for the management of the Programme – and it may be that both suffered from the same underlying cause – a lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of participants and the managing agent, Regenerate.

Certainly there were difficulties in Regenerate related to staffing and turnover, especially in such a short term programme, and resident learning was never part of the managing agent’s core business. But there is also a strong sense that problems were inherent in the original Programme design – or lack of design. Systems for accountability were never clear or were contested: there was no ‘constitution’ to assist the decision making processes and monitoring systems were weak. There was no agreed understanding across the parties – Guide Neighbourhoods, Housing Justice or Government about the powers of Regenerate. Was it ‘just handling the money’ or did it have a more strategic role?” Did the management agent have the capacity to impose sanctions – for example where individual Guide Neighbourhoods failed to comply with recording requirement – or not? These different perspectives on the role of the managing agent continued throughout the Programme – with tensions between the Guide Neighbourhoods themselves, as well as with the other stakeholders. As noted, the diversity of Guide Neighbourhoods was both a strength in terms of the range of learning opportunities – but also a weakness as the Programme, overall, lacked a clear identity.

Some Guide Neighbourhoods have been concerned that they were not made aware of the monitoring information required of them until well into the Programme. Indeed there was a real lack of strategy or consistency in the way that funding was originally allocated in relation to original work plans and intended outputs.

“There may have been a big vision at the start, but this was never linked to any real idea of setting targets, outputs or what the outcomes might be.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

Some of these deficiencies stem back to the origins of the programme. The commitment of the then Home Secretary to ensure the place of a resident centred programme in the Home Office was, however, a real coup for the right of those with hands on expertise to be recognised and rewarded:

“If you want to achieve quality of life outcomes you need communities to have the capacity to be part of the solution. This (should not be) an afterthought ... You need a critical core of active people in some of these neighbourhoods, otherwise however much money is put in people will leave as soon as they can.” (Policy interview)

But, the creation of a funded programme resulting from “political will and pressure” (policy interview), meant that it never really entered the mainstream of government funding and the associated routine monitoring systems were never put in place. The Programme became, in a changing environment, marginal to core policy objectives and the opportunities to play a substantive role in the implementation of ‘Together We Can’ were lost. Further, changes in the accountable government department did not help ensure that the initiative retained a high profile with some key civil servants and the devolution agenda impacted on the Programmes sustainability as there was insufficient time to effectively negotiate local and regional funding as central government ‘draws back’ from funding national networks and ring-fenced initiatives.



## 9 The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme: learning for change – the broader policy lessons

### Lessons for resident learning models – key points

- The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme was a diverse programme but there was one consistent message – residents must be part of regeneration solutions, but they can't do it all
- The 'visits' concept is part of the learning 'mix' but they are not enough on their own. Follow on support needs be available in the form of mentoring and ongoing advice to bring about change at the local level.
- Seedcorn funds can lead to big changes but grants are just part of the support. Many community groups need support beyond the grant. There is a value in combining small grants and ongoing mentoring and consultancy support.
- Hope is important but it is difficult to measure 'inspiration'
- The programme provides a wealth of evidence on how learning takes place for residents and how that learning can be translated into practical action at the local level
- Networking and collaborative working are highly prized as long as they are seen as purposeful
- Guide Neighbourhoods have a lot to offer current policy agendas and are experienced in sharing their learning with others. The strengths of, and learning from, the Programme should be used in future regeneration strategies and programmes.

There is no doubt that sharing of resident expertise and resident learning should be valued and supported. Despite the short timeframe, there is considerable evidence of positive change taking place for individual residents, their organisations and at community level. Indeed there is a lot that Guide Neighbourhoods can offer the policy environment too (see Appendix 6 for examples of key learning for emerging policy and practice). It is possible to identify a range of cross-departmental, and cross political party, policies and initiatives to which Guide Neighbourhoods are already contributing or have the potential to do so. These include:

- devolution/localisation and the modernisation of government.
- stock transfer and community managed housing.
- community based asset management.
- social enterprise development.
- management of small grants.
- community and voluntary sector contributions to the development and delivery of public policy – e.g. the Eldonian Group's work with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council to roll out local public service delivery to social enterprises in the Borough.
- the role of faith based groups in service delivery.

What is less straightforward is how to put in place effective support mechanisms to enable the organisation, co-ordination and accountability of resident consultancy. The essence of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme therefore needs to be picked up in, or built into, current and future strategies and programmes – learning at the neighbourhood level matters.

## Lessons for policy makers and strategists

“All the evaluations and reports to Government show that community development takes time. This was recognised in Together We Can. But that’s not really on the agenda now. It looks like (government) lost interest in this message and needed to get quick results and good news stories.” (Policy interview)

“There has been a change in emphasis in policy. It has moved from capacity building to the idea that individual citizens have rights and responsibilities and that they should have access as individuals to quality services. The idea that people need to be able to organise together to achieve this...that seems to be less influential in policy now”. (Guide Neighbourhood)

“What was difficult was the seeming change in expectations from Government...It (GN) started out as an action research project – and short term funding for action research is fine. But then there were huge, new, expectations about (Guide Neighbourhoods) actually changing things and having an impact on headline policy agendas. Now if that’s what you want to achieve, that takes more than two years.” (Guide Neighbourhood)

These three quotes from Guide Neighbourhoods and policy makers illustrate perceptions that government is moving away from its commitments of ‘Firm Foundations’ to community capacity building and the role of collective activity. Yet Communities and Local Government published ‘The Community Development Challenge’<sup>40</sup> in late 2006 to highlight its support for empowerment within communities. This highlighted the additional support needs of communities wanting ‘to do more’ might have, and a strategic package of activities to support active citizens, stronger communities and effective partnerships across the regions is currently being commissioned. There has also been the announcement of a new small grants fund as just one element of The Local Government White Paper (2006)<sup>41</sup> – a strand which can be informed by the Guide Neighbourhoods seedcorn grants work.

Policy makers then need to be able to ‘hold on’ to these visions or resident empowerment – with the realism that change is a long term process. There are precedents for recognising that programme start up takes time and ChangeUp<sup>42</sup> is an example of a long term commitment to see through change. A ‘year zero’ in the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme would have enabled confusions about the role of the managing agent to be clarified before anyone was tied into making the Programme work on the ground. It could have allowed time for the preparation of the promotion and marketing strategy necessary to raise its profile across the country and could have ensured that all Guide Neighbourhoods started out together with consistent work plans and a greater understanding of each others’ strengths.

<sup>40</sup> Communities and Local Government (2006) *The Community Development Challenge*, CLG, London

<sup>41</sup> Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities: the Local Government White Paper*, (White Paper CM 6939). The Stationery Office, London.

<sup>42</sup> Capacity Builders (2007) *Destination 2014: our strategy for the delivery of ChangeUp*, Capacity Builders, Birmingham

The main message is that you need time to adequately formulate a sustainable programme – but also that such programmes need a clear vision, purpose and robust management.

Guide Neighbourhoods have shown that in a short space of time they can engage communities in taking action to improve their neighbourhoods. They can support residents to work in partnership with other agencies, and support agencies to work with residents. They have lots to offer in the field of local governance. These are stated areas of priority for government and other public agencies and yet there is still an additional pressure to produce quality of life outcomes related to health and wealth for example – which cannot be achieved in few months and is therefore undermining. Residents in this programme have demonstrated that:

“Quality of life is (also) about people leaving their homes and getting together to do things like a children’s playground. “ (Resident guide)

Policy makers should therefore value what can be achieved with a few resources and celebrate this as a part of the picture alongside bigger, output driven and longer term programmes.

## Lessons for the managing agency approach

As noted, central, regional and (to a degree) local government is moving towards systems for ‘arms length’ management of funding and work programmes. Yet the role of the managing agency is fraught with difficulty. On the one hand they are expected to develop and profile the programme and support participants to deliver it. On the other they have a regulatory and procedural role. This involves more than administration skills – it requires a clear sense of purpose and direction.

In this case, Regenerate often struggled to build the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme as a ‘whole programme’. This was partly because of the very diversity of the organisations and personalities involved and partly because its responsibilities were not clear at the outset. Yet there are wider lessons, or at least questions, for government as arms length management becomes more common.

- are robust management and monitoring systems in place at the outset?
- is there a performance management system developed with the organisations in the programme to give a clear way on measuring progress?
- are the expectations being placed on the managing agent clear? Is their role developmental or purely administrative?
- does the managing agent have the skills and knowledge to effectively co-ordinate the activities it is commissioned to deliver?
- does the managing agent have the capacity and resources to both ‘police’ an initiative as well as act in more developmental roles?
- are the lines of accountability transparent and understood by all involved in the delivery of a particular programme?

- are the goals of the programme clear – and clearly communicated by the managing agent to partners and other stakeholders?
- are there systems in place to resolve disputes between agencies involved and between the sponsoring Government Department and the managing agent?
- have exit or succession strategies been put in place at the outset? Are these reviewed and revised on a regular basis?
- are the outputs and outcomes anticipated realistic and meaningful?

## Lessons for community based organisations

“Change takes time, investment and commitment to a long view. That may be the message (to government)...but communities need to show how they are contributing, how they are changing things and be clear that they have to be accountable when they receive public funding.” (Policy interview)

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has also furnished key lessons for community based organisations. First amongst these, is an understanding of fundamental shifts in funding regimes over recent years. Money, whether from central government, other statutory agencies or, indeed, the Big Lottery, is increasingly tied to the achievement of ‘hard’ policy objectives (e.g. crime reduction, educational attainment etc.) A ‘good idea’, or something that would generally benefit the community, no longer makes a sound basis for a funding application. Groups therefore need a greater sophistication in relating their ideas and objectives to key local and national targets – and being precise in how their activities will help the funding body achieve their own objectives. New and emerging organisations need to be clear about the consequences of accessing public funding in terms of developing management systems which enable them to report back regularly and accurately to sponsoring bodies.

This shift to a focus on hard outcomes and service delivery at the local level has had an impact on Guide Neighbourhoods. Whilst they have contributed to client neighbourhoods working towards, for example, enhanced community safety – they have done so as advocates and supporters rather than as delivery agents themselves. Yet funding is increasingly focused on direct delivery – with a risk, highlighted by the Charity Commission<sup>43</sup>, to those advocacy and support roles that have been core of Guide Neighbourhoods’ work. This in turn raises the question – do we as an organisation ‘follow the money’ and move from community representation to service delivery? And what are the consequences of this for us, and the neighbourhoods we serve?

Even running a small group requires an increasingly detailed understanding to ensure compliance with legislation and accountability. Do such groups have the capacity to do so? Are the management and monitoring systems within the organisation robust enough to manage funding and report adequately on its use? Do we have clear and transparent governance?

Again, the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has made a substantial contribution to developing such governance systems, often, as noted, challenging those groups with weak

<sup>43</sup> Charity Commission (2007) *Stand and Deliver: the future of charities providing local services*. Charity Commission, London.

and unaccountable management systems. This is a crucial element of the devolution and neighbourhoods agenda. Yet good governance does not flow righteously from a desire to place power at the local level.

So, as current funding draws to a close, it is important that this crucial role of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme is not lost – developing good neighbourhood governance based on both experience, expertise and a willingness to address issues from the perspective of supportive peers rather than, last resort, regulation.

Finally, the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has illustrated the importance of developing ‘new’ management skills in voluntary and community organisations. Change takes time and time requires funding in an uncertain and changing environment. Business planning and the ability to take a long term view of organisational roles and development are now fundamental, and often absent, skills. Whilst social enterprise may not be the way forward for all, adopting or adapting this more business orientated model may be crucial if community based organisations are to survive, never mind thrive.

## Learning for infrastructure networks

Networks need a purpose and a structure but ‘networking’ can take many forms. Evidence shows that residents / unpaid activists get little access to networks beyond their immediate locality and have few opportunities to learn from people outside their local area. This is because they are often outside the information loops of paid ‘professionals’ and they do not have the resources to travel to meetings or often the personal time and space to be away from home for any length of time. Access to networks, especially if nationally spread like the Guide Neighbourhoods one, is therefore significant for programme participants.

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme has run a formal network and is looking to continue this. In doing so, a clearer focus might come from assessing the needs of network members in relation to how much it is about<sup>44</sup>:

- exchanging information, skills and learning as well as building mutual support and confidence
- joint working on issues of common concern and developing a sense of common purpose
- co-ordination of activity
- collaborative strategic decision making and influencing policy agendas
- delivering policy objectives across neighbourhoods, localities and regions

<sup>44</sup> Skinner, S and Wilson, M. (2002) *Assessing Community Strengths*. Community Development Foundation.

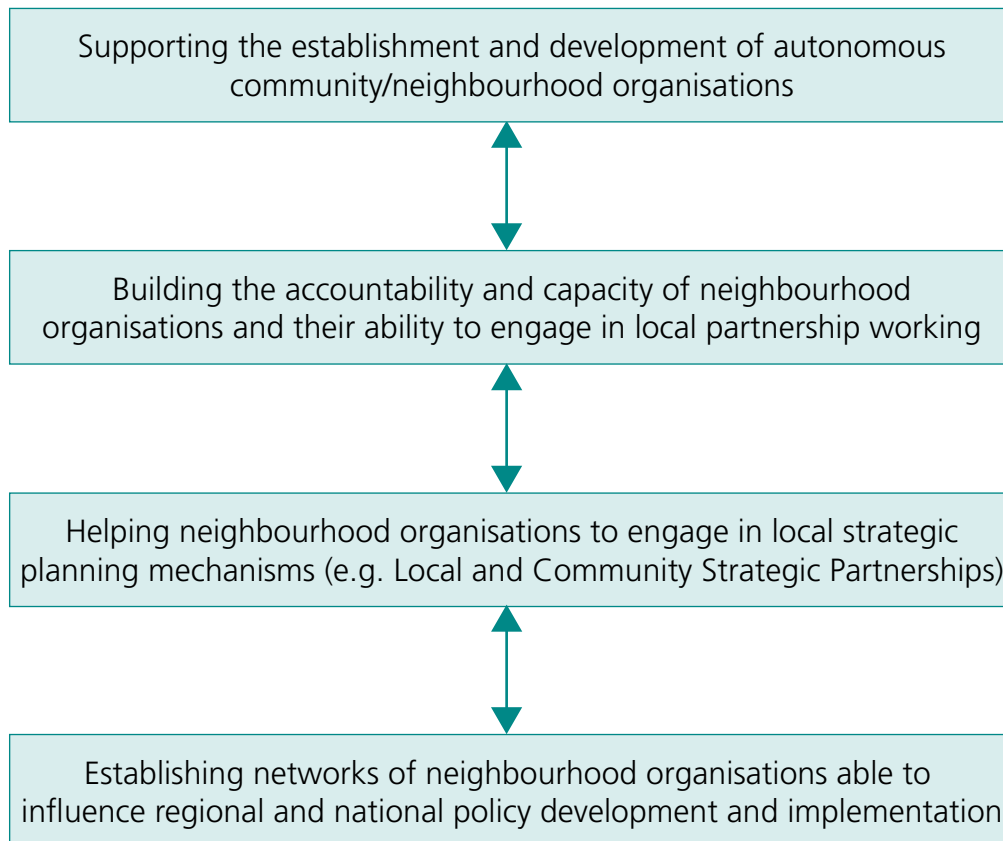
Alternatively, network health checks are useful to reflect on past experience and strengthen the network for the future. These would ask questions about who feels ownership of the network, how the network ensures people don't feel excluded, whether the network intends to influence policy and if so how it ensures this is carried out in an accountable way – and, crucially, whether strong resident representation within other established nation networks (such as Community Matters) is a more effective way forward – rather than establishing discreet Guide Neighbourhoods arrangements where guides may lack the resources on the ground to actually deliver what has been distinctive about the initiative – namely resident to resident or neighbourhood to neighbourhood learning for change.

## Conclusions: from small steps to big differences

Guide Neighbourhoods have attempted to work at a range of policy and practice levels (see Table 4) – from the national to the highly local. Further, they have supported not only neighbourhood development but the growth and effectiveness of communities of interest.

Where they have had most impact, in policy terms, has been in building active citizenship and strengthening communities locally. Further, they have begun to address the capacity of resident and community based organisations to engage with partnerships – and vice versa. Given time and funding constraints, there is less evidence of impact at regional and national levels. However, in terms of addressing the broad agendas of democratic deficit, active citizenship and the engagement of diverse communities Guide Neighbourhoods at their best have demonstrated the value of offering a 'menu' of learning opportunities which, with on-going and accessible advice and support, can bring about neighbourhood change.

**Table 4: Levels of Guide Neighbourhood engagement and influence**



The issue of how more confident neighbourhood groups can then move on to work together and influence regional and national policy has yet to be fully addressed. But resourcing that grass roots engagement beyond the purely local will be critical if examples of positive practice are to become more than localised, isolated, exemplars and the aspirations of ‘The Learning Curve’<sup>45</sup> are to be achieved – namely changing the understandings and practice of professionals and policy makers working to promote, or address the barriers to, active citizenship and sustainable communities. In short, every voice may count, but not every voice is heard or respected. Guide Neighbourhoods have played an important role in ‘giving a voice to the voiceless.’ But, as previous evaluations of regeneration initiatives have amply demonstrated – this takes time.

The challenge now is to capitalise on this investment in the learning from the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme; to use the resident expertise available as a key implementation tool for the Local Government White Paper and other policy agendas. Investment in neighbourhood learning locally, regionally and nationally is critical to achieving the goal of sustainable communities and building the belief that ‘every action counts’ and that articulate and confident communities can make a difference:

“Planting flowers, tidying up the neighbourhood may seem like small steps. But they are making a big difference” (Client neighbourhood)

“We used to say, if we can do something. Now we say when we can do something” (Client neighbourhood)

<sup>45</sup> Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2002) *The Learning Curve: developing skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal*. ODPM, London.

## Glossary

The following glossary outlines the key policy and practice initiatives referred to throughout the report. For the purposes of consistency, existing definitions have been used wherever possible.

### Area based initiatives

The term Area based Initiatives covers a wide range of government funding programmes over the last 10 years (from Health and Education Action Zones to New Deal for Communities) which have targeted ring fenced monies on the most deprived wards in England.

### Active citizenship

Refers to the full participation of people in the civil, political and social well-being of their communities – through volunteering or engagement in local political decision making.

### Active Learning for Active Citizenship

An initiative funded by The Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit (2004) as part of 'Together We Can' to develop a network of learning opportunities to promote active citizenship.

### Capacity building

A term which refers to building the skills, knowledge and access to resources which enable individual citizens, voluntary and community organisations to play a fuller part in policy development and delivery.

### ChangeUp

ChangeUp (Home Office; 2004) is the Government's ten year strategy for supporting voluntary and community sector infrastructure development (e.g. access to expert legal, funding and related advice) which enhances the capacity of front line voluntary and community sector delivery organisations.

### Civil Renewal

"Civil renewal is about giving people a stronger sense of involvement in their communities and a greater say over their lives. It is about encouraging people to be active citizens, strengthening communities and enabling partnership between citizens and officialdom in the planning and delivery of public services". (Blunkett, D (2003) *Active Citizens, Strong Communities. Progressing Civil Renewal*. Home Office, London).



## Community cohesion

Community cohesion incorporates and goes beyond the concept of race equality and social inclusion. A cohesive community is one where there is a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities, the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued and those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities (adapted from Cattle, T. (2005) *Community Cohesion*, Palgrave, Basingstoke).

## Democratic deficit

Refers to policy concerns that voter registration and actual voting at national and local elections has declined in Western democracies in recent years – along with a fall in the active membership of civil society organisations such as trade unions and community groups (Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling Alone*, Simon & Schuster, New York).

## Egan Review (The)

Produced in 2004, this report explores the holistic approach necessary for sustainable communities and the skills and behaviours required by partners in working together. The report has been the basis for the subsequent White Paper; Planning for a Sustainable Future (Communities and Local Government; 2007).

## Learning Curve (The)

Produced in 2002 by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, The Learning Curve outlines the government's strategy for developing the skills and knowledge of professionals and policy makers working with deprived or marginalised communities.

## Local Enterprise Growth Initiative

The Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) was announced in the 2005 Budget and is a funding stream which aims to “release the economic and productivity potential of the most deprived areas across the country through enterprise and investment” (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit).

## Localisation

Refers to a range of government policies, outlined in the 2006 Local Government White Paper, which emphasise the devolution of decision making powers to regions, local government and, ultimately, neighbourhoods.

## Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal; A national strategy action plan (2000) set out “the government's vision for narrowing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country so that within 10 to 20 years no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live.” The strategy has underpinned a range of initiatives, including Neighbourhood Management, Neighbourhood Wardens and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) across 88 local authority areas in England.

## Policy Action Team 16

The Policy Action Team 16 report (*Learning Lessons*; 2000) identified gaps in the skills and knowledge of practitioners and policy makers in bringing about change in deprived or marginalised communities and recommended a menu of learning opportunities to develop such skills.

## Quirk Review (The)

The Quirk Review (*Communities and Local Government*; 2007) examines the potential of the transfer of assets (e.g. leisure centres and other buildings) from local authorities and other statutory agencies to community based organisations.

## Russell Commission (The)

The Russell Commission report (*A national strategy for youth action and engagement*; 2005) aims encourage local and national strategies which promote young people's positive contributions to their communities.

## Social enterprise

A term which refers to a broad range of organisations which operate on business principles – but aim to have direct social benefits and trade on a not-for-profit basis, or re-invest any surpluses generated in their communities. The Government's strategy to promote social businesses is outlined in The Department of Trade and Industry paper (2002) – *Social Enterprise; a strategy for success*.

## Together We Can

Together We Can is “the government's campaign to bring government and people closer together, encouraging public bodies to do more to enable people to influence local decisions.” Together We Can is led by Communities and Local Government, but is a cross departmental programme which has supported a range of initiatives including the Guide Neighbourhoods and Active Learning for Active Citizenship programmes.

# Appendix 1 The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme evaluation framework: thinking about change

## Client neighbourhoods

Issues to be addressed in Client Neighbourhoods	Types of Intervention/ support offered	Challenges for Clients Responding to GN Programme	Outcomes for Clients	Indicators of Client Learning and Progress	Evidence
<b>Quality of Life</b> Need for Technical Expertise in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Housing Management</li> <li>● Community Safety</li> <li>● Education</li> <li>● Employment</li> <li>● Environment</li> <li>● Health</li> <li>● Social Enterprise</li> </ul>	Neighbourhood visits Training Consultancy	Geographical location Finding appropriate Guide Neighbourhoods	Improvements in the quality of (community) life	<b>Process:</b> Degree to which knowledge and skills have been gained by clients and been applied <b>Output:</b> Examples of community driven/informed development <b>Impact:</b> Examples from clients of how any difference/change created by their learning	<b>Process:</b> Improved Housing Management Stronger negotiating position with Landlord Understanding of tenant management <b>Impacts:</b> More jobs and facilities More training and education opportunities Better access to better housing
<b>Analysis of Neighbourhood Issues and Assets</b>	Community Appraisal exercises delivered by Guide Neighbourhoods	Raising awareness	A clear way forward based on greater understanding of the neighbourhood Residents able to take ownership of their own community's needs and aspirations.	<b>Process:</b> Issues are identified by the community <b>Output:</b> Development of community led plans	<b>Process:</b> Consultation and identifying potential partners <b>Output:</b> Neighbourhood/ Master Plans or neighbourhood strategy
<b>Resident Engagement and Self-Esteem</b>	Neighbourhood Visits, Personal Development Work Community Development Work	Inspiring others Gaining confidence of own community	Gaining confidence to challenge the issues affecting them and find solutions Representative structures established	<b>Process:</b> Increasing community activity. Increasing community morale. <b>Output:</b> Increasing community involvement in partnerships/ representative structures	<b>Process:</b> Outreach recruiting more members to community groups <b>Output:</b> Number of residents involved in local processes

Issues to be addressed in Client Neighbourhoods	Types of Intervention/ support offered	Challenges for Clients Responding to GN Programme	Outcomes for Clients	Indicators of Client Learning and Progress	Evidence
<b>Organisational Capacity</b>	Training in resident governance, leadership and business skills	To trust the Guide to provide services Too many things to do Prioritising Tight timescale	Residents' groups with an action plan to access funding and provide a 'local' service to residents Knowledge of staffing issues and general management of their estates/communities	<b>Process:</b> Action Planning Training and experience in staffing and project management Awareness of gaps and identification of appropriate further skill development.	<b>Process:</b> constitution/terms of reference as appropriate, development of strategic action plan/business plan, learning management skills <b>Output:</b> activities undertaken in relation to action plan. Successful employment and management of workers
<b>Community Cohesion and Diversity</b>	Consultants supporting community development in Client Neighbourhoods	Guides may be struggling in this area and/or have little expertise to offer.	Residents involved reflect the diversity of the neighbourhood	Range of opportunities for involvement. Diversity of those involved Developments reflect different interests. Range of issues addressed.	<b>Process:</b> Examples of new route into engagement <b>Output:</b> Examples of greater engagement of BME groups/ women/'new' communities/ young people into local processes and structures
<b>Partnership Working and Influence on Power holders</b>	Training on non-conflict working, values and trust Mentoring	Relationships with local council and agencies	More influence over decisions, priorities and services for their neighbourhoods	<b>Process:</b> Residents learning to work in (and establish) effective partnerships with service providers Recognition of communities as contributors by other partners <b>Impact:</b> Extent of influence of residents on agendas	<b>Process:</b> Examples of effective collaboration and improved working relationships with service providers. <b>Outputs:</b> Examples of community led projects and resident led decisions
<b>Sustainability</b>	Funding and business training	Accessing resources Difficulty in receiving guidance and support to get resources Lack of clear Info re HMRI	Access to relevant funds Assets transferred into resident control	<b>Process:</b> Strategic/business plans in place, including long term financial projections. Positive approach coupled with understanding of 'risk'.	<b>Output:</b> Secure Funding position Development of TMOs

## Guide Neighbourhoods Programme

Programme Aims	Programme wide support offered to GNs	Challenges for Guide Neighbourhoods in Providing Services	Outcomes for GNs	Programme Outcomes	Indicators	Evidence
<b>Tangible change in quality of life in Client Neighbourhoods</b>	Funding	Building up client base	Developing skilled services capable of impacting on clients	Improving quality of life in client neighbourhoods	<b>Impact:</b> NRU Neighbourhood Floor targets	<b>Impact:</b> Examples of improvements in employment, educational attainment, services and access to facilities
<b>Transfer learning to clients</b>	Small grants	'Clients' not requesting visits Training skills necessary to pass on expertise.	Income streams, Learning from clients Tried and tested models of active and transparent process for involving people	Cascade of future GN capacity	<b>Output:</b> Increasing number of neighbourhoods using an evidence base to focus on solutions	<b>Output:</b> Examples of Client Neighbourhoods developing and using Action Plans Feedback from clients
<b>Develop Sustainability in Guide Neighbourhoods</b>	Funding	Limits of timescale for programme <i>Sustainability of the resident consultants</i> roles Limited resources Rules of employment for consultants (Poverty trap) Communications and marketing How to measure achievements Lack of sufficient skilled residents	Sustainable employment growth and career paths, including consultancy undertaken by residents on commercial basis after 18 months Improved knowledge levels and confidence of staff and committee members	Effective seedbed for social enterprise	<b>Process:</b> Increasing capacity of Guide Neighbourhoods to provide broader range of services and/or greater depth of service <b>Output:</b> Increasing number of people able to work with client neighbourhoods, including number of mentors developed and number of people gaining qualifications <b>Impact:</b> Moving from funding (grants) dependency to self-sufficiency	<b>Process:</b> Examples of developing defined consultancy products with viable markets <b>Output:</b> Number of trained consultants in employment <b>Impact:</b> Examples of success in being commissioned to work in neighbourhoods where funding is available

Programme Aims	Programme wide support offered to GNs	Challenges for Guide Neighbourhoods in Providing Services	Outcomes for GNs	Programme Outcomes	Indicators	Evidence
<p><b>Share learning across GNs in Programme</b></p>	<p>Network Meetings, bilateral contacts and mutual visits</p>		<p>Extended networks and peer support within and across regions, sharing skills and knowledge Co-ordinated approach to govt</p>	<p>Effective learning network embodying good practice</p>	<p><b>Output:</b> Examples of GNs learning from each other. <b>Impact:</b> GNs are building on each other's work rather than duplicating</p>	<p>Evidence that small grants criteria, policies, publicity is being shared</p>

## Appendix 2 The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme 'Shield'

### **What**

Developing and supporting the sharing and establishment of good practice within the community to influence and stimulate action for positive change for all.

### **Who**

Residents are at the heart of it but served and supported by all useful statutory and non-statutory agencies.

### **Why**

Because we are ideally placed to meet local needs by empowering communities through sharing our experiences and knowledge.

### **How**

By enabling residents in successful neighbourhoods to share experiences, including partnership working, development and training of other groups and to take a leading role within their communities.

### **Our Purpose is to:**

1. Develop and support the share and establishment of good practice within the community to influence and stimulate action for positive change for all by enabling residents in successful neighbourhoods to share experiences to include partnership working, development and training to take a leading role within their communities.
2. Eradicate disadvantaged neighbourhoods through resident-to-resident support.

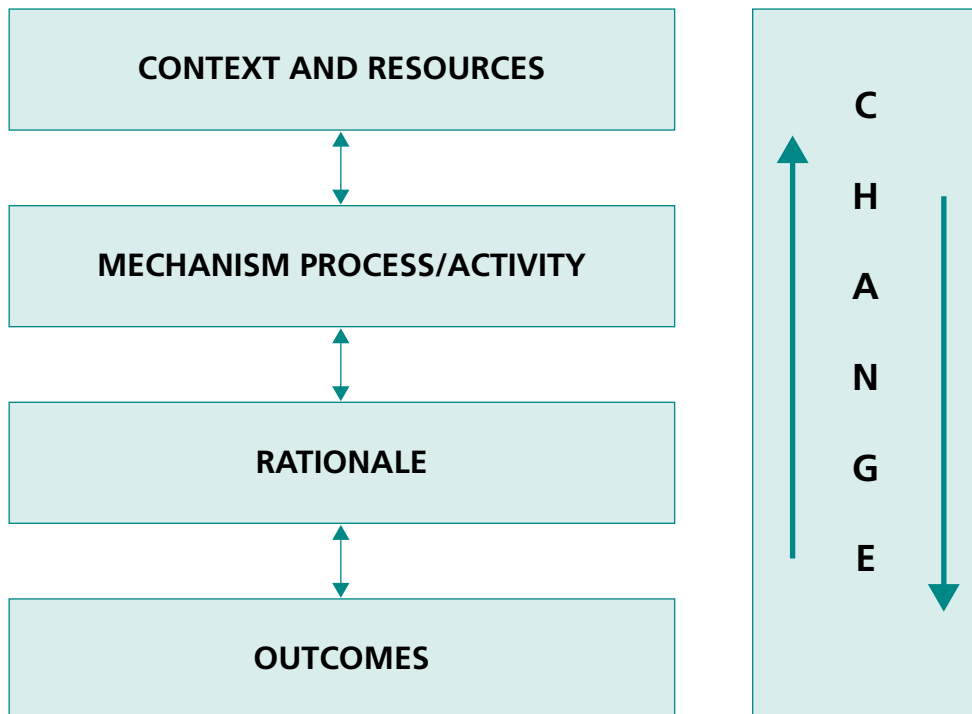
## Appendix 3 Evaluation methods

“The main concern about the future remains, as it has since the beginning of the programme, that there is not sufficient time for significant impact to be evidenced.”

(Regenerate (2006) Guide Neighbourhood Annual Report to the Home Office/CLG. June)

Attributing change to any one programme or intervention is always problematic – particularly in a field as complex and varied as community regeneration. In an attempt to address these issues, the evaluation team adopted a ‘Theories of Change’ model. This was developed as an evaluation framework for exploring the impact of complex community based initiatives (CCIs) in the United States in the late 1980s and 1990s.<sup>46</sup> The approach adopted is summarised in the diagram below.

### Theories of change



A further advantage with Theories of Change is that it enables evaluators to:

- place service development within a broader context of needs, resources and policy
- explore the processes (or activities) undertaken to address needs and the rationales which underpin particular approaches to service delivery mechanisms which may maximise impact
- Identify and attribute impacts in the short and medium term against longer term goals.

Using this approach, a theories of change evaluation framework was developed in workshops with Guide Neighbourhoods (See Appendices 4-5) early in the Programme’s evolution.

<sup>46</sup> Kubisch et al (eds) (1995) *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives*. Aspen Institute, Washington DC.



In terms of research activity, the original intention was to focus on three in depth case studies and adopt a 'light touch' approach with other participants in the Programme. However, it became apparent that, as the initiative expended, this would not capture the diversity of the Programme or the outcomes achieved across individual neighbourhoods.

As a result, the evaluation team has tried to work across all Guide Neighbourhoods in a greater depth – within limited resources available – and to balance a clearly developmental role with that of an objective external commentator. Further, towards the end of the initiative, attention moved from Guide Neighbourhoods themselves to direct work with their client. This was a means of both assessing the learning models adopted by Guides and the extent to which learning was being translated into action and change in particular communities.

The evaluation has, therefore, moved through three stages.

### **Phase 1: Baseline**

This involved initial scoping meetings with the Home Office and representatives from Regenerate/Housing Justice to refine the evaluation approach and questions. In addition, face to face interviews were held with all the original Guide Neighbourhoods (9) and with those that joined the Programme at a latter date (5) or became involved as associates (2). Interviews were also conducted with key policy makers, and an extensive literature review undertaken, to contextualise the initiative.

At this stage, 19 interviews also with client neighbourhoods and 4 (including group interview) sessions were held with Resident Guides. These were then repeated throughout the evaluation as a means of assessing both barriers and progress.

Findings from this stage of the evaluation were presented to the Home Office in November 2005 (Experts through Experience).

### **Phase 2: Progress reviews**

This stage involved repeat mid-point interviews with Guide Neighbourhoods, representatives from Regenerate, the Home Office, client neighbourhoods and other key stakeholders. In total, 39 interviews were completed with 55 participants. The findings at this point were then fed back to Guide Neighbourhoods as well as the managing agent and the Home Office (Learning from Neighbourhood to Neighbourhood; July 2006).

### **Phase 3: Impact assessment**

In the final phase, the emphasis shifted from Guide to client neighbourhoods. A postal questionnaire was forwarded to 88 neighbourhoods that Guides identified they had some form on on-going relationship with (over and above initial visits). All 45 respondents to this questionnaire were then interviewed either by phone or face-to face.

Final exist interviews were also undertaken with representatives from the Home Office/ Communities and Local Government, Regenerate. Guide Neighbourhoods and associates (20).

In addition to formal/semi-structured interviews, the evaluation team also:

- Attended national Guide Neighbourhood networking events and facilitated 9 workshops at these meetings
- Observed and facilitated workshops at both national and regional Guide Neighbourhood conferences
- Participated in Guide Neighbourhood Forward Strategy and Training Working Groups
- Took part in observation sessions at local Guide Neighbourhood events
- Offered telephone advice and support to individual resident guides
- Held regular debriefing sessions with representatives from the Home Office/ Communities and Local Government and Regenerate.

The evaluation was not, then, simply the linear approach suggested in the previous description of ‘phased’ working. Rather, much like the experience of Guide Neighbourhoods themselves, it required the careful building of relationships both with Guides and client neighbourhoods and the ‘pushing back’ of evaluation activity to the very end of the initiative in an attempt to capture the outcomes of Guide Neighbourhood activity. This has required flexibility on the part of Communities and Local Government, Regenerate, Guide and client neighbourhoods. Their patience, time and honesty have been particularly appreciated by the evaluation team.

## Appendix 4 Reference group membership

The evaluation team would wish to thank members of the evaluation reference group, convened by Communities and Local Government, for their advice and support. Members of the group included:

Phil Barton	RENEW (North West Regional Centre of Excellence)
Amanda Beers	Home Office/Communities and Local Government
Sarah Benioff	Community Development Foundation
Alison Gelder	Housing Justice/Regenerate
Elin Gudnadottir	Urban Forum
Jayne Humm	Community Development Foundation
Rob Lantsbury	Poplar HARCA (Guide Neighbourhood)
Robin Lee	Home Office/Communities and Local Government
Lorna Leeston	Seedley and Langworthy Trust (Guide Neighbourhood)
Beth Longstaff	Community Development Exchange
Judith Maizel-Long	Housing Justice/Regenerate
Marjorie Mayo	Goldsmiths: University of London
Jane Moss	Home Office/Communities and Local Government
Duncan Prime	Home Office/Communities and Local Government
Tony Rich	Local Government Association
Jess Steele	Development Trust Association
Marilyn Taylor	Independent Consultant
Charles Woodd	Home Office/Communities and Local Government

Thanks also to Professor Marilyn Taylor (Cities Research Centre, University of the West of England for her encouragement and critical readings of draft evaluation reports.

## Appendix 5 Guide Neighbourhoods: a portrait

Guide Neighbourhoods brought together a common theme of resident to resident, or neighbourhood to neighbourhood, learning. Yet the organisations involved were diverse – both in the characteristics, skills and expertise. The following appendix offers a brief ‘pen portrait’ of the participating groups and the communities they serve.

### **Balsall Heath Forum, Birmingham**

Balsall Heath is an inner city ward of Birmingham. Although mixed tenure, housing is predominantly Victorian and Edwardian terraces with some low-rise 1960/70s buildings. Out of a local population of 15,000, 60% are Asian, 20% black and 20% white.

The Guide Neighbourhood work is managed by Balsall Heath Forum, a company limited by guarantee established in 1992 from what had previously been the ‘Building a Better Balsall Heath Campaign’. The Forum employs 20 people, who are managed through the locally elected committee. There is one full-time Guide Neighbourhood Co-ordinator who works closely with other staff employed by the Forum. The Forum is involved in a wide range of activities – including running a community (environmental) nursery, neighbourhood management and warden schemes.

The Forum (via Residents for Regeneration) was involved in the ODPM/DfES funded Resident Consultancy initiative and has a particular focus on the development of local services and improving services in inner city/multi-cultural communities.

### **Burrowes Street Tenant Management Organisation, Walsall**

Burrowes Street is an inner city estate of 312 properties with a mixture of low-rise, multi-story blocks and sheltered accommodation. Built in the 1960s, the area is predominantly white – though with an increasing number of black and minority ethnic and newly arrived community residents. It is surrounded by Victorian and Edwardian housing, which are mainly owner occupied with a majority Asian population.

Burrowes Street gained Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) status in 1994 and was the first organisation to do so in Walsall. The Tenant Management Organisation has managed property on the estate for approximately thirteen years, and is an active member of Walsall Alliance of Tenant Management Organisations (WATMOS – established in 2003) and the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations (NFTMO). Burrowes Street also works in partnership with both Caldmore and Accord Housing Associations, managing a small number of homes on behalf of each organisation.

Whilst the initial focus of local activity was on stock transfer, Burrowes Street also works with a range of partners on issues such as green space environment, community safety, disability and early years programmes (e.g. SureStart).

### **Castle Vale Community Housing Association, Birmingham**

Castle Vale is a peripheral estate on the outskirts of Birmingham. Built in the 1960s, it is a predominantly white area consisting of some 4,097 properties and approximately 9,000 residents. The estate is mixed tenure, with almost 40% of properties in owner occupation. Historically local authority managed, the estate became a Housing Action Trust in the 1990s and has undergone substantial refurbishment since – in particular the replacement of tower blocks with low-rise accommodation.

Castle Vale Community Housing Association (CVCHA) was formed in 1997 and is a registered social landlord. CVCHA took over management of the estate in 2005, as part of the succession strategy for the Housing Action Trust. CVCHA manages just under 2,500 properties.

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme is delivered by two full-time members of staff, with direct line management provided by CVCHA and support from a number of sessional/volunteer neighbourhood guides and other local partner agencies. In the past, the main focus of work has been on housing management, but the initiative is increasingly involved in addressing issues of environmental (green space) improvements, community safety, education and training.

### **The Eldonian Group, Liverpool**

The Eldonian Village is an inner-city area located at the end of the Leeds- Liverpool canal in the Vauxhall ward of Liverpool, just on the outskirts of the city centre. It consists of mixed tenure housing and a mainly white British population.

The Eldonian Group was established in 1987 and is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It is a community based membership organisation with a management board comprising elected local community and business representatives. The Group has successfully helped transform significant parts of the Vauxhall area, attracting major external investment, contributing to improvements in the physical environment, and the skill levels and employment opportunities of local people.

The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme within the Eldonian Group is managed by the Regeneration Manager who reports to the Chief Executive. The focus for the Group's work is social enterprise development and resident led estate management.

### **Goodwin Development Trust, Hull**

Goodwin Development Trust (GDT) is based on the Thornton Estate, a deprived inner city estate of 2,600 properties, 60% of which are council owned. There are approximately 3,500 residents living on the estate and there is a wide range of ages and ethnic backgrounds. The estate, built in the 1950s, has a history of multiple deprivation, particularly in areas of education, skills and health.

GDT was established ten years ago by a group of local residents keen to improve their neighbourhood, and has pioneered an approach to regeneration, community involvement and provision of quality services to become a multi-million pound enterprise which works across Hull and beyond. Now, a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, the Trust management structure maintains a resident led balance (seven residents and four partners).

Although GDT is still rooted in the predominantly council owned Thornton Estate and continues to invest and manage resources there, it has been running a Community Wardens service across Hull for some time, and is increasingly called upon to share its expertise in relation to a whole range of issues and models of working – including community safety, local governance, participatory appraisal, project management, asset development and partnership working.

### **INclude, Liverpool**

INclude covers two mixed tenure areas of inner city Liverpool: Liverpool 1, which has a diverse population including the majority of the Chinese community of the city; and, Liverpool 8, which also has a diverse population including the majority of black and minority ethnic residents in the city.

INclude is a neighbourhood regeneration company which was formed in March 2001 as a partnership between Liverpool City Council and CDS Housing, the social landlord with most property in the area. It is an Industrial and Provident Society with an elected management board and staff team of five. The Guide Neighbourhood work employs two full-time staff and is managed and delivered by TiC – a consultancy arm of PLUS Housing Association – and reports to the Board of INclude.

INclude is a centre for Neighbourhood Management and works to support the involvement of local residents in the development of services.

### **Leicester North West Community Forum**

Leicester North West Community Forum covers five peripheral estates. The population of the neighbourhood is approximately 20,000, with 13,500 on the electoral role, consisting of 10,000 households, of which 22% are black and minority ethnic. The population is diverse, with 32 languages spoken within three or four streets of the Forum office. More prominent ethnic groups include Somali, Congolese, Romanians and Turkish. The neighbourhood includes 400 to 600 asylum seekers and refugees.

Leicester NW Community Forum is a not for profit company limited by guarantee. The Board of Directors consists of local residents elected by the local community (with a 38% poll). The Board sets the direction for the Forum staff.

The core work of the Forum is capacity building and resident learning. The Guide Neighbourhood Programme work, which commenced in July 2005, is lead by the Learning Manager, who is supported by the Chief Executive.

### **National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations**

The National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations (NFTMO) was founded in 1992 to support emerging Tenant Management Organisations. It is a national membership based organisation representing approximately 110 (of an estimated 230) TMOs in England.

The Federation is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by an executive committee of 20 community representatives from all parts of the country.

NFTMO currently has one part-time paid co-ordinator, but has recruited some 18 volunteer neighbourhood guides at the local level, and provides them with induction training as a means of delivering its Guide Neighbourhoods work programme. The specific focus of this is supporting the development of TMOs and other forms of community managed housing.

### **Neighbours4U, North Kent**

Neighbours4U primarily operates in the Thames Gateway areas of Medway and North Kent. The aim of Neighbours4U is to assist residents in implementing regeneration and renewal projects. The project links residents in neighbourhoods that have been through the process of regeneration with those starting out, allowing them to share successful experiences and to encourage and inspire other residents to become involved.

Neighbours4U is managed by Hope in the Community (HitC) – a registered charity established in 2004 with the aim of providing an umbrella of support for faith and voluntary sector groups engaged in community regeneration.

A full-time Community Development Worker is employed by Neighbours4U to encourage networking between neighbourhood groups. Qualified trainers are used to deliver seminars and recognised courses in community development, which relate directly to the needs of local communities.

### **Pembroke Street Estate Management Board, Plymouth**

Pembroke Street is situated in Mount Wise, an inner city estate approximately one mile from Plymouth city centre, bordering on Devonport naval dockyards. The local population is white English. Suffering from a history of declining housing stock as well as crime and litter, a campaign group was launched in 1987 and this eventually led to an intensive redesign of the estate led by the residents. Pembroke Street became the only tenant management estate in Plymouth. Pembroke Street Estate Management Board was set up in 1994 to manage the 160 properties for which it is responsible.

Pembroke Street Estate Management Board is a company limited by guarantee, with a board consisting of 14 residents, two councillors and two housing officers. Its core work is housing management, as well as youth work and economic development. Pembroke Street has a staff of eight full-time paid and seven part-time staff, and 15 volunteers.

Pembroke Street has expertise in involving residents in estate and housing management, including 'planning for real', and is now supporting the setting up of another tenant managed estate in Plymouth, as well as youth, community safety and partnership working and general resident engagement and confidence building.

### **Perry Common Guide Neighbourhood, Birmingham**

Perry Common is a peripheral estate in Birmingham. It is a predominantly white area with housing stock consisting of new-build terraced, semi and detached properties as well as semi-detached former council housing.

Witton Lodge Community Association (WLCA) was formed in 1994 as a direct response to Birmingham City Council earmarking approximately two-thirds of the estate for demolition. The original purpose of WLCA was to manage the redevelopment and regeneration of Perry Common. WLCA is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It has a resident-majority board with an independent (unpaid) chair. It has no employees. Its core work is the physical rebuilding of the estate, housing management, management of Sycamore Court Extra Care Scheme and 127 of its own properties. The Association's work has also recently evolved to address issues of community safety, environmental services and play facilities.

Perry Common Regeneration Partnership was founded in 2001 with the aims of supporting the physical regeneration of the Perry Common area by addressing the wider regeneration issues of the residents, such as social, economic, emotional and health concerns. It currently has a staff of four, including Perry Common's Neighbourhood Co-ordinator. The Partnership also supports Perry Common's Community Shop and Parish Nurse Project.

Witton Lodge Community Association and Perry Common Regeneration Partnership together constitute Perry Common Guide Neighbourhood.



### **Poplar HARCA/New Mill Consultants, London**

Poplar HARCA (Housing and Regeneration Community Association) covers one and a half square miles of inner city East London, comprising six ex-council estates. The neighbourhood consists of very dense social housing. Of 11,000 housing units in the neighbourhood, Poplar HARCA owns and administers over 7,300, which have been transferred from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets between 1999 and 2006. Asian/Asian British and Black/Black British residents make up 38% and 10% of the population respectively. The area also has a high youth population. Census statistics show that in Tower Hamlets 25.6% of the population are under the age of 16, which is higher than anywhere else in Britain. The local area experiences extreme pockets of deprivation, with high crime rates, poor housing standards, few green spaces and low qualification levels.

Poplar HARCA is a registered social landlord and registered charity. New Mill Consultants consists of resident leaders who have worked with Poplar HARCA in the regeneration of the local community. New Mill Consultants are a constituted company that works closely with Poplar HARCA's Resident Empowerment Team and are able to offer expertise in supporting and developing residents so they can manage their estates and the regeneration of the area. As a result of this many resident-led trusts and local regeneration groups have been established, including those pioneered by New Mill residents. This has resulted in successful initiatives such as community greens and social enterprises.

### **Royds Community Association, Bradford**

Royds Community Association was formed 10 years ago and is located on the south west border of Bradford. It originally served three council estates, consisting of approximately 3,500 properties and a population of 12,000. The population was largely white working class with an ethnic minority population of less than 1%. Royds currently operates across a larger area of Bradford South working with diverse communities, including asylum seekers and economic migrants. Its core activity is to deliver a range of social projects, promote local regeneration and develop social enterprise.

The Community Association is both a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It is resident led and the Board of Directors, who are all volunteers, is the accountable body and comprises local people and 'institutional' directors. Royds currently has a staff team of 32 – with two workers employed on the Guide Neighbourhoods initiative.

Royds offers expertise around consultation, capacity building and planning/design as well as asset management and community safety. A particular emphasis is placed on partnership development.

### **Seedley and Langworthy Trust (SALT), Salford**

Seedley and Langworthy Trust (SALT) is a community trust. It is based in the Langworthy ward of Salford which is an area of 3000 households. Housing is mainly terraced and was originally built to house those working in local industries. The age, condition and lack of demand for this type of property led to a decline in the area during the 1990s and early 2000s. The crime rate in the area is still higher than in other areas of the city with most of the issues relate to juvenile nuisance in specific areas.

SALT was set up in 1997 to develop effective links between people who live and work in the Seedley and Langworthy area of Salford and partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It provides over 20 resident associations with ongoing support and runs a community resource centre within the local shopping area. It is currently involved with Urban Splash architects in the redesign and regeneration of 385 Victorian terraced houses into affordable contemporary homes.

The Trust can also provide expertise on environmental and community safety projects, including, for example, creating green spaces in dense built-up areas and implementing alley-gating schemes.

### **Stubbin Neighbourhood Association (SNA), Sheffield**

Stubbin in Sheffield is a peripheral estate of around 8,000 people. The housing is primarily owned by the council with the remainder being right to buy properties, run by registered social landlords and private landlords. A new Barratt Homes site is under construction. It is an area characterised by unemployment and benefits, with a record of low educational attainment (the third worst neighbourhood in the city). It has a disproportionately high number of both young and older people and community issues reflect this – poor health, lack of family support, crime and community safety (drug and alcohol abuse, a number of no-go areas and anti-social behaviour). Encroaching far right political activity is also a feature and concern of SNA.

Although originally a tenants and residents association and therefore housing focused, SNA was formed as a company limited by guarantee in December 2005 to indicate a broader agenda and has a management committee of local residents.

SNA is sharing its expertise in 'starting up and getting things going', resident involvement (especially with regard to age and ethnic diversity), and knowledge of council structures and potential partner agencies.

### **Walterton and Elgin Community Homes (WECH), London**

Walterton and Elgin Community Homes (WECH) is a resident controlled housing association in Westminster consisting of 658 homes – 507 Victorian terraces on the Walterton estate and 151 on the Elgin Estate. WECH has 149 leaseholder and 455 tenants. As a charitable housing association its aim is to provide homes at affordable rents for those in housing need but it is also a community organisation playing an active part in the regeneration of North Paddington.

WECH is membership-based organisation, with every tenant and leaseholder being entitled to join. It was established in 1992 due to the successful campaigning of the Walterton and Elgin Action Group, which stopped Westminster Council selling off Walterton and Elgin estates to private developers. There are currently 604 members (over 80 % of WECH households have at least one member). The Board comprises 14 resident directors and has places for six co-opted members, chosen for their expertise in particular specialist areas. WECH's rules prevent non-residents from becoming a majority on the board. It has 13 members of staff.

WECH provides an example of how residents and agencies can successfully work together on community driven agendas. Issues of poor health, overcrowding, unemployment and crime are being addressed through a number of activities such as a 'Police in Residence' project, a financial inclusion project, children's activities, a youth club and environmental improvements and arts projects.

## Appendix 6: The Guide Neighbourhoods Programme contribution to policy: summary

Policy Theme	Policy Objectives/Activity	Lead Government Department/Agency	Examples: Guide Neighbourhoods Involved <sup>47</sup>
Localisation/double devolution (Housing and Planning theme – Local Government White Paper)	Reconnecting Govt with citizens Devolution to LA districts/ neighbourhoods	CLG– but cross cutting theme with Home Office/ Cabinet Office etc	All
Neighbourhood Management (Housing and Planning theme – Local Government White Paper)	Neighbourhood Management Schemes Neighbourhood Wardens Neighbourhood Policing Increase in accountability of services	CLG – but cross-cutting theme	Balsall Heath, Royds Community Association, Goodwin Development Trust, INclude
Community Managed Housing/Stock Transfer (Housing and Planning theme – Local Government White Paper)	Linked to localisation/ neighbourhood agenda Additional/new investment in housing stock Improving housing stock in poor owner occupied neighbourhoods	CLG – but cross cutting theme Housing Corporation/ English Partnerships (Communities England)	NFTMOs, Pembroke Street, Burrowes Street, Poplar HARCA/New Mill Consultants, Castle Vale CHA, Eldonian Group, Seedley and Langworthy Trust
Community Safety (Community Safety theme – Local Government White Paper)	Neighbourhood Warden Neighbourhood Policing	Home Office/CLG – but cross cutting theme	Goodwin Development Trust, Castle Vale CHA, Royds Community Association, Burrowes Street
Learning for Neighbourhood Renewal	Learning Curve – increasing the effectiveness of professionals in deprived neighbourhoods Egan Review – learning for sustainable communities	Cross cutting theme (NRU Learning Curve) – learning strategy to support the implementation of the Local Government White Paper	All
Modernising Government – revised Comprehensive Performance Assessment frameworks – communities	Series of 'Better Government' papers (e.g. Better Government for Older people) (See neighbourhood/ localisation agenda) E-government	Cross cutting theme – Cabinet Office/ Strategy Unit/CLG/Local Government White Paper	All Possible contribution to e-government via Leicester NWCF website development

<b>Policy Theme</b>	<b>Policy Objectives/Activity</b>	<b>Lead Government Department/Agency</b>	<b>Examples: Guide Neighbourhoods Involved<sup>47</sup></b>
Community Cohesion (Community Cohesion theme – Local Government White Paper)	Connecting communities agenda	Home Office/CLG/Local Government White Paper	Balsall Heath, Leicester NWCF, Stubbin Neighbourhood Association, INclude, Royds Community Association
‘Mainstreaming’ (Housing and Planning theme – Local Government White Paper)	Development of pooled budgets/Local Area Agreements etc	Cross cutting theme (ODPM Research Report 16)	All
Increase role of voluntary and community sector (Third Sector theme – Local Government White Paper)	Enhance the role of the voluntary and community sectors in public policy planning and delivery	HM Treasury/CLG/Home Office/DTI – cross cutting theme (Treasury Review/Think Smart; Think Voluntary Sector)	All
Active Citizenship (Vulnerable people/ third sector and health and wellbeing themes – Local Government White Paper)	Increasing participation in democracy Increasing number of volunteers	Home Office/CLG/Third Sector Directorate (linked to Treasury PSA targets)	All
Social Enterprise (The Economy theme – Local Government White Paper)	Developing social businesses in deprived neighbourhoods Social Enterprise Strategy – targets for increasing the number of social businesses	DTI/DWP	INclude, Royds Community Association, Eldonian Group, Goodwin Development Trust
Role of faith based groups (Third Sector theme – Local Government White Paper)	Recognise the role of faith based groups in regeneration/community cohesion	Home Office	Neighbours4U
Young People and Participation (Russell Commission/ Children, young people and families theme – Local Government White Paper)	Increase youth participation	DfES/ODPM	Castle Vale CHA, Stubbin Neighbourhood Association, Perry Common
Sustainable Communities (theme throughout Local Government White Paper)	Egan Review	Cross Cutting Theme	All

<b>Policy Theme</b>	<b>Policy Objectives/Activity</b>	<b>Lead Government Department/Agency</b>	<b>Examples: Guide Neighbourhoods Involved<sup>47</sup></b>
Transfer of Assets to Communities	Quirk Review		Goodwin Development Trust, Royds Community Association

<sup>47</sup> The list of Guide Neighbourhoods involved in delivering particular policy themes is illustrative only.

## Appendix 7 Case Study: from community activist to paid worker

As noted, the aspiration of moving community activists into paid employment was one key objective of the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme. The technical difficulties of achieving this are addressed in the main text. The following case study, however, reflects the personal challenges and difficulties faced by volunteers in making that transition.

### From volunteer to paid worker – a case study

My work as a volunteer started at my local church. As a volunteer at the church, I worked very informally. (but then) ....The job advert for the Neighbourhood Development Worker under the Guide Neighbourhoods Programme came through the mail, and at first I rang a woman who was one of my volunteers at the time – I was a volunteer co-ordinator at the church – and asked her if she was interested, but she said ... “why not you?”, and I thought why not me?

My job as a Neighbourhood Development Worker has been at times, very challenging. .... I had worked for a long time on my own...now I was part of a team. I thought the job would just be about picking myself up and placing myself in another building to do the same kind of work, but I think it is a lot different from working in my previous role as a volunteer. These are the differences I see:

At times, when you work voluntarily with one group, you tend to see changes that are needed and can work with those changes there and then. Conversely, as a worker, because of your workload you may never see that group’s needs when it really matters. Therefore it is important to keep up a regular visiting pattern with groups. After the initial honeymoon period is over project administration tends to kick in, and you seem to get stuck behind the desk a little more than you would like. Having to reach targets in paid work helped me, in a way, to think how professionals do and to consider the real need for the project. As well as trying to meet the needs of the group you sometimes have to adapt ...to suit the targets that have been set. When you work voluntarily you build closer relationships, as you often spend more time with people. Trust that happens here is often the invaluable trust that starts to build real community.

Residents that used to be grateful for the work you did voluntarily can presume you are paid to do ... everything that needs to be done in your community, and at times this can be very demanding.

- a) One Sunday afternoon I was still in my pyjamas and someone knocked and asked me to come and take a look at a lamp post that was corroded, so that I could report it and get it dealt with quicker.
- b) I had a visit from a local resident who stayed for three hours to discuss the problems she was facing in the community. After a neighbourhood meeting she attended, which I attended as a worker, she thought she could knock and have coffee after the meeting, and all I wanted to do was to finish work for the night as it was 9pm.
- c) People left it down to me to report anti-social behaviour on a few occasions and just took it for granted now that, even when it doesn’t affect me in anyway, I will take the cause on. There is then a danger of being seen by others as the local “Grass”. I have tackled a few people in the past because of their anti-social attitude.

At times you feel as though you are restricted, for example, in the sense that the views you have as a volunteer community activist may not be the same as the views of the organisation you work for. Having a responsibility to both your employer and your community can sometimes be quite difficult to separate out, especially if it is about something you feel passionate about. There is a great need for a play/sports area in our neighbourhood and I had, in the past looked into funding, and into permission from Liverpool City Council which was given. When I became a paid worker I realized that I had to separate myself from my commitments to this project because my employers were involved in the re-development of the area. Sometimes I almost feel (unintentionally) as though I have given up my community's needs for my own needs of employment.

I have learnt a lot about what community representation really means and how involvement in local community groups can have a demanding impact your life. I have learnt that you should consider every last person's views, and not be bullied into following the stronger pack. I have learnt to be patient with people's views and try to understand their reasons no matter how immaterial they may seem to me or others. ... When I approach an organisation I think of the same thing, "What are their needs?" I ask them how they would like me to help them. At times little things make such a big difference to them.

In general, I feel very blessed in receiving the learning opportunities I have had over the past nine months.

Christine has now left paid work as she found it hard to balance with family life.



## Appendix 8 Guide Neighbourhoods as innovation: sample learning sets

A number of Guide Neighbourhoods have been at the forefront on new policy development – from developing social businesses through to building neighbourhood management and community ownership of assets. The following learning sets are summaries based on workshops facilitated by those Guide Neighbourhoods involved in these developments at programme network events.

### Learning Set 1

#### What's working in neighbourhood management? – a view from Guide Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhood management is a key mechanism in the drive to improve services at a local level and to renew local democracy through active community engagement. Many of the Guide Neighbourhoods have been forging new neighbourhood arrangements for several years and have championed joined up approaches and developed local solutions. Key learning points which can inform successful neighbourhood management initiatives are:

- Develop a shared local community development strategy and vision as a starting point
- Local resident representation at every stage of neighbourhood management is vital. Resident Scrutiny Boards (for example at Castle Vale Community Housing Association) can build trust between residents and key agencies
- Neighbourhood agendas have to be bottom up and have a community focus. This involves a transfer of power from the local authority – and the risks, as well as opportunities this offers need to be recognised by all parties.
- Systems need to be in place to raise the community's understanding of governance issues and for the resolution of disputes between partners to be resolved in an open and transparent manner. Using an independent 'broker' can help.
- Establish clear communication systems – between the wider community and Neighbourhood Management structures – as well as between partner agencies
- Informal networks of key individuals can drive change – but networks need to be accountable to the wider community.
- Celebrate success. "People need to feel proud... reinforcing a sense of community is a priority."

## Learning Set 2

### Social enterprise development – lessons from Guide Neighbourhoods

Promoting social enterprise has become a key theme in recent government policy statements to “strengthen an inclusive and growing economy” (DTI; 2002). The Department for Trade and Industry, alongside Regional Development Agencies, has invested in community development finance initiatives (Phoenix Fund; GHK; 2005) and, with the Home Office (2005), encouraged social enterprises to play an increasing role in the procurement and delivery of public services. Yet there is little literature available which reflects the realities of building social businesses at a community level.

Whilst Guide Neighbourhoods have adopted a different approach to social enterprise and the business activities undertaken – a number of common themes emerged:

- Social enterprise models have the potential to diversify both organisational activities and the funding base. This required new ways of thinking “seeing problems as a market opportunity, rather than a problem”.
- Changing organisational cultures can be difficult, particularly in organisations with a voluntary sector ‘tradition’. “There were tensions between the host organisation feeling the business was a good idea and supporting that idea – and actually investing in it.” What was required was a shift in attitude from managing grants to an investment based approach “but there can be undue pressures to make a profit quickly – which we know is not possible for most new businesses. Organisations can see investment for the long term as a drain on resources in the short term”
- Social enterprises often fail, or struggle to survive because of initial under-investment – especially where there are high capital costs involved in business start-up.
- There are a number of tensions between balancing business objectives and social goals:
- “It’s easy to lose sight of the original (social) objectives and just become another business.”
- “You have to be hard headed. It’s a business and if it does not make a profit – then the community suffers. Maybe the community works at one speed – but as a business you have to operate at another and it’s not easy. You can’t wait around for the community to catch up”
- “Last year the business did not make that much profit. So we had to make (a) community advice worker redundant. It was the hardest decision of my life....because the advice centre does really good work....but if the business folded, there would be no money for community (projects) in the future.”
- Running social enterprises involves “a new professionalism....new ways of thinking, changing mindsets and new ways of working....a flexible workforce....a leaner and in some ways meaner organisation and making sure you do work on a full cost recovery basis. There is a skill I’m still learning – which is to persuade (purchasers/ commissioners) of the ‘added value’ of contracting with a not-for-profit whilst also saying – yes, we do have management costs and yes, you do need to pay for them.”

- Social entrepreneurs are “ideas people, good at development” but “they can be dabblers, watch out for dabblers...they can leave a trail of devastation...they develop the idea, but have no interest in managing things or taking people with them so it all falls apart.” Further, “you do need to know when to let go. If the business (you are developing) requires a lot of technical knowledge – and you only have that in some vague way because you are about developing things – then let go. Let the experts take over. If not, the business will fail – you have become a liability.”
- “Social entrepreneurs are fantastic starters. But they don’t retain interest. You really need to link them with people who really are managers.”
- Social enterprise is not a solution to everything – “there will be communities and places where there is just not enough money around to sustain a business”. However, “it allows (organisations) to use business ways of working to benefit their community...and to get out off being dependent on grants and short term money... to be sustainable. Grants might help, but unless we can keep going, be independent and have the freedom to take risks....communities won’t benefit long term. But its hard – there are no soft options and no short-cuts”.

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### Learning Set 3

#### The Management of community assets: the experience of Guide Neighbourhoods

The transfer of assets from Local Authorities to communities is a key theme of both the Local Government White Paper (2006) and subsequent Quirk Review. Asset transfer is a relatively new area of policy development, and the key lessons from Guide Neighbourhoods involved in this field are:

- Owning and managing community buildings can build the autonomy and independence of community organisations and reduce a reliance on grant income and enhance communities status in partnership negotiations – but: “Ensure you are taking on an asset at the start and not just accepting some one else’s liability.”
- Managing capital assets such as buildings can be a way of creating local jobs – though, for example, employing local labour in improvement and maintenance contracts.
- Asset management requires community organisations to develop new skills – in risk assessment, financial controls and long term investment planning. Training and support to develop this knowledge is not readily available.
- “Getting capital to purchase buildings is the easy part. Its making sure you have the working capital to keep things going that is much harder.” Developing long term relationships and contracts with statutory and other agencies to both use buildings and deliver local services is the key to sustainability.
- As with social enterprise models of regeneration (See Learning Set 2) there are tensions between community benefit and business imperatives. Addressing these needs to be built into the initial planning and development phase of asset management plans.
- There is a tension between the need to expand the asset base to service loans and mortgages and the capacity to ensure that asset management has a long term and direct benefit for the local community. It is important that the wider community feels some ownership of, or at least benefit from “their assets, otherwise you become just another big bad landlord, big bad property developer.”
- The role and expectations of funders are crucial: “You might manage the housing and generate a profit. But Housing Corporation rules prevent you from re-investing that in community development. There needs to be greater flexibility... because without that investment in the community and not just the buildings, you can’t sustain regeneration.”
- Managing assets can “divert your purpose...from being a community advocate to just managing buildings and delivering services. You can loose sight of what you set out to do and what is really needed – a strong voice for the neighbourhood.”