

Tackling deprivation



Adding value at the local level

For many years the government and its partners have been committed to tackling poverty and deprivation. However, progress has been frustratingly slow.

Inside we outline the challenges faced by local authorities and the solutions offered by SQW Consulting.

Are we breaking the cycle of deprivation?

Since 1997 the government and its partners have been committed to tackling poverty and deprivation, seeking to ensure that wealth and opportunity accrue “to the many, not the few” and that “no-one should be disadvantaged by where they live”. There has also been cross-party support for the challenge of reducing child poverty. Progress has clearly been made through a package of measures – the minimum wage, changes to tax and benefits, area-based regeneration initiatives and improved public services. Yet a recent assessment by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) concludes that:

...the strategy against poverty and social exclusion pursued since the late 1990s is now largely exhausted. (JRF, “Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion”, 2007)

The strategy appears to be stalling, and poverty is once more beginning to rise. Perhaps most frustratingly of all, social mobility does not appear to have shifted in the last few decades and the geography of poverty in the Britain has barely altered since the 1970s. SQW’s own extensive work over the last ten years in researching a wide range of local and national regeneration initiatives confirms how difficult it is to “break the cycle” of deprivation and to transform both “places” and “people” at the same time.

New approaches?

Poverty and deprivation represent classic “wicked issues” for government. In many areas, the challenge is highly complex, deeply entrenched and resistant to simple solutions or short-term initiatives. Any effective response must be long-term and multi-faceted.

Clearly, national government will continue to play an important role in tackling these issues. We also believe that local government is now in a stronger position to effect change and add value. The devolution of funding and responsibilities through Local Area Agreements (LAAs) provides flexibility in designing local approaches to local problems. The reforms and investment in local government over the last decade have also put local government in a stronger position to take on such challenges.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), through long-term Sustainable Community Strategies and supported by partnership-based LAA programmes, create opportunities to devise and deliver new approaches to tackling deprivation in local areas. In particular, LSPs are in a unique position to help join up public investments, in collaboration with the voluntary sector and local communities, in order to better address complex issues, for example:

- how can investments in adult skills best contribute to reducing child poverty?
- how can families in difficult situations be better supported through early interventions?
- how can investments in housing be best linked to social programmes?
- how do we raise the aspirations of communities?
- how do we overcome, or at best mitigate, the impact of the economic downturn on already vulnerable communities and families?



Examples of experience

Nottingham City Council and One Nottingham - Tackling Deprivation: a City Study and Strategy Development:

we mapped the nature and extent of multiple deprivation in the city, analysing its long term causes through national and local evidence reviews, and consultations with key partners. We then made recommendations for improvements to the city's approach to tackling deprivation, testing our thinking with key decisions-makers in a seminar setting. SQW supported One Nottingham and the City Council in preparing a full "State of the City" report and a new vision for the city encapsulated in a ten-year Sustainable Community Strategy.

Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) – Neighbourhood Briefing Paper: as a contribution to the 2006 Local Government White Paper, we prepared a briefing paper for IDeA on the evidence base on the costs and benefits of neighbourhood working and the implications for local government.

Birmingham City Council - Final Evaluation of the £40 million SRB 6 Programme 2001-2008: we evaluated the north west Birmingham programme, incorporating case studies, interviews with stakeholders and analysis of socio-economic indicators. This was followed by further specialised research into the city's pattern of worklessness, supporting the City Council in shaping the new Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

Communities and Local Government (CLG) – Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders National Evaluation: we led a consortium of Universities and consultancies on a long-term evaluation of the Pathfinder Programme 2002-2008. The project involved detailed action research in all 35 Pathfinders, including action learning and case studies, together with a national programme of household surveys by NOP/MORI, as well as the dissemination of findings. Complementary research was also undertaken in a further 17 local authorities, exploring alternative approaches to neighbourhood management.

CLG Neighbourhood Renewal Unit – The Role of Community Involvement in Improving Public Services: we led a team of researchers exploring how local communities and service users in deprived areas are involved in planning and delivering mainstream public services and the difference they make to the final outcomes.

Our services and expertise

Our services and expertise include the following:

- Deprivation mapping and analysis – using a variety of quantitative, model-based, and qualitative approaches
- Research and policy development – to define issues and opportunities and clarify choices for policy makers
- Strategy development – bringing partners together to develop long term approaches
- Implementation planning – working with funding bodies to ensure that the aspirations set out in strategy are delivered
- Partnership support and facilitation – building capacity and trust at senior levels
- Learning and evaluation – devising frameworks, processes and indicators to measure and learn from performance

Our clients

Our clients include the following:

- county, district and unitary councils and their partnerships, and their regional representative bodies
- Improvement and Development Agency
- Local Government Association
- Whitehall Departments, including CLG, BERR, DCSF, DIUS, DWP and DEFRA
- devolved administrations
- Regional Development Agencies
- Homes and Communities Agency and predecessor bodies
- funding bodies
- Sector Skills Councils

About SQW Consulting

SQW Consulting is a leading independent consultancy in the area of sustainable economic and social development. Founded in Cambridge in 1983 by Nick Segal, Roger Quince and Bill Wicksteed, the firm now employs over 80 staff at its offices in Cambridge, Edinburgh, Leeds, London and Manchester.

Our consultants bring extensive experience to their assignments, with backgrounds in academia, national and local government, industry, and development agencies. In all of our work we employ the principles of rigorous analysis, collaborative working, commitment to quality and independence of thought.

We have a strong track record of analytical research across the various tiers of government and governance. The firm's geographic spread of experience across the UK and beyond, and our ability to join up between tiers / sectors, give us a unique market position. We have strong collaborative relationships and can complement our own specialist skills by drawing on a network of collaborators and associates.

We offer flexible and multi-disciplinary support, drawing on experience and expertise from across the firm. Whilst always providing a perspective that is rigorous and independent, we also work closely with our clients, recognising that they and their partners will be responsible for taking forward the analyses, strategies, and action plans that we have catalysed. Engagement is key to the way we work, as is our commitment to sharing and transferring knowledge and learning.

SQW Group

SQW Consulting is part of SQW Group. Other divisions include: SQW Asia, which provides consultancy services to government organisations in Hong Kong and China and foreign firms investing in China; SQW Energy, which provides consultancy services in energy and carbon management; and Oxford Innovation, which manages innovation centres and investment networks. For more information: www.sqwgroup.com.

Contact us

To discuss how we can help, please contact

Tim Thorlby, Associate Director

T: +44 (0)207 307 7140

tthorlby@sqw.co.uk

www.sqw.co.uk

