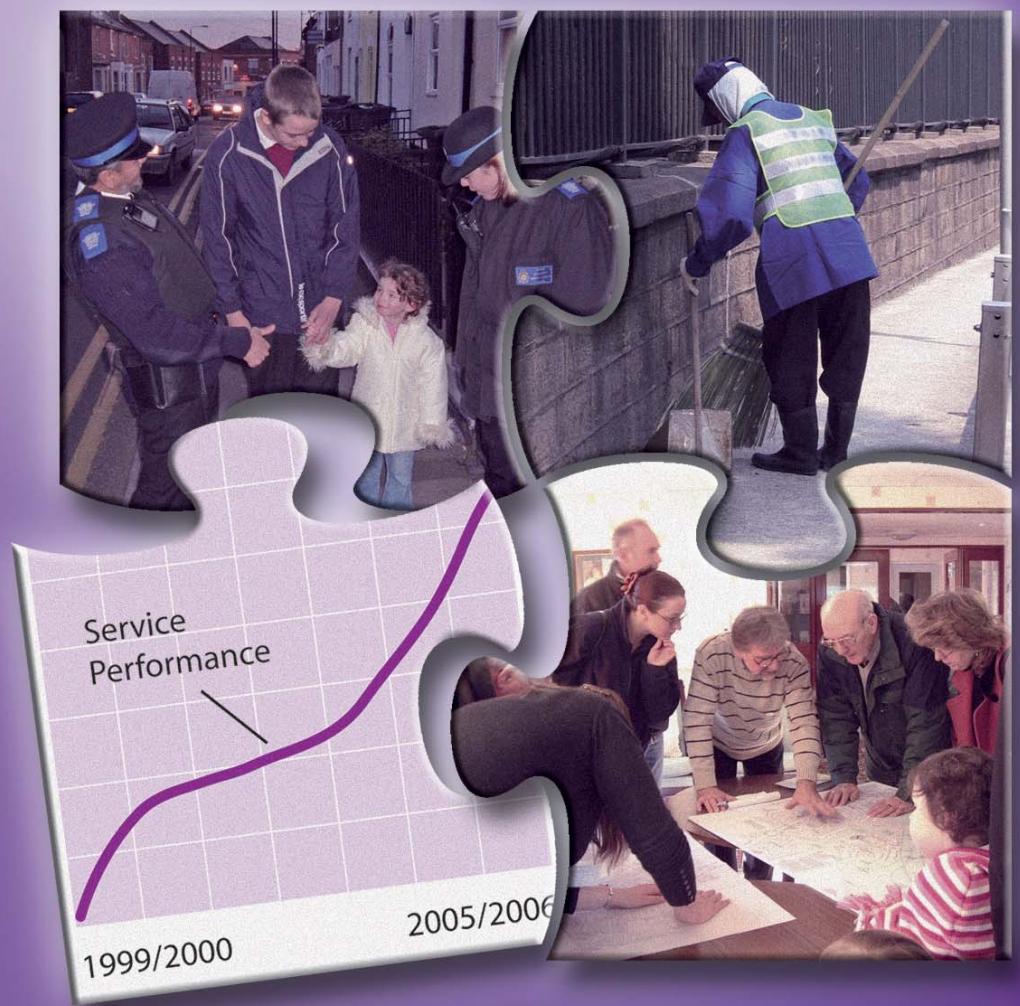


Using Data to Improve Services

A toolkit for neighbourhood management initiatives



Prepared for the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit as part of the National Evaluation of Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders

CEA

CAMBRIDGE ECONOMIC ASSOCIATES LIMITED

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National Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme

The National Evaluation of the Pathfinder Programme is being undertaken by a consortium of organisations, led by SQW Ltd:

- SQW Ltd
- GFA Consulting
- European Institute for Urban Affairs, Liverpool John Moores University
- Cities Research Centre, University of West of England, Bristol
- Cambridge Economic Associates
- Local Government Centre, Warwick Business School, Warwick University
- MORI
- NOP

The Evaluation has been commissioned by the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. If you would like more information about the Evaluation please see our website or contact us directly:

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PREFACE

Using Data to Improve Services is a toolkit that aims to give practical advice to neighbourhood management and other neighbourhood renewal initiatives on how to gather and use service data as part of their engagement with service providers. It sets out key indicators and explains how data can be used to facilitate negotiations about ways of improving service delivery in deprived neighbourhoods.

The publication of this toolkit is timely because it coincides with further guidance from the Communities and Local Government (CLG) on Local Area Agreements (LAAs) which focus on improving services and generating better outcomes for local people. The LAA Outcomes Framework contains a number of mandatory indicators which read across directly to the service quality and outcome indicators recommended in this toolkit. With such a strong emphasis on LAA Outcomes, now is a good time for neighbourhood renewal practitioners to be engaging with service providers, analysing data on service performance and outcomes, and discussing where and how services can be improved to benefit deprived neighbourhoods.

The key message promoted by the toolkit is to look widely for evidence on what works, and when doing so to look hard for information on the benefits and costs of new approaches to service delivery which can be used to make the case for change. Service providers are much more likely to take forward ideas which can demonstrate the potential to meet their own priority targets for quality and efficiency. While the initial evidence may not be sufficient to trigger immediate action, it may lead to a review or feasibility study which looks at different ways of delivering services or joining up with other service providers. The toolkit also emphasises the importance of gathering and using data as part of an ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation.

This second edition of the toolkit is presented in five modules:

- An Overview Module explaining why service data matters
 - Module 1, relating to street cleansing and refuse collection services
 - Module 2, relating to uniformed policing
 - Module 3, relating to housing management
 - Module 4, relating to Jobcentre Plus
- } *new modules*

The research that informed the toolkit is an integral part of the National Evaluation of Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders which is generating data to inform an assessment of the Programme's impact. Though the toolkit has its origins in the NMP programme, it is hoped that it will be a valuable aid to all neighbourhood renewal practitioners, including those involved in delivering the Neighbourhood Element of the Safer Stronger Communities Fund.

OVERVIEW MODULE: WHY SERVICE DATA MATTERS

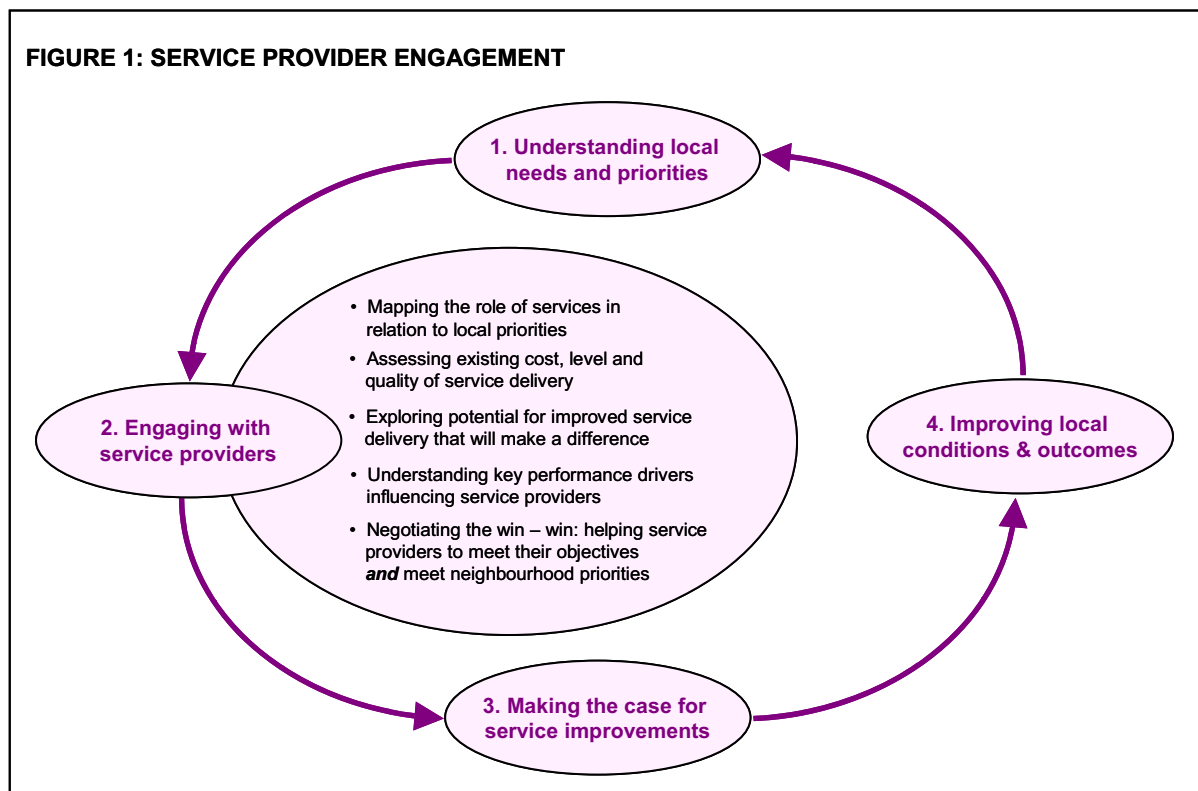
1. Understanding local needs and priorities

Neighbourhood management initiatives seek to turn around deprived neighbourhoods by tackling problems such as crime and anti-social behaviour, poor environmental quality, worklessness, ill health, and low levels of educational attainment. These problems are often deep-rooted: in many cases they have emerged over a long period of time and require painstaking effort to solve.

The best neighbourhood management initiatives have identified and prioritised the most important problems affecting the quality of life of their residents. They have done so by engaging with local residents and their communities. They have examined the root causes of deprivation in the area, including the complex inter-relationships between different problems. Critically, they have then gone on to identify the key service providers and other partners that the neighbourhood management initiative needs to work with to bring about lasting change in the area.

2. Engaging with service providers

The neighbourhood management approach to neighbourhood renewal revolves around the relationship between resident needs and aspirations and service provision. The primary goal of neighbourhood management initiatives is to negotiate improvements to service delivery which will have a positive impact on priority outcomes. So the initial steps of clearly identifying the key deprivation problems and their root causes, and of finding the right partners who can help to bring about change are crucial. Figure 1 shows how engagement with service providers is fundamental to the success of neighbourhood management initiatives.



Discussions with service providers are not always about increasing the level of a service and spending more on it. Often they concern more subtle changes in:

- ❑ corporate policies & practices
- ❑ the way mainstream resources are allocated
- ❑ how services are designed and how they can be better joined up
- ❑ improving access to increase take up.

All of these can bring about improvements in service delivery in ways that have a positive impact on the quality of life of local residents.

Why service data matters?

Whatever the focus of discussions with service providers, the more relevant and robust the information about existing services, the more effective the negotiation will be about ways of improving service delivery.

With hundreds of thousands of pounds of public expenditure, and the performance and reputation of a service provider at stake, it would be unreasonable for them to change their approach without looking very carefully at:

- ❑ what services are delivered already and where
- ❑ how much they cost for a given level of service
- ❑ what the quality and accessibility issues are with existing services
- ❑ what the service provider's plans are for service improvements generally
- ❑ how specific improvements to individual services or groups of different services could help to meet their corporate aims and targets.

Getting to the point where this kind of information is available and capable of being analysed to assist in the negotiation is a critical part of the neighbourhood management process. Only then can there be a meaningful dialogue that focuses on the costs and benefits of changing the way services are delivered.

Opening the "black box"

Many neighbourhood management initiatives find that they are the first "outsiders" to ask these kinds of questions of service providers and that the whole issue of obtaining service data can be a bit of a "black box". Getting hold of useful information on service performance can be difficult and time consuming because it isn't always clear from the outside:

- ❑ how services are organised and managed
- ❑ how service providers measure their performance
- ❑ what data on service costs, levels and quality is available at the neighbourhood level
- ❑ how a meaningful case can be made to change the way services are delivered.

Like most organisations, service providers only tend to publish information that is likely to be relevant to the concerns of key stakeholders (e.g. local residents, tenants). Naturally, they tend to emphasise high level performance rather than the detail of how services are delivered. And the focus is almost always at the organisational level (e.g. “how well are we doing in the Borough as a whole?”), rather than at the neighbourhood level.

Looking behind the glossy annual reports, CEA’s research suggests that, for whatever reason, most service providers tend not to measure service delivery at the neighbourhood level. The technical constraints are few, but service delivery geographies are often larger than neighbourhoods, and there are resource costs in collecting and analysing data at the neighbourhood level. Even so, in most cases it should be possible to gain a fairly accurate picture of the level, quality and cost of services at the neighbourhood level and compare these with borough or wider area performance.

It is the job of neighbourhood management initiatives to open this “black box” and engage in dialogue with service providers to understand how their service is delivered. It is also crucial to understand what is driving its performance, get hold of relevant data, and encourage service providers to discuss how services can be improved for the benefit of neighbourhood residents. Some explanation is needed about why service data matters, linked to persuasion regarding the potential mutual gains to be had (e.g. helping a local authority to find ways of meeting a key performance target) and, perhaps, some modest resources to meet the additional costs of non-routine measurement.

Neighbourhood management initiatives are also able to play the critical role of understanding whether and how certain services work together in practice, and if there might be benefits from a more joined-up approach.

There are also initiatives that neighbourhood management initiatives can take themselves, with little effort or interaction needed from service providers. The most important of these is ensuring that neighbourhood household surveys seek to mirror key customer satisfaction questions used by service providers. This will greatly assist in comparing service quality at the neighbourhood level with organisation-wide performance.

3. Making the case for service improvements

With the advent of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) there is an increasing emphasis on how local authorities and their partners in Local Strategic Partnerships can work together to improve services and generate better outcomes for local people. So it is more important than ever before for neighbourhood renewal practitioners to gather and use service data to inform the debate and show how sustained emphasis on service performance can improve outcomes in deprived neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood management resources are increasingly being allocated and prioritised through LAAs. Such initiatives need to be able to track clear changes in service delivery, attribute these to the influence of neighbourhood management, and show how they are having a positive effect on outcomes.

When is best to make the case?

Service providers vary widely in terms of how and when they make and debate the case for service improvements. What follows is a simple list of things to find out about which will help in deciding tactically how to make the case for a service improvement.

Understand the service provider's planning processes. It's worth spending time finding out when it makes sense to introduce new ideas into the service planning process, and whether it's possible to do so between planning rounds. When a case is ready to be made, the best time to introduce it is most likely to be when preliminary discussions are taking place on the next year's service delivery plan, and, ideally, the next Corporate Plan. However, service planning can be a more fluid process than that. Neighbourhood management initiatives need to be alert to national, regional or local issues which may mean there could be an opportune moment for a case to be made – e.g. in the case of local authorities, an Audit Commission inspection which may have recommended improvements to a particular service, or a new policy initiative from DCLG or DEFRA (e.g. the new Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse), or a local service “crisis” which prompts calls for a new approach.

Who to target?

Understand who makes the decisions about changing services. Decisions on altering the way services are delivered, and committing further resources to service delivery, are likely to be taken at senior management level. The case for service improvement – or even reviewing the way the service is delivered - will first need to be “sold” to that individual, who will then need to make the case internally within the organisation. For example, in the case of local authorities this will probably be at “head of service” level (e.g. management board), and – most likely – will need to be ratified by elected members, probably through some form of “scrutiny committee”.

Make the time and prepare

Allow enough time to understand the problem and develop ideas for change. It's essential to build in a sufficient lead-in period to look at the data together with the service provider, develop ideas and see whether they might work. All of this needs to be done before the formal case for change is prepared and it should ideally be developed in partnership with the service provider. The process can take several months – it certainly won't be done in a fortnight.

4. Improving local conditions and outcomes

After all the effort has been put in to bring about service improvement, it will be important for neighbourhood renewal practitioners and service providers to engage with service users to monitor progress in implementation, assess whether the changes are bringing about the desired improvements in local conditions, and apply lessons from experience going forward.

Therefore, it will be necessary to put in place relevant targets and milestones, monitoring arrangements and contingency provisions where things don't go according

to plan. It will be advisable to arrange for evaluation to learn what changes worked and those that didn't work so well.

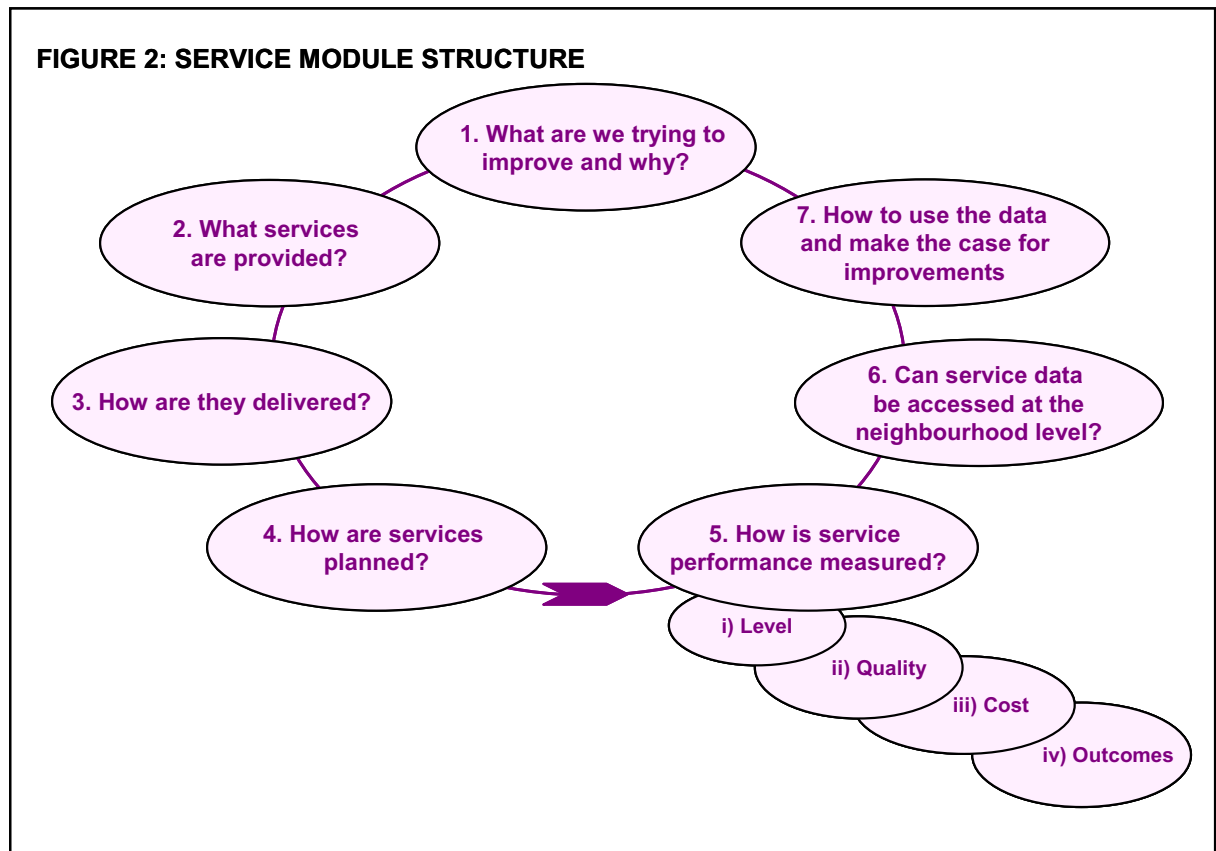
This is not just to ensure that the specific service changes bring about the intended improved outcomes. It is also to provide the basis for wider learning. It may, for example, suggest that the improvements could be rolled out to other neighbourhoods and/or to other services.

About the toolkit

The toolkit presents guidance on:

1. **What are we trying to improve and why?** What are local needs and priorities and what's the evidence to back them up?
2. **What services are provided?** The toolkit covers certain services and each one is defined.
3. **How are they delivered?** For example, are services delivered at larger or smaller units of geography than neighbourhoods?
4. **How are services planned?** For example, what timescale do corporate and service plans typically cover, how often are they updated and at what times of year are they typically prepared?
5. **How is service performance measured?** What indicators are typically used to measure service level, service quality, service cost and the outcomes from service delivery?
6. **Can service data be accessed at the neighbourhood level?** Is data on certain indicators available at the neighbourhood level and what constraints typically need to be overcome? Could these be overcome with some encouragement and modest resource input?
7. **How to use the data and make the case for improvements.** How should the data be stored and analysed to track performance over time and benchmark service performance? How can it be interpreted to highlight service-related issues? What changes might be made to service delivery that could have positive outcomes? When and how should the case for service improvements be made?

Each of the service modules is structured in the same way, following the cycle of key issues shown in Figure 2.



Module 1

Street cleansing and refuse collection

Contents



MODULE 1: STREET CLEANSING AND REFUSE COLLECTION

Module coverage

The services covered by this module are domestic waste collection (but not recycling) and the cleansing of all streets and footways in residential and commercial areas.

1. What are we trying to improve and why?

Research suggests that clean streets make for more satisfied residents. They signal pride in an area and make it more likely that people will want to live there and behave responsibly. Many neighbourhood management initiatives find that residents have negative perceptions of the state of their local environment. Common issues are dirty or littered streets and large items (e.g. old furniture) left outside houses for weeks on end. Different areas have different issues, and some initial questions need to be asked to establish what the specific problems are and how bad they really are:

- Compared with other areas, how bad is the problem: are the streets *measurably* dirtier or more littered in this neighbourhood?
- How often do the streets get cleaned and the litter picked?
- Is there a problem in this area with the way large household items are dealt with – either by households (who may not be aware of the services on offer) or because service providers are slow to collect?

Trying to establish the nature of the problem as precisely as possible will make it easier to improve service provision.

2. What services are provided?

Having identified the problem, the next issue is to figure out which service providers are currently responsible for keeping the area clean and tidy.

All local authorities are bound by the 1990 Environmental Protection Act to “keep specified land clear of litter and refuse as far as is practicable... and...to keep public highways clean as far as is practicable”. The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 also gives new powers to local authorities to deal with fly-tippers and litter droppers, including the greater use of fixed penalties.

Street cleansing and refuse collection services are delivered by local authorities or organisations contracted by them. It’s important to note that while the local authority may be responsible for specifying the service and procuring it, it may have contracted the delivery of the service out to another organisation, most likely a commercial operator.

3. How are they delivered?

Waste collection

Many areas have a weekly kerbside refuse collection service using wheel bins or bin bags. This service is usually delivered through the operation of “rounds”. Generally a

“round” is larger than a neighbourhood management area. The research suggests that a neighbourhood management area is typically contained within one round, though it might straddle two rounds.

Local authorities also offer residents a special collection service for bulky items such as large furniture and household electrical goods like washing machines and fridges/freezers. There is usually a charge for this service. The collection of bulky items tends not to be organised on a geographical basis below the borough level. Households dispose of large items periodically, so local authorities or their contractors tend to arrange for such collections only when residents contact them.

Street cleansing

Street cleansing services delivered by or for local authorities usually involve cleansing of streets, alleyways, litter zones, subways, car parks, public conveniences, removal of dead animals from roads and public land, market waste collection, installation and maintenance and emptying of litter bins, removal of fly tipping, and servicing of dog waste bins.

The delivery of street cleaning services is governed by a Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse which has recently been updated¹. For example, the Code defines standards of cleanliness achievable in different types of location and differing circumstances, and also gives advice on the “zoning” of land as shown in the table below. Local authorities use these Zone classifications to set service standards about the frequency of cleaning activity. High intensity areas, such as shopping centres, tend to be cleaned most frequently. Periodic reviews of zones are usually undertaken to avoid sharp distinctions between zones swept on a daily basis and others swept only a few times a year.

High intensity of use	Areas which, through intense pedestrian and/or vehicular movements, are prone to fluctuations in litter and refuse and require both high levels of monitoring and frequent cleansing
Medium intensity of use	Areas affected by moderate levels of pedestrian and vehicular activity and therefore less prone to fluctuations in litter and refuse, usually situated outside centres of retail or commercial activity, but used regularly by members of the public (includes all housing areas that are not located in high intensity areas)
Low intensity of use	Areas subject to low or infrequent levels of pedestrian and vehicular activity and therefore less prone to fluctuations in litter and refuse, often located in more rural areas
Areas with special circumstances	Types of land where issues of health and safety and reasonableness and practicability are dominant considerations when undertaking environmental maintenance work.

¹ Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse, Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra), 2006

The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse recommends the use of the Local Environmental Quality Survey of England (LEQSE) developed by ENCAMS (Environmental Campaigns) for monitoring a range of local environmental quality issues. In summary, this involves surveying a sample of streets and grading the level of litter and detritus on a scale of A to D where A is clean, B is light, C is significant and D is heavy. This methodology allows local authorities to measure one of their Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs), BVPI 199a. Full details of the survey and the measurement of BVPI 199a can be found at www.leq-bvpi.com

4. How are services planned?

Most local authorities produce Corporate Plans that will set the strategic direction for the organisation as a whole, including performance targets, over a three year period. Some organisations update their Corporate Plan annually. Preparation times will vary, but often tend to be in a three to six month period before the plan becomes effective (e.g. planning in October to March for the next financial year).

The detail of how specific services are to be delivered and their performance targets will often be contained within “service plans” or “service delivery plans”. These documents are typically produced or updated annually. However, as with the Corporate Plan, targets are usually set at the Borough level and not for lower geographical levels such as neighbourhoods.

5. How is service performance measured?

The main indicators used by local authorities tend to be Best Value Performance Indicators². All local authorities should be using these mandatory indicators, defined by Government, to measure service levels, quality and cost on a consistent basis across their boroughs. In addition there are a number of local indicators many of which are suggested by the Audit Commission³.

i) What level of service is delivered?

For **waste collection**, the key service level indicators are:

- Service standards (frequencies and response times) for:
 - Domestic refuse collection
 - Emptying missed bins
 - Removing bulky items
- Kilogrammes (kg) of household waste collected per head (BVPI 84, annual)

² <http://www.bvpi.gov.uk/pages/index.asp>

³ <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/>

For **street cleansing**, the key service level indicators are:

- Frequency of street cleansing (1 in x week cycle, or x times per annum) for different zones, e.g.
 - residential streets
 - main roads
 - shopping areas
- Frequency of litter picking
- Frequency of emptying of litter bins

*ii) What **quality** of service is delivered?*

For **waste collection**, the key service quality indicator is:

- Number of missed bins per 100,000 collections of household waste (NS88, local indicator)

For **street cleansing**, the key service quality indicator is:

- % of relevant land and highways assessed as falling below a Grade B in cleanliness (litter and detritus) (i.e. the % with Grade C (significant) or Grade D (heavy) levels of litter or detritus). (This is BVPI 199a using the LEQSE method)

*iii) At what **cost** are services delivered?*

For **waste collection**, the key service cost indicator is:

- Cost of waste collection per household (BVPI 86, annual)

For **street cleansing**, the key service cost indicator is:

- Cost per sq. km of keeping land and highways for which LA responsible clear of litter and detritus

*iv) What **outcomes** do services generate?*

For **waste collection**, the key outcome indicator is:

- % of people satisfied with household waste collection (BVPI 90a, 3 yearly survey, next due in 2006/07)

For **street cleansing**, the key outcome indicator is:

- % of residents satisfied with the cleanliness standards of the Borough's streets (BVPI 89, 3 yearly, next due in 2006/07).

6. Can service data be accessed at neighbourhood level?

General observations

For service data to be useful to neighbourhood managers it needs to be fine grained geographically. Only then can it be used to highlight whether performance at the neighbourhood level is better than, the same as, or worse than some wider area (e.g. the borough average). This process of comparing performance is called "benchmarking". Where neighbourhood performance is worse than some wider area, then it provides a focus for discussion with service providers about why that is and what might be done to improve the situation.

Our research suggests that there is nothing in principle which should prevent these waste collection and street cleansing indicators being measured at the neighbourhood level. The practical issues are another matter, however. Few local authorities set performance targets or service standards at lower levels of geography. While they do have to react to problems as they arise – for example at specific addresses or locations when reported by the public via "hotlines" or by crews when they are on the ground - this is different from a pro-active tracking of service performance across different neighbourhoods.

Although it's unlikely that neighbourhood data will be available "off the shelf", the measurement methods used, combined with the use of new technology, makes it increasingly possible to collect data at a finer grain that would be useful to neighbourhood managers. Some more detailed tips on the "art of the possible" are provided below.

Waste collection

Routine performance reporting by local authorities on waste collection is undertaken for the borough as a whole, and certain indicators may be measured at the "round" level (e.g. kg of waste collected), but typically not for smaller levels of geography such as the neighbourhood.

However, it is increasingly possible to collect and analyse data at smaller levels of geography than the "round". Weighing facilities on some modern refuse collection vehicles mean that it is possible to collect data for a smaller specified area giving an average weight per bin measurement. Some authorities are also introducing "chipped bin" systems for recording a range of waste collection data.

The outcome indicator for waste collection is survey-based. Local authorities are unlikely to have sufficiently large survey samples to allow results by neighbourhood, but the fact that they are asking resident satisfaction questions in a consistent way means that neighbourhood management initiatives can include the same questions in

their own neighbourhood surveys. Neighbourhood management areas can then be benchmarked against the borough average.

Street cleansing

All local authorities are obliged to follow a specific methodology for measuring how clean their streets and spaces are every year. This ENCAMS LEQSE methodology involves taking a sample of streets in the borough for staff to inspect and record three times a year.

While local authorities' priorities for reporting on street cleanliness will be at the borough level, it is quite straightforward to report on a smaller specified area such as a neighbourhood management area. The methodology is clear and it can be readily applied and analysed for different samples of streets using the same systems in place for the borough-wide sampling. The only constraint is likely to be the willingness of the local authority to provide the staff resources to undertake the necessary survey and analysis work.

In relation to resident satisfaction with the cleanliness of their streets, this will be available from local authorities from their best value performance resident surveys, but probably at borough level only. However, neighbourhood management initiatives can include the same standard questions in their own neighbourhood surveys and benchmark the results. Alternatively, neighbourhood management initiatives might want to encourage the local authority to increase the sample for the subject neighbourhood to enable some comparisons to be made directly.

7. How to use the data and make the case for improvements

Getting good quality data at the neighbourhood level is a critical ingredient for negotiations, but how it is used to build a case for improvements in service delivery is just as important.

This last section of the module provides some practical guidance on how to use the data as the basis for negotiations with service providers. The guidance is structured in the following way:

- How can the data be analysed?
- What does the data tell us we should focus on?
- What kinds of service improvement will make a difference?

How can the data be analysed?

Having explored the issues of data accessibility, and come to some agreement about data sharing and analysis at the neighbourhood level, neighbourhood managers should establish their own service database probably using spreadsheet software such as Microsoft Excel. The graphic opposite gives a flavour of how the data could be stored and analysed to take snapshots at particular points in time, as well as track changing performance over a number of years.

SERVICE DATA FOR: STREET CLEANSING & WASTE COLLECTION					
	Base year	Latest year	Change Base year to latest year	Borough av.	
				Base year	Latest year
i) Service level indicators					
Street cleansing					
Actual frequency of street cleansing (times per annum, e.g. 13 for a 1 in 3 week cycle):					
- residential streets					
- main roads					
- shopping areas					
Frequency of litter picking					
Frequency of emptying litter bins					
Waste collection					
Domestic refuse collection - times per annum (e.g. 52 = weekly)					
Emptying missed bins - response time after notification					
Removing bulky items - response time after notification, or by appointment					
Kilogrammes (kg) of household waste collected per head					
ii) Service quality indicators					
Street cleansing					
% of relevant land and highways (controlled by local authority), assessed as falling below a Grade B in cleanliness (litter and detritus) (i.e. the % with Grade C (significant) or Grade D (heavy) levels of litter and detritus) using the LEQES method					
Waste collection					
Number of missed bins per 100,000 collections of household waste					
iii) Service cost indicators					
Street cleansing					

What does the data tell us we need to focus on?

The key to understanding service data is benchmarking, the process of comparing performance for a target neighbourhood against some wider area (often, in this context, the local authority district). The following example demonstrates how benchmarking can be used to highlight a problem, and measure how severe it is compared with other areas.

If the performance data suggests that the neighbourhood is receiving services at a lower level or lower quality than necessary, these conclusions can provide some focus for discussions with service providers about why that's the case, and what steps might be taken to improve the service.

What's the problem?

A neighbourhood management initiative has done a household survey to inform its delivery plan. The survey found that only 24% of local residents were satisfied with the cleanliness of the neighbourhood. Some focus groups identified a problem particularly with the residential estates rather than the main roads. When the neighbourhood management team benchmarked this result with the most recent Best Value Survey done for the borough as a whole, it found a striking difference: 54% of the population at the Borough level were happy with cleanliness.

It found out that the borough as a whole was performing fairly well in terms of Best Value Performance Indicator 199a – 28% of the land and highways for which the Council was responsible had levels of litter or detritus at Grades C (significant) or Grade D (heavy), but there was no information at the neighbourhood level.

After initial discussion, the neighbourhood management initiative and the Council agreed to share the costs of conducting the LEQSE survey in the neighbourhood. This found that only 19% of streets in the sample met Grade A or B – i.e. that 81% had significant or heavy levels of litter and detritus, significantly worse than the borough average for similar types of residential area. The situation was found to be bad throughout the neighbourhood, but particularly acute in and around a block of flats - an area of social housing outside of the local authority's control and managed by an RSL.

However, raw data on its own is unlikely to tell the full story. Other information – including feedback from residents and discussions with service provider managers – is often needed to reveal the key underlying problems and what can be done about them.

What are the reasons for this performance gap?

In this case, the neighbourhood manager asked to see the Council's service standards and found out who had been contracted to deliver the services. She found that the street cleansing and refuse services had been contracted out to a single company who, in addition to the weekly refuse collection and bulky item disposal service, were required to sweep the residential streets in the area once every 17 weeks, and that litter picking should take place once every 3 weeks.

Discussions with the Council showed that the contractor was meeting the standards, but several issues came to light. The Council had not yet moved to a wheeled bin service, and local residents reported that bin bags were being ripped open the night before collection by pets and vermin. A new mobile take-away had also moved to the area, but the area had not been re-classified and so the frequency of the litter picking service was for an area with no retail or commercial activity.

Having taken the process this far, the neighbourhood manager was now in a position to work with the service provider to see if any solutions could be found.

What kinds of service provision will make a difference?

Some service improvements may be very straightforward and cheap to deliver. However, others may be more complex, requiring detailed analysis into how existing services are delivered and options for improving service delivery. Neighbourhood

management initiatives can and should be proactive in looking for evidence on what works from other areas and sharing it with local service providers. There is an increasingly body of useful information from sources such as the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), ENCAMS and the Audit Commission as well as the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. The box below explores some of the improvements that were considered in the context of the specific example used here.

What service changes will make a difference?

Having got to the root of the problem, some of the solutions were fairly obvious and could be taken forward at little cost:

- The take-away operator agreed to erect some new litter bins in the immediate vicinity of the take-away, and put up signs on the vehicle reminding customers to use them and of the new fines for littering.
- Promotional work in the neighbourhood about when to put bin bags out, to make use of the new litter bins, and to advise them of the new powers of local authorities to levy fines on those leaving litter
- Getting the Council to agree to re-zone the area around the mobile take-away so that it was monitored more often, with litter picking also more frequent
- Facilitating discussions between the Council and the RSL over inconsistencies in service standards for litter picking and street sweeping around the flats managed by the RSL. These were brought into line.

The issues raised by the neighbourhood management initiative about ripped bin bags, combined with the experiences of other local authorities, led to the neighbourhood management initiative and the Council sharing the costs of a feasibility study into whether to adopt wheeled bins. The neighbourhood management initiative played a key role by assembling and highlighting some preliminary evidence from local authorities elsewhere. This demonstrated that the move to wheeled bins could help to reduce street cleansing costs and lead to a marked improvement in the Borough's performance in terms of overall litter and detritus. This was enough for the Council to commit resources to the feasibility study.

Following the study, the Council was persuaded of the merits of moving to wheeled bins and initiated a pilot covering a number of waste collection rounds including the target neighbourhood. The pilot evaluation showed significant improvements in street cleanliness as a result of the change in approach. Within a year the proportion of streets achieving Grade A or B under the LEQSE measurement was up to 96%, and resident satisfaction increased to 60%.

Useful links

The box below provides some useful websites for further information about these services and how they can be measured.

- ❑ www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/litter/code/index.htm - for the 2006 Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse
- ❑ www.encams.org - for the ENCAMS website
- ❑ www.leq-bvpi.com - for details about measuring BVPI 199a on litter and detritus
- ❑ www.dclg.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1136106 - for guidance on Best Value Performance Indicators
- ❑ www.bvpi.gov.uk/pages/Index.asp - for the local government performance measurement website
- ❑ www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance/ - for the Audit Commission's website on performance indicators and performance measurement
- ❑ www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/statistics/index.htm - for statistics on waste management
- ❑ www.cleanersaferegreener.gov.uk/ - for best practice examples relating to street cleansing and refuse collection
- ❑ www.renewal.net - for a range of good practice relating to local environments and the liveability agenda
- ❑ www.idea.gov.uk/knowledge - for the Improvement & Development Agency's website, which offers good practice, guidance and other practical tools
- ❑ www.sgw.co.uk/nme/ - for the National Evaluation of Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders.

Module 2

Uniformed policing

Contents



MODULE 2: UNIFORMED POLICING

Module coverage

The services covered by this module are⁴:

- ❑ Uniformed community policing, including community beat officers and community support officers and crime prevention activities
- ❑ Uniformed responsive policing, including call-outs to 999 calls or follow-up calls to reported crimes.

1. What are we trying to improve and why?

Research by the NRU⁵ notes that crime tends to be heavily concentrated in deprived areas and that drug use is significantly higher in poor neighbourhoods than elsewhere. Racially motivated attacks can also be important problems faced by ethnic minority residents in low income areas.

Crime and disorder matter a great deal to local people: they cause economic, physical and emotional distress for victims and have wider social and economic impacts for an area. For example, fear of crime might frighten people going out after dark and stop them from meeting their friends and relatives and engaging in other social activities. There is a strong relationship between crime and substance misuse, causing related problems for health as well as discarded needles; youth crime is sometimes linked to school truancy and exclusion and poor educational attainment, as well as the provision of out of school youth activities; the poor reputation of high crime areas can make properties more difficult to sell and let, which can lead to problems of vandalism and environmental deterioration. If employers have a choice, why would they choose an area with a reputation of having high levels of property crime?

Different areas have different patterns of crime and anti-social behaviour, and these will interact in different ways with other neighbourhood renewal problems. Some initial questions need to be asked to establish what the specific problems are, how bad they really are and where they are:

- ❑ Compared with other areas, how bad is the problem: what specific types of crimes and anti-social behaviour are measurably worse in this neighbourhood?
- ❑ Is there any evidence about who is causing the problem? For example, is it thought to be carried out by people living in the area, or those coming in from outside? Is there a disproportionate amount of crime and disorder caused by a small number of individuals or in particular “hot spots”?
- ❑ What level of uniformed policing does the area receive already, both in terms of community policing and responsive policing?
- ❑ Does feedback from residents suggest there are problems with the level of services or the ways they are delivered?

⁴ **Services excluded** are scenes of crime, forensic or other scientific support, CID, plain clothes intelligence gathering/surveillance, traffic and other policing services.

⁵ www.renewal.net - crime overview

Trying to establish the nature of the problem as precisely as possible will make it easier to find solutions.

2. What services are provided?

Having identified the problem, the next issue is to establish how services aimed at tackling crime and anti-social behaviour are organised and where within those structures neighbourhood management initiatives can sensibly engage.

Front-line delivery of uniformed policing services is carried out by police forces. At the time of writing there are 43 forces⁶ in England & Wales which will typically have responsibility for the following activities:

- ❑ reducing crime and the fear of crime
- ❑ increasing public reassurance
- ❑ reducing public disorder, anti-social behaviour and nuisance behaviour
- ❑ providing effective call handling, incident response and assistance
- ❑ increasing public confidence in the justice system.

3. How are they delivered?

Each police force is sub-divided into a number of Basic Command Units (BCUs, sometimes known as divisions or districts) which have responsibility for both community and responsive policing. BCUs are the key structural building blocks in every force, and they are currently the lowest level of geography used by the Home Office to measure policing performance. BCUs are typically commanded by a Chief Superintendent.

Basic Command Unit geographies may be larger or smaller than local authority districts, depending on the size of the district and its character. For example, in metropolitan areas, a BCU may be the same as a large unitary authority. In other areas, such as shire counties, there will be a number of BCUs, each covering maybe three or more local authority districts.

Community policing

Community policing is delivered by Basic Command Units through Local Policing Units (LPUs). Local Policing Units may be the same size as a local authority district, but in some areas two or three LPUs might cover a local authority district. Each Local Policing Unit is typically commanded by an Inspector with responsibility for the line management of a number of Sergeants, Police Constables and Community Support Officers (CSOs) across a given geographical area.

The LPU's police officers are deployed across the LPU area at the discretion of the LPU commander. With the increasing emphasis on neighbourhood-based policing, it is not unusual to find that officers are focused on particular neighbourhoods or council

⁶ The number of Police Forces is likely to reduce as a result of a force restructuring process which is currently underway

wards. Some police forces have created safer neighbourhood teams, where police officers work alongside neighbourhood wardens and other service providers within defined boundaries. The actual relationship between officer deployment and neighbourhoods will vary depending on the level of crime and disorder and the nature of the policing requirement, and also the force’s policy on neighbourhood policing.

Responsive policing

Responsive policing is usually managed across the Basic Command Unit as a whole. This dimension of the BCU’s work is mostly concerned with handling incoming 999 calls requiring an immediate response and responses within short timescales. Officers will be deployed from a dedicated pool as incidents come in, and they have their own vehicles and infrastructure which is separate from community policing.

As calls come in to an incident management call centre, incidents will be categorised according to the urgency of the response needed. The categories and response times vary force by force. The boxed example below provides an indication of how one police force classifies incidents and the required response times.

Responsive policing – example of incident categories and response times	
Level 1	Immediate response urban (within 10 minutes)
Level 2	Immediate response rural (within 20 minutes)
Level 3	Priority response (within 30 minutes)
Level 4	Standard response (within 24 hours)
Level 5	Scheduled response (by appointment)
Level 6	Screened response by telephone
Level 7	No response

4. How are services planned?

Police forces work closely with their Police Authorities to produce Corporate Plans covering a three year period (e.g. 2005-2008), and these also tie in with the timescales used for the Home Office’s National Policing Plan.

Corporate plans will usually be prepared and refreshed during the period December to March prior to the new plan coming into effect.

Below the force level, formal service planning takes place at the Basic Command Unit level. Each BCU will produce a three year plan covering the same timescale as the force plan. The objectives and targets in the BCU Plan (which may be called a divisional plan or district plan) are guided from the top-down by the force plan, and from the bottom-up by the local priorities that emerge from Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). CDRPs have broadly the same boundaries as local authority districts and also set three yearly plans.

Although there may not be formal three yearly plans for community policing via LPUs, or for responsive policing, CEA’s research found that the performance of these parts of the police structure is guided by BCUs through “control strategies”. These are

operational plans which are updated over a 3 to 6 month period depending on the force. Control strategies set out how LPUs and units responsible for responsive policing are expected to contribute to the BCU's objectives and targets. While BCU plans may be published (even if only in summary form), control strategies are rarely published.

5. How is service performance measured?

In the last few years the Police Standards Unit (PSU), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Association of Police Authorities (APA) have worked together on the development of the Police Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF) to measure and compare policing performance across the country.

The PPAF culminated in the first Police Performance Assessments (PPA) for 2004/05. These were based on Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) set by the Home Secretary each year and HMIC Baseline Assessments (annual reviews of police force performance derived from a self-evaluation by each force of key areas of policing).

All police forces are using the same SPIs to measure service levels, quality and cost on a consistent basis for the force as a whole and, for some indicators, at the Basic Command Unit level. In addition to setting SPI targets, each Police Authority will also set targets for its force using a range of local performance indicators.

The SPIs are particularly focused on indicators relating to service quality (e.g. resident and victim satisfaction with police services) and service outcomes (i.e. levels of crime and disorder and fear of crime), with few indicators relating to the level of service and the cost of service. However, there are a number of SPIs which are particularly relevant to neighbourhood management initiatives.

i) What level of service is delivered?

For *community policing*, the key service level indicators are:

- Number of officers directly engaged in community policing:
 - Chief Inspectors
 - Inspectors
 - Sergeants
 - Police Constables
 - Community safety officers
- Percentage of officer time spent on frontline duties (SPI 11)

For **responsive policing**, the key service level indicators are:

- Number of staff directly engaged in responsive policing
 - Chief Inspectors
 - Inspectors
 - Sergeants
 - Police Constables
 - Other staff (e.g. civilian call handling staff)
- Target or predicted⁷ level of response by incident category in minutes (e.g. immediate response urban, immediate response rural, etc.)

*ii) What **quality** of service is delivered?*

Service levels should be capable of being tracked for community and responsive policing. However, in terms of quality indicators, the PPAF and SPIs make no distinction between the policing activities that contribute to performance. It is also true that the service quality of other policing activities – including CID, scientific/forensic and other support not covered by this toolkit - will also make a significant contribution to the quality performance. The box below sets out the service quality indicators which are considered to be particularly relevant for uniformed policing overall, whether this is community or responsive policing:

- Actual level of response by incident category in minutes (e.g. immediate response, etc.)
- Percentage of notifiable/recorded offences resulting in conviction, caution or taken into consideration at court (SPI 6b)
- Percentage of notifiable offences resulting in a sanction detection (SPI 7a)
- Percentage of domestic violence incidents where an arrest was made related to the incident (SPI 8a)
- Satisfaction (% satisfied, and % very/completely satisfied) of victims of domestic burglary, violent crime, vehicle crime and road traffic collisions with respect to:
 - Making contact with the police (SPI 1a)
 - Action taken by the police (SPI 1b)
 - Being kept informed of progress (SPI 1c)
 - Their treatment by staff (SPI 1d)
 - The overall service provided (SPI 1e)

*iii) At what **cost** are services delivered?*

Even though it may be very difficult to relate the contribution of specific policing activities to overall performance in terms of quality and outcomes, it is still recommended that the costs of community and responsive policing should be tracked separately, as these can then be compared with service levels and provide a much clearer basis for discussion on budgets and resources.

⁷ Some Forces no longer set formal targets for response times, due to concerns about the impact of such targets on road safety/fast driving speeds. However, Forces are likely to have predicted response times for different categories so that performance can be monitored.

For **community policing**, the key service cost indicators are:

- ❑ Overall LPU budget per 1000 resident population
- ❑ Overall LPU budget per 1000 “at risk” population (i.e. resident population plus workplace population)
- ❑ Overall LPU budget per 1000 “at risk” properties (i.e. residential properties and commercial properties)

For **responsive policing**, the key service cost indicators are:

- ❑ Overall responsive policing budget per 1000 resident population
- ❑ Overall responsive policing budget per 1000 “at risk” population (i.e. resident population plus workplace population)
- ❑ Overall responsive policing budget per 1000 “at risk” properties (i.e. resident properties plus commercial properties)

*iv) What **outcomes** do services generate?*

For both **community and responsive policing**, the key outcome indicators are shown in the box below.

- ❑ Number of crimes by type (expressed as per 1000 population/households as appropriate):
 - Burglaries
 - Criminal damage
 - Drug offences
 - Fraud & forgery
 - Robbery
 - Sexual offences
 - Vehicle and other theft
 - Violence against the person
 - Other offences
- ❑ Life threatening crime and gun crime per 1000 population (SPI 5e)
- ❑ Acquisitive crime per 1000 population (SPI 5f)
- ❑ Risk of personal crime (SPI 4a) (based on survey evidence regarding the % of adult respondents who were victims of a range of personal offences)
- ❑ Risk of household crime (SPI 4b) (based on survey evidence regarding the % of responding households that were the victim of household offences)
- ❑ Fear of crime (SPI 10a)
- ❑ Perceptions of anti-social behaviour (SPI 10b)
- ❑ Perceptions of local drug use/drug dealing (SPI 10c)
- ❑ Percentage of respondents who think their local police are doing a good or excellent job (SPI 2a)

There are two important points to make about the outcome indicators, and particularly the SPIs.

The first is that the Statutory Performance Indicators change every year (those included in this toolkit are indicators for 2006/07 which were published in February 2006). Two of the latest SPIs – 5e and 5f represent amalgamations of crimes that were previously recorded as separate SPIs. Although police forces will only be reporting to the Home Office against the latest SPIs, this toolkit recommends that neighbourhood management initiatives should seek to extract the finest possible grained analysis of all types of crime, as this will provide a more precise view on the nature of the problem.

Second, the crime outcome SPIs are currently constructed mostly on a per 1000 population basis. Recent work by the Social Disadvantage Research Centre at Oxford University for the NRU suggests that there is merit in looking at crimes per 1000 “at risk” population. This is considered to be a more appropriate denominator because it includes employees and workplaces that may also be victims of crime.

6. Can service data be accessed at neighbourhood level?

For service data to be useful to neighbourhood managers it needs to be fine grained geographically. Only then can it be used to highlight whether performance at the neighbourhood level is better than, the same as, or worse than some wider area (e.g. the CDRP or BCU average). This process of comparing performance is called “benchmarking”. Where neighbourhood performance is worse than some wider area, then it provides a focus for discussion with service providers about why that is and what might be done to improve the situation.

CEA’s research suggests that there is nothing in principle which should prevent these policing indicators being measured at the neighbourhood level. The practical issues are another matter, however. Few police forces set formal performance targets or service standards at levels of geography below the Basic Command Unit level, and the Home Office only requires the customer satisfaction indicators listed on the previous page to be collected at force level.

Local Policing Unit commanders will be tracking crime and disorder activity on a very fine grained basis every day, and this helps them to deploy their officers according to need on both a short-term and longer-term basis (e.g. if there is an immediate problem, or a persistent hot-spot). However, while this involves looking at evidence on the location, type and level of crime and disorder, it is not the same thing as pro-active tracking of service levels and service quality neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood.

Although it’s unlikely that neighbourhood data will be available “off the shelf”, the measurement methods used by police forces mean that it should be possible to collect data at a finer grain that would be useful to neighbourhood managers. Some more detailed tips on the “art of the possible” are provided below.

Service level data at neighbourhood level

Service level data may not be systematically tracked at the neighbourhood level, but all LPUs should be able to provide a staffing breakdown in the way this toolkit suggests, and should also be able to identify the number and grade of staff who are tied to, or focused on, particular neighbourhoods.

Establishing the proportion of time spent on front-line duties may be more difficult, but all forces undertake annual “activity based costing” exercises, involving diary keeping by officers over a two week period. This information may help to establish whether front-line presence in particular neighbourhoods differs from BCU averages and the reasons why.

Finding out about target or predicted response times for different categories of incident should be very straightforward, even if the force does not publish or wish to be held accountable to formal targets because of the road safety reasons mentioned earlier.

Service quality data at neighbourhood level

Data on quality of service includes actual data recorded by the police using their crime recording and incident handling systems, as well as survey-based data asking residents and victims about their perceptions of the service offered by the police.

Data on detection rates, arrests, cautions etc. is available but, as explained above, is unlikely to be routinely measured at the neighbourhood level. This is an area where neighbourhood management initiatives need to establish a good dialogue with those responsible for data and analysis – normally there is a performance management team within each BCU – and discuss what data can be extracted, and whether there any cost implications.

For survey-based indicators, it’s essential that neighbourhood management initiatives design their own household surveys with a close eye on the key questions in the British Crime Survey that are used by the Home Office and police forces to measure police performance. The questions that need to be asked, and how the data should be reported, are detailed in the guidance on SPIs (see link at end of this module).

Service costs at the neighbourhood level

It is highly unlikely that the costs of uniformed policing – whether community policing or responsive policing – have been tracked historically at the neighbourhood level. However, the recent emphasis on neighbourhood policing means that most forces and BCUs will have devoted considerable attention to the issue of how to structure community policing at the neighbourhood level. This may have involved analysis of historical resourcing patterns and perhaps even costs.

The toolkit prompts for information on the LPU budget per 1000 population, and per 1000 at risk population and at risk properties. At the neighbourhood level this means establishing the share of the LPU’s budget spent on services delivered to the neighbourhood. This is unlikely to be straightforward, but there is no “rocket science”

involved either. It will involve looking at the level of police resources devoted to a neighbourhood, the share of other resources in terms of time spent in that neighbourhood, and some apportionment of overhead costs. For responsive policing, it may be possible to apportion the BCU's total costs of responsive policing to the neighbourhood based on the number and type of incidents that neighbourhood generated over a given period.

Service outcomes at neighbourhood level

For outcome measures such as fear of crime and perceptions of particular crime and disorder issues then the survey-related points made earlier apply here.

Crime levels and rates are not currently published below CDRP level, although some data is expected to emerge in 2006 based on both the location of offenders and the location of offences. However, most police forces are readily able to monitor and extract data on levels of crime by type at very fine grains of geography using their crime recording systems. The use of such systems to identify hot spots of activity is routine, and neighbourhood management initiatives should approach their LPU commander or local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to discuss access to data.

7. How to use the data and make the case for improvements

Getting good quality data at the neighbourhood level is a critical ingredient for negotiations, but how it is used to build a case for improvements in service delivery is just as important. This last section of the module provides some practical guidance on how to use the data as the basis for negotiations with service providers. The guidance is structured in the following way:

- How can the data be analysed?
- What does the data tell us we should focus on?
- What kinds of service improvement will make a difference?

How can the data be analysed?

Having explored issues of data accessibility, and come to some agreement about data sharing and analysis at the neighbourhood level, neighbourhood managers should establish their own service database probably using spreadsheet software such as Microsoft Excel. The graphic on the following page gives a flavour of how the data could be stored and analysed to take snapshots at particular points in time, as well as track changing performance over a number of years.

SERVICE DATA FOR: UNIFORMED POLICING							
	Neighbourhood		Change Base to latest year	Comparator area	Comparator area average		Change Base to latest year
	Base year	Latest year			Base year	Latest year	
i) Service level indicators							
6	Number of officers engaged in community policing:			LPU			
7	- Chief Inspectors			"			
8	- Inspectors			"			
9	- Sergeants			"			
10	- Police Constables			"			
11	- Community Support Officers			"			
12							
13	Number of staff directly engaged in responsive policing:			BCU			
14	- Chief Inspectors			"			
15	- Inspectors			"			
16	- Sergeants			"			
17	- Police Constables			"			
18	- Other staff (e.g. civilian call handling staff)			"			
19							
20	Target or predicted level of response by incident category (minutes)			BCU			
21	- category (to be defined)			"			
22	- category (to be defined)			"			
23	- category (to be defined)			"			
24	etc.			"			
25							
ii) Service quality indicators							
27	Actual level of response by incident category (minutes)			BCU			

What does the data tell us we need to focus on?

The key to understanding service data is benchmarking, the process of comparing performance for a target neighbourhood against some wider area (often, in this context, the Local Policing Unit, or Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership area, or Basic Command Unit). The following example demonstrates how benchmarking can be used to highlight a problem, and measure how severe it is compared with other areas.

If the performance data suggests that the neighbourhood is receiving services at a lower level or lower quality than necessary, these conclusions can provide some focus for discussions with service providers about why that's the case, and what steps might be taken to improve the service.

What's the problem?

A neighbourhood management initiative accessed comparative crime statistics showing the rates of different crimes in its neighbourhood, and those in the local authority district (CDRP area) as a whole. This showed that the neighbourhood had a rate of burglary (22.6 offences per 1000 population) that was 80% higher than the district rate (12.5 offences per 1000 population).

Feedback from the neighbourhood's own household surveys revealed a high fear of crime compared to the force average, particularly amongst the elderly population. Data from surveys, focus groups and one to one conversations with the neighbourhood manager, also revealed dissatisfaction with the level of visible police presence in the area in terms of the limited number of patrols in car and on foot during the day and at night.

However, raw data on its own is unlikely to tell the full story. Other information – including feedback from residents and discussions with service provider managers – is often needed to reveal the real underlying problems and what can be done about them.

What are the reasons for this performance gap?

Discussions with the LPU commander and the CDRP found that the local police force was also aware of these issues and they agreed to undertake and share a more detailed analysis of the problem, as well as facilitating some open meetings in the neighbourhood on crime and disorder issues. This revealed that the burglaries were being a) disproportionately focused on households occupied by elderly people; and b) seasonally biased towards the summer months (when windows are left open). Local intelligence gathered by the police suggested that many of the crimes were being conducted by a relatively small number of local drug users who were stealing cash and other valuables to fund their drug habit.

What kinds of service provision will make a difference?

Some service improvements may be very straightforward and cheap to deliver. However, others may be more complex, requiring detailed analysis into how existing services are delivered and options for improving service delivery. Neighbourhood management initiatives can and should be proactive in looking for evidence on what works from other areas and sharing it with local service providers. There is an increasingly body of useful information from the Home Office and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, including national evaluations of neighbourhood renewal programmes. The box below explores some of the improvements that were considered in the context of the specific example used here.

What service changes will make a difference?

Having got to the root of the problem, some of the solutions were fairly obvious and could be taken forward at little cost:

- A crime prevention pack was prepared, which included pens to mark property and encouragement to pensioners not to keep large quantities of cash at home.
- This pack was hand-delivered by police constables to all houses occupied by elderly people and posted to all other households. This provided an opportunity for the police to become immediately visible in the area, provide reassurance, and also offer some immediate, practical advice on home security.
- A programme of target-hardening commenced, funded by the CDRP and the neighbourhood management initiative. This fitted window locks to all windows and shutters and bars to some properties.

At the same time as these low-cost measures were taken, the local force was in the very early stages of thinking about neighbourhood policing, but it didn't have the budget necessary at that stage to resource a full neighbourhood policing team in the area. The neighbourhood management initiative and the police eventually agreed to share the costs of an additional 2 police constables and 2 community support officers together with the additional supervisory time and create a neighbourhood policing team on a pilot basis. This had clear objectives in terms of reducing priority crimes, as well as operational targets related to time spent on front-line duties, visible patrolling times and patterns. Targets, monitoring methods and performance reporting were clearly specified in a service level agreement (SLA). This also obliged the police to consult and report back regularly to local people, as well as to agree to mainstream the service improvement if it was judged to be successful.

Within three years the rate of burglary in the neighbourhood had fallen by 45%, compared with a district level reduction of 24%. At this point, the neighbourhood's rate of burglary crime was still 31% above the district average, but the police were pleased with the significant fall in crime, as well as a marked improvement on their relationship with this community. These results were sufficient to persuade the police to maintain their neighbourhood policing team in the area following the pilot period and meet the costs directly. Lessons from this pilot are now being rolled out to other priority neighbourhoods in the district.

Useful links

The box below provides some useful websites for further information about these services and how they can be measured. Particularly helpful, and recommended reading, is a recent (May 2006) report by the Audit Commission which encourages the police and other community safety service providers to work with local people to improve services at the neighbourhood level. It provides an in-depth analysis of many of the measurement-related issues covered in this module.

- ❑ www.police.uk - for information on police forces in the UK and links to individual force websites
- ❑ <http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/cpindex.htm> - for information on crime reduction initiatives, and links to Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships
- ❑ <http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/> - for the Home Office's police website, including links to publications and guidance about performance measurement and SPIs
- ❑ <http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/community-policing/neighbourhood-police> - for guidance on neighbourhood policing
- ❑ www.together.gov.uk - for guidance on ways of tackling anti-social behaviour
- ❑ www.apa.police.uk - for information on the role played by local Police Authorities
- ❑ www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/index.asp - for the Audit Commission's recent report "*Neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour: making places safer through improved local working*"
- ❑ www.renewal.net - for a range of good practice relating to tackling crime and disorder

Module 3

Housing management

Contents



MODULE 3: HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Module coverage

This module concentrates on the delivery and measurement of a number of housing management services within general needs social housing, including responsive repairs and cyclical maintenance, empty and decent homes, anti-social behaviour, and caretaking and gardening services. It also covers services targeted at private sector homes which are empty or fall below the Decent Homes Standard.

1. What are we trying to improve and why?

Housing is central to neighbourhood renewal and the Government's programme for developing sustainable communities, which it defines as "*places where people want to live and work, now and in the future*" and which are "*active, inclusive and safe*", "*well run*", environmentally sensitive, "*well designed and built*", "*well connected*", "*thriving*", "*well served*" and "*fair to everyone*". Housing, both as a key element of the built environment, and in terms of housing management, governance and associated services, contributes to all these dimensions of a sustainable community.

Neighbourhood management areas vary significantly in their mix of housing tenures. However, national evaluation survey evidence suggests that the Pathfinder areas include a much higher proportion of rented properties than the national average. Of the 50% of NM pathfinder residents who were renting in 2006, 53% were renting from the local authority, 26% from a housing association and 16% from a private landlord.

Households who rent, whether privately or from social landlords, are reliant on their landlords for the ongoing maintenance of their property and for dealing with emergency or urgent repairs. Tenants also depend on social landlords for the maintenance and tidiness of the external estate and dealing with troublesome tenants. These, together with the ongoing process of rent collection and housing allocations, represent the core of housing management services for tenants.

Problems with the quality of the housing stock in some areas create further housing management responsibilities for service providers. In 2000 the Government threw the spotlight on this issue by requiring that all dwellings should meet the Decent Homes Standard⁸ by 2010.

While much of the Government's focus has been on social housing, in some areas privately owned stock suffers from serious disrepair and inappropriate management by landlords. Since 2002, local authorities have also had obligations to ensure the decency of private dwellings occupied by vulnerable groups (e.g. those on benefits or families with children). There has also been an obligation to bring empty homes back into use.

The reasons for these private sector housing problems are difficult to generalise because a variety of factors are often at play. Many neighbourhood renewal areas have a preponderance of either older pre-1919 stock, or post-war stock, not all of

⁸ A decent home is one that meets: the current statutory minimum standard for housing; is in a reasonable state of repair; has reasonably modern facilities and services; provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

which is in good physical condition to start with. In certain areas these issues combine with a lack of demand to create pockets of housing for which there is little demand and which fall into disrepair. Low house prices then make these properties targets for investment owners, the most unscrupulous of whom further compound the problem through inadequate management and maintenance.

2. What services are provided?

Taking **social housing** first, over the last few years many local authorities have transferred their social housing stock to independent organisations including Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). RSLs are non-profit-making businesses registered with the Housing Corporation to provide social housing and many RSLs are “housing associations”. ALMOs are companies set up by a local authority to manage and improve some or all of its housing stock through Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

Typically the housing management services provided by these agencies include:

- Responsive repairs
- Forward maintenance
- Improvements to properties
- Meeting the Government’s Decent Homes Standard
- Dealing with voids (empty properties)
- Grounds maintenance, including gardening services
- Anti-social behaviour and problem tenants.

In some cases a local authority may maintain responsibility for some of these services, e.g. anti-social behaviour. It should also be noted that sometimes RSLs or ALMOs may subcontract some service elements to private contractors, for example responsive repairs.

For the purposes of the module we have focused on the services above. In addition, local authorities, RSLs and ALMOs provide other services such as collecting rent, housing allocations, and providing affordable housing to particular vulnerable groups. These services are not covered by the module.

Turning to **private sector housing**, services are generally delivered by local authorities, or special initiatives within certain areas charged with housing regeneration issues such as Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders. The local authority services are regulated by the 2004 Housing Act which was set up for all those who own, rent or let out property in order to protect the most vulnerable. Private sector housing service provision includes meeting the Decent Homes Standard and the management of empty dwellings. These are covered by the module. In addition, local authorities are also responsible for housing renovation/repair grants, health and safety, and licensing of houses in multiple occupation and many deliver services relating to energy efficiency and landlord accreditation. These services are not covered by the module.

3. How are they delivered?

Social housing

Housing services are often delivered across a number of sub-areas within a given local authority district. Though these sub-areas are often called “Neighbourhoods”, they are typically much larger areas than neighbourhood management areas. Usually these large neighbourhood areas are split further into “patches” and one or more patches would probably cover a neighbourhood management area.

Within each Neighbourhood a team of operatives will be managed by an overall Neighbourhood or Housing Officer. Some staff may have responsibility for a particular patch.

The responsive repairs service, which may be subcontracted to a private company, will include an out of hours emergency service, although other less serious problems will be categorised as urgent or routine, with response times similar to those in the table below.

Example of categories and response times for responsive repairs services	
Emergency	24 hour service coverage
Urgent	Response within 7 days
Routine	Response within 31 days

Responsive repairs will usually run alongside a planned maintenance programme, undertaken on a cyclical basis against a set work plan, often on a three-yearly programme.

A number of caretakers within the team will have responsibility for cleaning the communal areas, which may include smaller areas of graffiti. In addition, gardeners are normally employed to undertake a number of activities, largely to meet needs of elderly and disabled residents, including garden maintenance and grass cutting. They may also report on other problem areas such as fly-tipping.

Private sector housing

Local authorities have overarching responsibility for housing strategy at the local level, and they also tend to deliver services targeted at private sector housing. The exceptions tend to be where a Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder has been designated and where the HMR team might take the lead in matters to do with problem private sector stock in some areas.

Local authority service delivery will be across the whole district, but there may be priority areas. For example, action to deal with empty or non-Decent properties may be focused either on particular neighbourhoods or particular types of problem housing stock.

The team involved with these services may be very small and the work is usually part of an annual programme which will include both responsive work (e.g. enforcement activity) and proactive efforts to address specific problem areas (e.g. via housing grants).

4. How are services planned?

Planning for social housing and private sector housing services will be done through the corporate planning processes of the RSL, ALMO or local authority. Corporate Plans normally cover three financial years (i.e. 1st April to 31st March), with annual updating.

Preparation of the updated plans takes place over a period of about six months and during this time new or modified forms of service delivery would be assessed and debated. The timing of this updating process varies, but it often takes place from around September to January, and sometimes right up to the end of March.

The delivery of specific service elements are incorporated in Service Plans or Service Delivery Plans which are updated each year. These are usually prepared in advance of the Corporate Plan.

While targets for specific services are usually set at the organisational and/or borough levels, some service providers are beginning to move towards “neighbourhood” service planning at lower levels of geography. Caution is needed with the terminology, though. As noted above, “neighbourhoods” in a social housing sense can be much larger than neighbourhood management areas. Of more interest to neighbourhood managers will be the extent to which plans and targets are set for particular “patches”.

5. How is service performance measured?

Social housing and local authority performance are currently highly regulated, but the performance regimes are changing fast. The trend is towards a smaller number of national performance indicators (PIs) and a greater focus on service quality, efficiency and outcomes, rather than service levels. Service providers are also being encouraged to develop their own local indicators.

In relation to **social housing**, in April 2007 there was a dramatic reduction in the number of mandatory Housing Corporation performance measures against which RSLs have to report. From a situation where there were 50 PIs in 2003, in 2007/08 there are only 12 and in 2008/09 this will fall to 9 indicators. It is likely that the regulation of RSLs will, in the future, become lighter touch with most activity concentrated on failing organisations. Whether the other PIs are discarded by service providers remains to be seen. Having invested in data systems for their collection, we think it likely that the more useful PIs will be retained as local indicators for internal management by service providers. However, practice will probably vary.

In relation to local authority and ALMO housing services, these have traditionally been measured using the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) framework⁹. Here it is even less clear what the precise performance measurement regime will be. Announcements in the 2006 Local Government White Paper¹⁰ will lead to a significant reduction in the number of national performance indicators, and the maximum number is expected to be 200, covering all services.

The expectation is that many of the 200 indicators will adopt existing BVPIs, but new indicators may also be devised and it remains to be seen how local authority and ALMO housing management will feature in the national indicator set. Again, it would not be a surprise if “local” performance continued to be tracked using long-standing BVPIs which draw data from a number of sources including a BVPI survey on housing and the BVPI general survey. However, until the 200 national PIs are published, it is difficult to know what consistency there will be across local government. Local authority management of **private sector housing** has also been measured using a small number of BVPIs so the same comments apply here too.

The sub-sections and boxes below deal with this uncertainty in the following way. For **social housing**, the known Housing Corporation PIs for RSLs in 2007/08 and 2008/09 are displayed. For ease of reference, and given the relatively small number, all of the Housing Corporation indicators for general needs housing are listed, even where some may not be directly relevant to the housing management services covered by this module. Additionally, the boxes include a selection of the most relevant existing PIs, which might continue to be used locally. A number of these indicators correspond to BVPIs used by local authorities to measure their or their ALMOs’ performance. For **private sector housing**, the existing BVPIs are displayed, accepting that these may or may not be retained as future national indicators.

i) What level of service is delivered?

The service level indicators for **social housing** are shown in the box below. Service quality, cost and outcome indicators follow later.

New Housing Corporation PIs for RSLs:

- ❑ % of routine repairs completed within target
(NB: this indicator will be discontinued after 2007/08)
- ❑ Average days to re-let a social housing rental dwelling
(A separate indicator will also collect the same information for general needs stock for 2007/08 before being discontinued)
- ❑ Rent arrears of current social housing tenants at the financial year end as % of rent debit

Continued on following page

⁹ <http://www.bvpi.gov.uk/pages/index.asp>

¹⁰ Department for Communities and Local Government (October 2006): Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Local Government White Paper, Cm6939-1

Other indicators for which data may be available:

- ❑ Target days for emergency, urgent and routine repairs (*old Housing Corporation (HC) contextual indicators GNCX09, 10 and 11*)
- ❑ Total no. of repairs notified (*old HC contextual indicator GNCX12*), and no. that were emergency, urgent and routine.
- ❑ No. of complaints of Anti-Social Behaviour and/or Harassment received
- ❑ Average void turn-around time (days) for major or minor repairs

For **private sector housing**, the key service level indicators are shown in the following box. Each local authority will also have its own systems for recording the number of grant/loan applications for funds to support repairs.

- ❑ BVPI 62: % of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority
- ❑ BVPI 64: No. of non-local authority vacant dwellings returned to occupation/ demolished during the financial year as a direct result of action by local authority

*ii) What **quality** of service is delivered?*

For **social housing**, the key service quality indicators are:

New Housing Corporation PIs for RSLs:

- ❑ % of tenants very satisfied or satisfied with the way their landlord deals with repairs and maintenance (*voluntary for 2007/08, mandatory for 2008/09*)
- ❑ % of tenants satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord (*2007/08 only. From 2008/09, the new indicator will be “% of tenants satisfied with landlord’s services”*)
- ❑ % of tenants very or fairly satisfied with the opportunities for participation in management and decision-making (*2007/08 only. From 2008/09, the new indicator will be “% of tenants satisfied that their views are being taken into account”*)
- ❑ Satisfaction of shared owners with the overall service provided by the association
- ❑ % of shared ownership purchasers satisfied with the sales process (*voluntary in 2008/09, mandatory from 2009/10*)

Continued on following page

For areas where social housing is provided by the local authority, many of these indicators will be collected through the BVPI regime, drawing on local authority-wide surveys such as the BVPI survey on housing and the BVPI general survey.

Other social housing quality indicators, for which data may be available:

- ❑ % of emergency repairs completed within target (*old Housing Corporation (HC) PI, GNPI18*)
- ❑ % of urgent repairs completed within target (*old HC PI, GNPI19*)
- ❑ % of routine repairs completed within target (*old HC PI, GNPI20*)
- ❑ % of repairs where an appointment was made and kept (where appointment system exists) (*old HC PI, GNPI21*)
- ❑ % of Anti Social Behaviour perpetrators contacted within 10 working days following receipt of complaint
- ❑ No. of Notices of Seeking Possession served for Anti Social Behaviour
- ❑ Number and % of Anti Social Behaviour cases closed

For **private sector housing** there are no mandatory or advisory service quality indicators, but each local authority will have its own systems for measuring this aspect of performance.

*iii) At what **cost** are services delivered?*

In relation to **social housing**, the Housing Corporation's new suite of performance indicators does not include measures relating to service costs. However, there is a requirement on housing associations and local authorities to submit Annual Efficiency Statements, as well as information on their financial accounts. These documents are not published, but demonstrate how organisations are making efficiency gains. Guidance exists on how to prepare efficiency statements (see links at end of this module), and there is also broader Audit Commission guidance on value for money within housing and how it should be assessed. However, there are no mandatory value for money indicators.

The box below draws on former BVPIs and Housing Corporation PIs to illustrate different ways in which the costs of some housing services have been measured.

- ❑ % of planned repairs and maintenance expenditure on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings compared to responsive maintenance expenditure on HRA dwellings (*BV211a*)
- ❑ % of expenditure on emergency and urgent repairs to HRA dwellings compared to non-urgent repairs expenditure to HRA dwellings (*BV211b*)
- ❑ % of rent lost through general needs dwellings being vacant (*former Housing Corporation PI, GNPI30*)
- ❑ Average weekly operating cost per unit of general needs stock (*former Housing Corporation PI, GNPI125*)
- ❑ % of investment due to routine repairs (*former Housing Corporation PI, GNPI16*)
- ❑ Weekly investment per general needs unit (*former Housing Corporation PI, GNPI27*)
- ❑ Operating cost as a % of Turnover (Former Housing Corporation PI, GNPI26)

There are no BVPIs for local authorities on the costs of **private housing management**. However, research for this module suggests that local authorities will keep records of the amount spent on the different services they target at private sector housing. This will probably include the amount of grant or loan, the amount of funding provided by the owner, and the nature of the works undertaken.

*iv) What **outcomes** do services generate?*

For housing, the ultimate outcomes of service delivery are reflected in overall tenant satisfaction with their home, and with objective measures of housing standards for the stock itself.

For **social housing**, the key outcome indicators are:

New Housing Corporation PIs for RSLs:

- ❑ Percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of their home (*not currently required, but will be brought in from 2008; separate indicator will be mandatory from 2009 for the satisfaction of tenants with the quality of their newly built homes*)
- ❑ Percentage of social housing stock failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard
- ❑ Percentage of social housing rental dwellings vacant at 31st March
- ❑ Percentage of general needs dwellings vacant at 31st March (2007/08 only)
- ❑ Average SAP rating (energy efficiency) of self-contained general needs dwellings (2007/08 only – from 2008/09 the indicator will be “Average SAP rating of social housing rental dwellings”)

Once again, for services delivered by local authorities there will be corresponding BVPIs.

For **private housing management**, the key outcome indicators are:

- ❑ BV184a: % of local authority dwellings that were non-decent at the start of the financial year
- ❑ BV184b: % change in proportion of non-decent dwellings between start and end of financial year

6. Can service data be accessed at neighbourhood level?

General observations

For service data to be useful to neighbourhood managers it needs to be fine grained enough to say something about what is happening at the neighbourhood level. Only then can it be used to highlight whether performance at the neighbourhood level is better than, the same as, or worse than a wider area (e.g. the borough average). This process of comparing performance is called “benchmarking”. Where neighbourhood performance is worse than some wider area, then it provides a focus for discussion with service providers about why that is and what might be done to improve the situation.

Our research suggests that there is nothing in principle which should prevent most of these housing management indicators being measured at the neighbourhood level (the exception is survey-based indicators, an issue discussed on page 40). This is because collection of information on service delivery is often at the individual dwelling level, and every dwelling has a post-code.

However, although this may be possible, the use of data at small levels of geography is by no means routine. The lowest level of geography for formal planning and reporting tends to be much larger than neighbourhood management areas. Formal targets or service standards are often still set for the organisation as a whole or at the borough level, and not at sub-levels of geography.

Although it's unlikely that neighbourhood data will be available "off the shelf", the measurement methods used, combined with the common use of databases containing post-code data, make it increasingly possible to analyse existing data at a finer grain in ways that would be useful to neighbourhood managers. Some more detailed tips on the "art of the possible" are provided below.

Social housing

While RSLs and local authorities and their ALMOs react to emergencies and other problems in individual dwellings, this is quite different from a pro-active tracking of service performance at a fine-grained neighbourhood ("patch") level.

A wealth of data is gathered and stored relating to the full range of housing services. While the indicators themselves may change, the data behind the indicators is likely to continue to be gathered via a relatively small number of large-scale data collection exercises. This helps to make the data consistent, as well as ensuring it is collected regularly.

Currently, the key sources of data are:

- The **Regulatory and Statistical Return (RSR)**, which is an annual return made by housing associations and local authorities. The focus of the RSR is on the volume, characteristics and ownership of social housing stock in all its forms, as well as capturing information on lettings, vacancy rates, rents and high level information on the nature of housing management activity undertaken by respondent organisations.
- **CORE**, the Continuous Recording of Lettings and Sales, which collects data every time a property is newly let, or re-let, or sold. This focuses on the tenants, rather than the stock itself – it includes information about the tenant's background, income, reasons for moving etc. – although some information is also collected about the property itself.
- A financial regulation form (**form FVA**), providing a summary of each organisation's annual accounts.
- At the national level, the **existing tenants surveys (ETS)** have provided a national and regional snapshot of tenant perceptions. The last survey was undertaken in 2004.

- **Best Value surveys** of housing and the Best Value General Survey, both of which are undertaken at the local authority level.

There are important changes to two of these data collection mechanisms which could make housing data at the neighbourhood level significantly more accessible. The Department for Communities and Local Government and the Housing Corporation are working together on a joint project called **NROSH – the National Register for Social Housing**. This project is creating a national point-level database which incorporates all aspects of CORE with parts of the RSR.

The project is still in its developmental stages, but is already capturing some live data. The aim is for NROSH to be fully operational by 2009/10. Once NROSH is fully operational, it is likely that the traditional RSR will become largely or wholly redundant.

One of the key benefits of NROSH from a neighbourhood management perspective is the ability to generate data at ward and middle-layer Super Output Area level, and at post code level (though it will not be possible to do a single search for groups of post codes unless boundaries have been defined in advance and incorporated into the NROSH system).

Even though the Audit Commission's inspection of RSLs and local authority housing departments is likely to become a lighter touch in the future, the encouragement for RSLs and local authorities to better manage their services will continue unabated. With the drive to improve quality and efficiency, it makes sense for housing management service providers to look ever more closely at their service delivery – and that includes analysing data at smaller levels of geography. With NROSH, the capability to do so will be much improved.

Post code generated data will be useful for the administrative data collected by RSLs as part of their day to day work, but cannot help with customer satisfaction indicators. Satisfaction indicators are drawn from the Standardised Tenant Satisfaction Survey (STATUS). This is a regular survey conducted by local authorities and RSLs using a standard questionnaire developed by the National Housing Federation. The survey is carried out every three years, with the most recent results available for 2006. However, a key issue for neighbourhood management initiatives is that the survey, as with the BVPI surveys, is a sample survey. Although the sample size means that results are statistically robust at the organisational or borough level, typical sample sizes would not allow the results to be "disaggregated" or broken down to sub-areas or patches and used with confidence.

To get over this problem there are a number of options available to neighbourhood management initiatives. One is to include some of the key STATUS and BVPI questions in their own neighbourhood surveys. An alternative is to liaise with the RSL or local authority about undertaking a "booster sample" for the neighbourhood in question. Either approach would enable the neighbourhood management area to be benchmarked with wider area performance.

Private sector housing management

Formal planning and reporting of these local authority-run services tends to be at the district level, although some analysis may be done of smaller areas with the greatest need, based on findings from stock condition surveys and surveys of empty dwellings.

There is the possibility that activities relating to empty and non-Decent properties could be tracked at lower levels of geography as this information tends to be stored by post code. The research that informed this module shows that this level of analysis is not yet routine, but – as with social housing management – there is nothing in principle that prevents it being done.

7. How to use the data and make the case for improvements

Getting good quality data at the neighbourhood level is a critical ingredient for negotiations, but how it is used to build a case for improvements in service delivery is just as important. This last section of the module provides some practical guidance on how to use the data as the basis for negotiations with service providers. The guidance is structured in the following way:

- ❑ How can the data be analysed?
- ❑ What does the data tell us we should focus on?
- ❑ What kinds of service improvement will make a difference?
- ❑ Making the case: when is best, and who to target?

How can the data be analysed?

Having explored the issues of data accessibility, and come to some agreement about data sharing and analysis at the neighbourhood level, neighbourhood managers should establish their own service database probably using spreadsheet software. The graphic below gives a flavour of how the data could be stored and analysed to take snapshots at particular points in time, as well as to track changing performance over a number of years.

	Neighbourhood e.g. 2003	2007	Change 2003-2007	Borough average e.g. 2003	2007	Change 2003-2007
5 i) Service level						
6 % of routine repairs completed within target						
7 Average days to re-let a social housing rental dwelling						
8 Rent arrears of current social housing tenants at the financial year end as % of rent debit						
9 Target days for emergency, urgent and routine repairs						
10 Total no. of repairs notified, and no. that were emergency, urgent and routine.						
11 No. of complaints of ASB and/or Harassment received						
12 Average void turn-around time (days) for major or minor repairs)						
13 ii) Service quality						
14 % of tenants very satisfied or satisfied with the way their landlord deals with repairs and maintenance						
15 % of tenants satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord						
16 % of tenants very or fairly satisfied with the opportunities for participation in management and decision-making						
17 Satisfaction of shared owners with the overall service provided by the association						
% of shared ownership purchasers satisfied with						

What does the data tell us we need to focus on?

The key to understanding service data is benchmarking, the process of comparing performance for a target neighbourhood against some wider area (often, in this context, the local authority district). The following example demonstrates how benchmarking can be used to highlight a problem, and measure how severe it is compared with other areas.

What's the problem?

A neighbourhood management initiative has done a household survey to inform its delivery plan. The survey found that 64% of local residents in general needs social housing were satisfied with the services provided by their landlord, a recent stock transfer RSL. When the neighbourhood management team benchmarked this result with the most recent STATUS survey results for the RSL, using data available from www.housingpis.co.uk, they found that a) this was significantly worse than the RSL's average performance (75%) and b) that the RSL was in the bottom quartile of performance nationally. The average for the top quartile of service providers nationally was 86%.

The neighbourhood management initiative devoted its next residents forum to the issue, and invited the housing officer to attend. The feedback revolved around two issues. First, residents were saying that properties in part of the estate were staying vacant for a long time between tenants, and were not sufficiently secure. This was attracting vandalism, including arson, and neighbouring tenants as well as elderly tenants were particularly concerned for their own safety and that of their home. Second, residents had a more general complaint about the difficulty of getting through to the RSL's central call centre and felt that the repair problems they 'phoned in were not always being dealt with.

If the performance data suggests that the neighbourhood is receiving services at a lower level or lower quality than necessary, these conclusions can provide some focus for discussions with service providers about why that's the case, and what steps might be taken to improve the service. However, raw data on its own is unlikely to tell the full story. Other information – including feedback from residents and discussions with service provider managers – is often needed to reveal the real underlying problems and what can be done about them.

What are the reasons for this performance gap?

After the meeting with residents, the neighbourhood manager and the housing officer met on their own, and the housing officer brought along some service performance data just for the neighbourhood, based on the estate's post codes. This revealed a number of problems, but essentially confirmed what the residents were saying. The data showed that RSL was taking on average twice as long (48 days) as the best performing service providers to re-let properties, and in this estate the delays were even longer. There were some specific reasons for this, centred around the age of the properties and the decision to refurbish them at the point of vacancy, but also due to the way the RSL was co-ordinating the different construction trades. In relation to the vandalism issue, existing security arrangements were limited to a periodic patrol by a private firm.

Other data showed that the resident feedback about the difficulty of reporting repairs was well-founded. Although emergency repairs were dealt with very quickly, response times for urgent and routine repairs were both significantly below the RSL's average, which in turn was also in the bottom quartile of national performance. The housing officer explained that the RSL had inherited the central phone number and repairs system when the stock was transferred from the local authority. There were acknowledged problems with the system, both in terms of ensuring every complaint was passed to the right department and in co-ordinating the correct response.

Having taken the process this far, the neighbourhood manager was now in a position to work with the housing officer and other RSL managers to see if any solutions could be found.

What kinds of service provision will make a difference?

Some service improvements may be very straightforward and cheap to deliver. However, others may be more complex, requiring detailed analysis into how existing services are delivered and options for improving service delivery.

Neighbourhood management initiatives can and should be proactive in looking for evidence on what works from other areas and sharing it with local service providers. There is an increasingly body of useful information from the Housing Corporation, the Chartered Institute of Housing, and the National Housing Federation as well as national evaluations of the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder programme and New Deal for Communities. The box below explores some of the improvements that were considered in the context of the specific example used here.

What service changes will make a difference?

Having got to the root of these two problems, the solution to the security risk at vacant properties was dealt with fairly quickly. Temporary shuttering over the windows and doors was an obvious response, which became a straightforward investment decision once the RSL looked at the cost of damage to the vacant properties and saw that it outweighed the cost of shuttering. The regular security patrols were kept on, but the timings changed to coincide with resident feedback about when anti-social behaviour was most prevalent. Co-ordination with PCSOs also led to more intensive patrolling by them.

The re-let times and the quality of the repairs service both took longer to address. However, the RSL decided to pilot a new system for reporting repairs in the neighbourhood. This was a GIS-based system which plotted all calls from tenants regarding problems, including repairs, and it also included a system for booking appointments, based on the workloads of the repair teams. This had the benefit of concentrating the repairs teams in particular patches and neighbourhoods, which cut down on their travelling time and costs. The new appointments system also helped to manage expectations about when repairs, especially routine repairs, would be made.

The neighbourhood manager and the housing officer continued to meet regularly to discuss these changes and to see how performance was changing. The subject was back on the residents forum agenda 6 months later, when the housing officer explained all of the changes that had been made. Feedback from residents was that they had noticed the changes and were generally pleased. The solutions brought about encouraging results in the RSL's performance indicators, helping it to move out of the bottom quartile nationally. The cost savings in travel time enabled the RSL to invest in service improvements in other areas.

Useful links

The box below provides some useful websites for further information about the measurement of housing services.

- ❑ <http://www.dclg.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1153107> - with details of Best Value measurements in housing (part of the Communities and Local Government website).
- ❑ <http://www.dclg.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1152984> - Anti social behaviour and housing (part of DCLG website)
- ❑ <http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1454> - Housing Corporation site - Performance and assessment.
- ❑ <http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/nav.526> - Housing Corporation site - details of Housing Association Assessments (HCAs)
- ❑ <http://www.housingpis.co.uk/?contentid=Home> - Housing Corporation – Performance Indicators website
- ❑ <http://www.cih.org/policy/EfficiencyGuidance.pdf> - Chartered Institute of Housing – guidance on Housing Association Annual Efficiency Statements
- ❑ <http://comunities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1150482> - Communities and Local Government – Social Housing Efficiency Statements – A technical note
- ❑ <http://www.bvpi.gov.uk/pages/Index.asp> - DCLG dedicated website to Best Value in England
- ❑ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1136106> - for guidance on Best Value Performance Indicators
- ❑ www.housingcorp.gov.uk/upload/pdf/ha_data_20060814132147.pdf - Housing Corporation – guide to data for the housing association sector (August 2006)
- ❑ www.bvpi.gov.uk/pages/Index.asp - for the local government performance measurement website
- ❑ <http://www.housemark.co.uk/hm.nsf/home?ReadForm> - Housemark, an online performance improvement service for housing organisations
- ❑ <http://www.housing.org.uk/prodserv/feedback.asp> - National Housing Federation - access to STATUS questionnaires for RSLs and LAs
- ❑ www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance/ - for the Audit Commission’s website on performance indicators and performance measurement
- ❑ www.audit-commission.gov.uk/kloe/housingkloe/kloe32.asp?CategoryID=english%5E1628 - Audit Commission Key Line of Enquiry 32 on Value for Money, and “Value for Money within housing – Supplementary Guidance”
- ❑ www.sqw.co.uk/nme/ - for the National Evaluation of Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders.

Module 4

Jobcentre Plus

Contents



MODULE 4: JOBCENTRE PLUS

Module coverage

This module concentrates on the delivery and measurement of those employment services delivered by Jobcentre Plus. The main objectives of Jobcentre Plus are to:

- Increase the effective labour supply through the promotion of work as the best form of welfare and by helping those who are unemployed and economically inactive to move into employment
- Work towards the parity of outcomes for ethnic minority customers
- Pay customers the correct benefit at the right time and protect the benefit system from fraud, error and abuse
- Provide high-quality and demand-led services to employers by swiftly filling job vacancies in an effective manner through the provision of well-prepared and motivated employees
- Help people facing the obstacles to employment to compete effectively in the labour market and move into and stay in work
- Continuously improve the quality, accessibility and delivery of services to all customers
- Ensure that people receiving working age benefits fulfil their responsibilities while providing appropriate help and support for those without work
- Increase Jobcentre Plus' overall productivity, efficiency and effectiveness

1. What are we trying to improve and why?

Ensuring that residents are able to secure access to employment opportunities is a central element of neighbourhood regeneration and renewal and it is thus important that the quality of employment services designed to enable residents in neighbourhoods to gain access to their local labour market is assessed. It is for this reason that during 2006/7 a decision was made to extend this toolkit to employment services. However, it was recognized from the outset that the work would be very much that of a pilot exercise designed to establish how employment services were delivered since initial discussion with the Department for Work and Pensions indicated that performance measurement information was not currently produced at a neighbourhood level.

Local areas and the neighbourhoods within them vary significantly in terms of their labour market characteristics. The nature of the problems preventing individuals obtaining work can be diverse. Neighbourhoods are part of a wider labour market and an important element of any attempt to improve the employment prospects of those out of work is to increase their access to the wider labour market. Jobcentre Plus delivery is configured on a district basis and this is a more meaningful geography with which to consider labour market issues, although the wider sub-region is also clearly relevant.

Helping local people to obtain jobs is central to successful regeneration. Deprived labour markets are highly segmented and many workers have very limited mobility. Segmentation can be significant by age, gender, skill and ethnicity, and it is not unknown for there to be considerable shortages of key workers alongside relatively large surpluses of workers with no skills at all.

Also, there are some very difficult interfaces between the incentive for people in deprived neighbourhoods who want to work and benefit regimes. Temporary jobs available to many of those on deprived estates are often low paid, offer uncertain prospects and may not be highly motivating. In such circumstances it is entirely logical that workers will stay on benefit regimes, particularly those involving housing benefit rather than take relatively low paid jobs. The minimum wage, in work benefits and the working families tax credit are designed to address such poverty traps, but the evidence suggests they have not gone far enough as yet. There also remains the lure of the informal economy.

Problems in the labour market can take a number of different forms reflecting the segmentation of the labour market that exists. The appropriate initiatives vary accordingly. However, a core desired outcome is to raise levels of employment/self employment. Examples of the problems that can affect the ability of the residents to participate fully in their local labour market are discussed extensively in recent research report from CLG (Research Report 34: Neighbourhood Management and Neighbourhood Economic Development, May 2007). Thus, the sort of problems encountered include 'postcode discrimination' by employers, a lack of information and awareness of the job opportunities available, a lack of transport and issues around ill-health.

In many deprived neighbourhoods Jobcentres have worked with other partners by participating in Area Based Initiatives often delivered through partnership based models. Most recently, these partners have been from New Deal for Communities, Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders or Single Regeneration Budget partnerships. These partnerships have adopted a number of measures to reduce worklessness. The most common examples are:

- Job placement services;
- Job search services e.g. job club;
- Training;
 - Literacy and innumeracy;
 - Personal development;
 - Skills training.
- Work experience, Intermediate Labour Markets;
- Employment for the sick and disabled;
- Job creation in the neighbourhood;
 - Training and assistance for self-employment;
 - Premises and advice for small firms;
 - Jobs in retailing and consumer and public services.
- Childcare facilities;
- Physical and organisational links between the neighbourhoods and local centres of opportunity and employment, including public transport services.

The overall objective of the initiatives adopted is to place more people from in and around the target area in work. In some cases it may be a question of getting them into better quality jobs, certainly involving higher wages. The outcome indicators that

might be expected to show some relative improvements over a long enough period of time are thus worklessness, the employment rate, the take-up of benefit and movements in the level of incomes.

A number of activities may be encouraged through the work of the Area Based Initiatives that include delivering training on a more local basis, training outreach services, the delivery of more informal training facilities, customising training, developing innovative approaches, enhanced education and childcare facilities, recognising the particular needs of the young and the appropriate way of getting them into work. Getting people in these areas back to work necessitates customising advice from Jobcentres to reflect the personal characteristics of the individual and taking account of their qualification/family circumstances and fitness to work.

Examples of how Neighbourhood Manager Pathfinders have been able to work with Jobcentre Plus colleagues in this way are provided in the Research report 34 referred to above. Thus, in the Springbourne and Boscombe Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder a full-time Employment Advisor was co-funded by the Pathfinder, Jobcentre Plus and the local SRB partnership to work-out of the local GP surgery for 12 months to meet people on long run IB. The evidence suggests that this way of working has allowed greater flexibility in the targeting of priority hard-to-reach groups.

2. What services are provided?

Jobcentre Plus is an executive agency for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and is responsible for delivering a wide variety of services. For people seeking work or other advice and guidance Jobcentre Plus offers the following;

- Online job search service for those seeking employment via the Jobcentre Plus website
- Help with acquiring job hunting skills (getting started, writing letters and applications and interview techniques)
- Help with training (information on basic skills and English, national traineeships, pre-vocational qualifications, work based training for the young, special training help for disabled people and information on Career Development Loans)
- Help with working or training in other European member states via the European Employment Services Network
- Information on government programmes aimed at the unemployed, e.g. New Deal, Work Trial, Pathways to Work and Employment Zones
- Guidance for those leaving school or college in terms of what to do next, knowing your rights, training and financial and other practical help
- Guidance and advice and support for those out of work
- Financial and practical support for lone parents including health, education and help in finding work
- Advice and support for disabled people via Disability Employment Advisers
- Information on working age benefits – there are a number of benefits and services administered by Jobcentre Plus including Attendance Allowance, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Incapacity Benefit and Income Support

- Advice for those seeking to become self-employed with details of organizations set up to help those wishing to work for themselves

Jobcentre Plus also offers a range of services for employers that include:

- Advice on recruitment needs with vacancies either in the UK or abroad and the provision of high quality applicants for each vacancy
- Circulation of all vacancies across the UK via the 8,600 touch screen systems in all Contact Centres as well as on the Jobcentre Plus website and through the Jobseeker Direct telephone service.
- Provision of a Vacancy Services Manager to work with an employer to help fill vacancies, providing local information about available people and other details of the local labour market.
- Larger employers with significant vacancies may access the Account Management Service which designs a recruitment package tailored to the employer's specific recruitment needs.
- 'Job Warehouse' facility for employers with a large number of vacancies to enable them to submit a number of vacancies at the same time rather than individually.
- Specialist help and advice on training, rates of pay, equal opportunities and employing people with disabilities or from overseas.
- Job applications can be made direct to the employer or alternatively Jobcentre Plus can manage the process on the employer's behalf. It also provides some additional facilities including interview facilities for employers that may need these.
- Jobcentre Plus also offer employers the opportunity to join a 'Work Trial' which enables an employer to try out a candidate for up to 15 days with no obligation on either side.
- Free access to the pensions forecast service which provides state and private pension forecast information that can be included in pension statements to employees (part of the Department for Work and Pensions)
- An Overseas Vacancies Team dedicated to aid employer recruitment outside Great Britain, including the Channel Islands, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and British Overseas Territories
- The European Employment Services Network helps employers recruit from across the European Economic Area.

3. How are they delivered?

A primary source of the delivery of services for job seekers is through the use of Personal Advisers. These advisers are assigned to customers who access the various programmes run by Jobcentre Plus including New Deal, Pathways to Work and all those who claim Jobseeker's Allowance. Their role is two-fold:

- Assisting people to find work by identifying barriers to employment and helping them to overcome these difficulties;
- Ensuring that those claiming benefit fulfil the necessary conditions to do so in order to protect the benefits system from fraud and error.

Delivery of advice is achieved through a personal interview with the customer that will vary in length depending on their personal requirements but could typically range from 20 minutes to over an hour. Initially people will receive a focused interview looking at a number of aspects including:

- work experience
- skills
- training and education opportunities
- qualifications
- other customer needs such as child care
- special needs for example for those with a disability

Subsequent interviews with the adviser will be arranged at agreed regular intervals to track progress and give further guidance as necessary.

Other advice and guidance is also available from Personal Advisers including training advice, general information on starting a business and financial advice on Tax Credits and other benefits advice. They can also provide more targeted advice for specialist groups such as the disabled and lone parents. Where the need is more critical, for example where a disability is causing additional problems for a person in getting or retaining a job, a Disability Employment Adviser can offer specialist support.

Help in seeking work is provided in a number of ways, both directly through the Centre, and indirectly via the website. The Online Job Search facility enables anyone to access current job vacancies via the website which have details of how to apply for the job. Jobseeker Direct is a phone service available to all jobseekers with information of the latest job vacancies. Once a suitable job is identified the application form will be sent to the applicant and where possible an interview will be set up on the customer's behalf. Finally Job Points are available at the Jobcentre Plus offices. These are touch screen systems that enable customers to have access to job vacancy information with details of where to apply.

Jobcentre Plus also provides detailed information via its website on job seeking skills including completing letters and application forms, writing a CV and interview techniques. Job fairs also provide an opportunity for jobseekers to find out what jobs are on offer and gives them the chance to meet and talk with prospective employers. Finally, Jobcentre Plus also offers a selection of guides and leaflets aimed at people who are out of work, leaving education, disabled or people with health conditions, carers and lone parents.

For customers seeking work abroad Jobcentre Plus is a member of the European Employment Services network, which is a partnership with other European Economic Area countries that enables the exchange of vacancy information to help facilitate freedom of movement between the member states. The Jobcentre Plus International Job Search Advice Team deal with overseas job enquiries and are also able to advise more generally on living and working abroad.

Services to employers are delivered in various ways via the network of offices and contact centres across the UK. Employers may be assigned a Vacancy Services Manager to work with them to help fill vacancies. Larger employers who tap into the Account Management Service will be allocated an Accounts Manager to help them

design their own specific recruitment package. Employers can create their own vacancy advertisement online through the 'Employer Direct' Online to give them greater control over the process. Alternatively vacancies can be emailed or sent via text phone to Jobcentre Plus or discussed direct with Jobcentre Plus staff.

Jobcentre Plus can provide a number of additional services that include the provision of interview facilities for employers at some of its contact centres. They are also able to distribute application forms on behalf of employers as well as sift through completed forms to ensure the employers only see the most suitable candidates for a post.

There are also a number of programmes including New Deal, Work Trials and Industry Specific Initiatives that Jobcentre Plus can advise employers on. Sector initiatives are run at the national level and Sector Relationship Managers have been appointed to key sectors of industry (including construction, manufacturing, transport and healthcare) with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the recruitment needs of these sectors.

Job fair events are arranged by Jobcentre Plus and operate around the country. Employers can take stands at these events to aid in their recruitment drives. Further advice and guidance on a number of issues including employment law, labour market information, service standards for employers is available via the Jobcentre Plus website.

4. How are services planned?

Jobcentre Plus operates according to an Annual Business Plan that documents how it intends to meet its objectives and the relevant targets for that period. Targets are set at the national level and the Job Outcome target measures the outcomes arising from the work of Jobcentre Plus in helping to find people work. The Job Outcome target uses HM Revenue and Customs employment data to identify when a person successfully secures employment following a Jobcentre intervention. In 2007-8 a total points score of 11,200,000 has been set based on the outcomes secured by Jobcentre Plus offices across the country. Points are awarded, as described elsewhere in this toolkit, according to the characteristic of the worker who is found a job. Thus, priority customer group one, for instance, covers Jobless Lone Parents, customers participating in New Deal for Disabled People or in receipt of inactivity benefit due to a health condition. Additional points are awarded for the customer being in a disadvantaged ward and being in receipt of child benefit.

5. How is service performance measured?

i) What level of service is delivered?

Possible indicators that can be used to measure the level of service being delivered are:

- ❑ Time devoted by staff to processing applicants from the target area
- ❑ Number of customers from target area dealt with by staff

ii) What **quality** of service is delivered?

There were two new quality measures introduced in 2006-7. The first was the Job Outcome measure designed to encourage staff to offer a greater choice to customers on how they look for work. A Job Outcome attracts a specific number of points depending on the customer profile from 1 point which is allocated to employed customers to 12 points for inactive benefit recipients such as lone parents. Additional points are also awarded to those in specified local authority wards. With this scoring system in place the target was set to achieve a total of 13.5 million points based on job outcomes for 2006-7.

The second new quality measure was the Average Actual Clearance Time for processing specific benefit claims. Targets set for 2006-7 are 11 days for Income Support, 12 days for Jobseeker's Allowance and 18 days for Incapacity Benefit claims.

Jobcentre Plus quality indicators include:

- ❑ Job Outcome indicator (total score of job outcomes Jobcentre Plus achieves)
- ❑ Average Actual Clearance Times (number of days taken to process claims for Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Incapacity Benefit).
- ❑ Employer Outcome indicator (% of employers placing their vacancies with Jobcentre Plus which have a positive outcome)
- ❑ Customer Service indicator (customer service level in the delivery of the standards set in 'Our Service Standards' and the Employers' Charters)
- ❑ Monetary value of fraud and error indicator (level of loss from fraud and error in working age Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance)
- ❑ Business Delivery (standard of efficiency and accuracy by which Jobcentre Plus business processes are delivered)

The target for the Employer Outcome measure for 2006-7 was set to ensure that 86% of employers placing their vacancies with Jobcentre Plus have positive outcomes.

The Customer Service measure looks at professionalism, timeliness and the accuracy of the information given to customers. These elements are measured largely through an independent contractor that completes a Mystery Shopping programme where mystery shoppers are employed to make office visits and telephone enquiries using a variety of questionnaires. The results of this exercise indicate the performance of each of the three elements, the overall target is to achieve an 84% customer service level.

The monetary Value of Fraud and Error target is to ensure that such losses with respect to Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance should be no more than current levels of loss or not more than 5.2% of the monetary value of these benefits paid during the year (whichever is the lower figure).

Finally the Business Delivery measure is designed to help Jobcentre Plus deliver its key business processes. The 2006-7 target was for 94% of checked business process cases to be delivered accurately, efficiently and to the specified standard.

iii) At what **cost** are services delivered?

- Awaiting Department for Work and Pensions to develop unit cost measures for Jobcentre Plus

iv) What **outcomes** do services generate?

There are four Public Service Agreements (PSA) that are related to Jobcentre Plus outcomes:

- [PSA 1] Halve the number of children in relative low-income households between 1998-99 and 2010-11, on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020, including:
 - Reducing the proportion of children in workless households by 5% between spring 2005 and spring 2008; and
 - Increasing the proportion of parents with care on Income Support and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance who receive maintenance for their children to 65% by March 2008
- [PSA 4] As part of the wider objective of full employment in every region, over the 3 years to spring 2008 and taking account of the economic cycle:
 - demonstrate progress on increasing the employment rate
 - increase the employment rates of disadvantaged groups¹¹; and
 - significantly reduce the difference between the employment rate of disadvantaged groups and the overall rate
- [PSA 8] In the 3 years to March 2008:
 - Further improve the rights of disabled people and remove barriers to their participation in society, working with other Government departments, including through increasing awareness of the rights of disabled people
 - Increase the employment rate of disabled people, taking account of the economic cycle; and
 - Significantly reduce the difference between their employment rate and the overall rate, taking account of the economic cycle
- [PSA 10] Reduce overpayments from fraud and error in Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Housing benefit

6. Can service data be accessed at neighbourhood level?

From both a customer and employer point of view it is possible to access many of the Jobcentre Plus services via the Jobcentre Plus website which could be used via a local internet connection. For jobseekers these online services include the Online Job Search service, many of the information and advice leaflets, information on vacancies and other job seeking advice. In addition the Jobseeker Direct service is run using a phone connection. Employers can advertise vacancies using Employer Direct Online and can also place a vacancy by phone using the Employer Direct service.

¹¹ Lone parents, ethnic minorities, people aged 50 and over, those with the lowest qualifications and those living in local authority wards with the poorest initial labour market position.

The operation of Job Fairs is another mechanism by which both customers and employers can access Jobcentre Plus services at a more local level. These events organised by Jobcentre Plus provide an opportunity for jobseekers who want to tap into job and training openings and employers who have vacancies to fill.

The existing incentivisation system used to reward Jobcentre advisors in delivering their services is designed to encourage them to focus on particularly hard to reach groups such as lone parents, but also those who live in some deprived wards as designated by their post codes. However, in general, Jobcentre Plus staff have historically relied on others, usually working through Area Based partnerships, to come up with ways of targeting hard to reach groups in specific neighbourhoods. The role of Jobcentre Plus has thus been responsive rather than proactive at the neighbourhood based level.

However, in 2006 the position changed somewhat with the deployment of a new initiative: the Cities Strategy. This has the objective of addressing worklessness in the most disadvantaged areas in the UK, many of which are to be found in urban areas. The strategy seeks to identify ways by which the activities of government agencies, local government, the private and voluntary sectors might be brought together to provide support to those out of work and to get them into work. They work together by forming a Consortium that ideally builds on existing partnership arrangements. By joining together and trying out innovative approaches it is hoped that more progress will be achieved than has been possible hitherto. Once they have agreed targets the Pathfinders have direct access to funding from the £32 million available in the Deprived Areas Fund, a role in influencing the Pathway to Work programme designed to get people off incapacity benefit, access to improved data sharing, an enhanced ability to influence the provision of training opportunities and employment programmes at the local level and potential additional reward funding if they are successful in meeting their targets to get people back to work. The funds secured from the Deprived Areas Fund may be used to enhance the provision of Jobcentre Plus services to those identified most in need in a particular area.

Two Department for Work and Pensions City Strategy Pathfinders were designated in East and West London in April 2006 and a further thirteen areas were granted this status in July 2006. On the 2nd April 2007 the Secretary of State announced that all fifteen Pathfinders would be eligible for the full package of assistance available.

Besides the City Strategy Pathfinder initiative it is also worth noting that the recent Local Government White Paper ([Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper](#)., September 2006) referred to a new duty for partners involved in regeneration like Jobcentre Plus to co-operate in agreeing Local Area Agreement targets and have regard to them. In order to ensure effective consultation, agreement of targets and efficient delivery against them, Jobcentre Plus like other Government Agencies will thus be required in the future to enter into a level of engagement that can produce sensible and functioning partnership working and joint planning at the local level.

7. How to use the data and make the case for improvements

The performance of Jobcentre Plus activities are currently assessed according to a points system that relates success according to assigned priorities. Hitherto hard to reach groups, including those in disadvantaged wards, form the basis of the priority allocation. There is not, at the present time, any neighbourhood based monitoring system, although the evidence presented in this toolkit indicates that the information can be assembled for a specific area, since the address of the individual being assisted is recorded by Jobcentre Plus. In this section we provide two examples of how neighbourhood pathfinders and local authorities can work with their local Job Centre Plus to tackle neighbourhood based labour market issues. The section concludes with an illustrative 'spreadsheet' that can be used to measure progress.

Springbourne and Boscombe West Pathfinder

What's the problem?

The Boscombe West and Springbourne neighbourhoods form a Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder area that extends from near the Centre of Bournemouth westwards to the shoreline in the South of the area. Of the economic active population of 8,996 people, 7.7% were unemployed in April 2001, compared to 4.6% across Bournemouth, and 5% nationally. This dropped to 5% in 2004, and continues at this rate in 2006. This decrease reflects a national trend, but at 5% unemployment in the NM area stubbornly stays above the Borough's target of 3%. In the Boscombe West ward, 27.27% of 16-64 year olds are registered as sick, disabled or lone parents, compared to 11.94% across the Local Authority, and 9.42% in the region. The LAA process is pushing all local authorities to move to the regional average. Again in the Boscombe West ward, as of April 2006, 38.6% of the working age population were claiming benefits of some kind with a relatively high proportion of local residents in the area on Incapacity Benefit.

What are the reasons for this performance gap?

A recent study undertaken as part of the National Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder programme reported that the availability of employment opportunities was not the main problem since Bournemouth had a strong tourism industry and presence in finance and insurance industries (Annual Business Enquiry 2003). However, there were difficult interfaces between those on Incapacity Benefit, drugs and a range of mental health issues. Two key goals were to bring about a reduction in the unemployment rate to be in line with Bournemouth Borough Levels of 3% and to secure a reduction in Incapacity Benefit claimants to the Bournemouth Borough level of 6.87%.

What service changes will make a difference?

The Springbourne and Boscombe West Pathfinder did not initially give a high priority to addressing local labour market issues because it wished to avoid duplicating the efforts of an SRB programme (2001-06) that covered its area. Moreover, there were not strong operational links with the local Job centre Plus. However, a new Partnership Manager appointment in 2004 at the JC Plus offices in Dorset Bournemouth and Poole led to a much better relationship and the Manager set up and chaired an employment group in late 2004 so that employment became one of two key themes for 2005/06. The Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, with the Jobcentre Plus and the local SRB Partnership, co-funded a full-time employment advisor to work out of a Boscombe doctors' surgery for a year, from January 2005. Recent research undertaken for the National Evaluation suggests "The adviser met with patients on long-term IB, referred by the GPs to consider options for access to employment. The post reflects JC Plus focus on deprived wards. Initial evaluation suggested that the project was exceeding targets in terms of the number of referrals. There were difficulties because very few of the patients referred were in a position to take first steps towards employment. After the first project worker left and was replaced, a different approach was adopted, which appears to be more successful. She works out of the surgery only one day a week, but also one day at the Boscombe Children's Centre, and one day a fortnight at each of the Springbourne Library, the NM office, and the

CRI Club House. This variety enabled her to target lone parents and the general public, as well as the recovering community. Her post was extended to end of July 2006. The cost to NM over the project lifetime has been £25,000.

This post has given JC Plus greater flexibility in its approach to targeting its priority groups, and sets lower targets that allows for a person-centred approach and greater investment in time. The advisor has greater freedom to engage with people in their own environments. She combines advice on employment with mentoring and support through the process. As with the volunteer services coordinator, she does not push people to look for employment, but rather discusses options and how to begin the journey into work, which in many cases she recognises may take several years.”

(CLG Research Report 34: Neighbourhood Management and Neighbourhood Economic Development, May 2007).

Birmingham City Strategy Partnerships

A further example relates to how the toolkit might be used by one of successful City Strategy Partnerships. Each of the City Strategy Partnerships has made available on the Department for Work and Pensions website their original Expression of Interest in being considered for City Strategy Partnership status. We chose the Expression submitted by Birmingham (See Department for Work and Pensions website as described below).

What's the problem?

In their submission the Birmingham Consortium identified 55 wards from across the City Region that could be assisted by the initiative. The selection was based on those wards with over half their Super Output Areas (SOAs) with worklessness levels a third or more above the Birmingham City average, those SOAs with worklessness levels a third or more above the City average which also had at least half of the ward's working age population location within them, and all City Region Deprived Area Fund wards. The 55 wards contain nearly 480,000 people that is about 31% of the City Region population. The intended overall focus is on all those on working age benefits (particularly Incapacity Benefit), people from the BME communities, lone parents and other 'inactive' groups outside the Benefits System

The Consortium aims to link together a range of policy initiatives that seek to tackle social exclusion as it relates to the labour market and its inter-generational transmission, particularly as it affects child poverty. It also wishes to secure more alignment of its policies designed to tackle worklessness with the wider objectives of its Local Area Agreements and local Community Strategies. There is a recognition that the needs of the modern day labour market are changing quickly. It is essential that individuals are encouraged to enhance their skill base. Those with little, or no skills, are particularly exposed. There remain many who cannot secure work since they do not have the requisite skills. At the same time, employers complain of skill shortages. As the Expression of Interest makes clear, there are 'pockets of long-term unemployment where over 20% are without work. In these areas, three successive generations of families have not found work'.

The Birmingham Consortium comprises Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, the relevant Local Authorities, public and private sector employers, private sector employment service providers and representatives from an extensive voluntary and community sector network of intermediary providers from across Birmingham and Solihull.

What are the reasons for this performance gap?

Whilst there has traditionally been a strong reliance on manufacturing industries for male employment in the City Region there has been a shift away from this over the last five years or so relative to the service sector. Key growth sectors for the region over the next 10 years are expected to be in professional and business services, retail/wholesale/distribution and health and care. The occupational and skills mix will shift quite dramatically towards managerial/professional and technical jobs and away from unskilled jobs. In consequence there will be a change in the demand for skills. It is anticipated that there will be a 35% growth in jobs requiring Level 3 and 4 qualifications and a 40% reduction in low skilled or unskilled jobs.

The labour supply in the City Region includes just over 1.5 million working age population. Within this the fastest growth is occurring in groups that are less likely to have qualifications and skills. The BME population account for 19% (compared with only 3% in the rest of the region) also the population is relatively young with 21% under 16 (compared with only 18% overall elsewhere in the region). Furthermore the population is ageing with an expected 14.5% over 50 by 2015. The City Region also has a high proportion of people with lower levels of ability or no qualifications with only around 51% having at least NVQ 2 skills (compared with nearly 69% nationally) and 31% with no qualifications compared to 23% nationally.

These contrasts between labour demand and supply highlight the problems faced by the area and the need for an integrated employment and skills strategy to help tackle them.

What service changes will make a difference?

The approach being recommended is to provide an enhanced level of employment service advice and training to those most vulnerable and ill equipped to meet the new needs of a rapidly changing labour market. In order to do this Neighbourhood Action Plans will be prepared at the Ward/SOA level. These plans set out activities that improve client engagement, provide individual skill assessment and lead to commissioned and tailored interventions that seek to match skills to job requirements. They also describe how improved Employer Engagement will be secured that includes more active involvement of employers in programme delivery through the establishment of four City Region Employer Boards.

There will also be an integrated Employment and Skills Delivery Plan. It is intended that this will introduce a common client entitlement across the area with a one-to-one assessment and the development of a Skills Assessment Plan for everyone. A Joint Investment Plan will be established setting targets for the recruitment and upskilling of the economically active population targeted.

The focus within the 55 wards identified will be on the following groups:

- People from the BME community
- Lone parent families
- Those claiming Incapacity Benefit or are sick and disabled
- The young unemployed
- Older people

Capturing the data

Central to the success of both of the above examples of local area initiatives involving Jobcentre Plus is that the partners have to be able to track performance against targets. The spreadsheet described below pulls together the indicators described in the toolkit that could be used to measure the Jobcentre Plus contribution to the endeavour. It seeks to provide indicators that can be used to measure service levels, the quality of service delivered, and outcomes as they relate to those targeted. To measure achievement it would be necessary to establish a baseline year and then chart progress from this.

Microsoft Excel - jobcentre plus data.xls

File Edit View Insert Format Tools Data Window Help

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	SERVICE DATA FOR: JOBCENTRE PLUS							
2		Neighbourhood		Change	District average		Change	
3		2005	2008	2005-2008	2005	2008	2005-2008	
4	ij Service level							
5	Time devoted by staff to processing applicants from the target area							
6	Number of customers from target area dealt with by staff							
7	ii) Service quality							
8	Job outcome indicator (total score of job outcomes Jobcentre Plus achieves)							
9	Average Actual Clearance Times (number of days taken to process claims for Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Incapacity Benefit)							
10	Employer Outcome indicator (% of employers placing their vacancies with Jobcentre Plus which have a positive outcome)							
11	iii) Outcomes							
12	The proportion of children in workless households							
13	The proportion of parents with care on Income Support and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance who receive maintenance for their children							
14	The employment rate							
15	The employment rates of disadvantaged groups							
16	The difference between the employment rate of disadvantaged groups and the overall rate							
17	The rights of disabled people and barriers to their participation in society							
18	Employment rate of disabled people taking account of economic cycle							
19	Difference between disabled employment rate and overall rate taking account of economic cycle							
20	Reduction in overpayments from fraud and error in Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Housing Benefit							
21								

Jobcentre Plus /

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Useful links

The box below provides some useful websites for further information about the measurement of Jobcentre Plus services.

- ❑ <http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Aboutus/Jobcentreplusperformance/index.html> - shows performance against targets for Jobcentre Plus since 2004/5.
- ❑ <http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/index.html> - Jobcentre Plus main website
- ❑ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2006/autumnreport/> - Department for Work and Pensions Autumn Performance Report 2006
- ❑ http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Aboutus/Usefullinks/Dev_011697.xml.html - Department for Work and Pensions, labour market information
- ❑ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/raisingstandards/jobcentreplus/> - Department for Education and Skills Raising Standards of Jobcentre Plus programmes
- ❑ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/article.asp?id=1172> - ONS National Statistics – publication of Jobcentre Plus vacancy statistics
- ❑ <http://www.nao.org.uk/about/role.htm#Value> - National Audit Office website, value for money audit
- ❑ www.sqw.co.uk/nme/ - for the National Evaluation of Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders.
- ❑ <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.aspx?id=1163512>- for guidance on the Department for Work and Pension's City Strategy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The toolkit was prepared by Peter Tyler, Colin Warnock, Angela Brennan and Steve Stevens of Cambridge Economic Associates Limited (CEA). It is based on research into a number of service areas in three local authority districts with neighbourhood management areas:

- Newcastle-under-Lyme (Knutton Cross Heath)
- East Staffordshire (Heart of Burton)
- Rotherham (Eastwood and Springwell Gardens).

The research is an integral part of the national evaluation of Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders. The objective of this work has been to see whether there is consistency across different areas in terms of the way services are delivered on the ground, how they are planned, the performance indicators used, and how organisations make the case for service improvements.

CEA would like to thank the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, the three Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders and all of the service providers who have participated in the research for their valuable inputs to this work.

