

*A regular update on the
National Evaluation of the NRU's Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme*

Influencing Service Providers...?

In April 2003 the evaluators of the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme visited each Pathfinder and interviewed key stakeholders as well as assessing Delivery Plans and other material. The reviews considered all aspects of Pathfinder development, particularly progress in bringing about changes in mainstream services. At the same time, a survey was carried out amongst residents in each Pathfinder area (www.sqw.co.uk/nme/).

More detailed findings will be disseminated in due course. In the meantime, this Newsletter provides a summary of some of the key lessons that may be of interest to all with an interest in developing neighbourhood management initiatives ...

Influencing....

- Service providers are more likely to engage where they can see a clear self-interest and an opportunity to meet their own corporate objectives. The level of engagement varies between areas but generally the police, Primary Care Trusts and housing management departments of local Councils tend to be in the forefront of involvement.
- It is important to ensure that commitment to neighbourhood management within service providers is broadly based and includes senior, middle management and budget holders, so that commitment permeates the organisation and front-line deliverers are supported.
- Many partnerships are seeking to establish formal Service Level Agreements with the intention of holding providers to account for service performance. The process of developing such SLAs is as important as the end product, as it brings residents and service providers together in a way that enables each to learn about the other and their needs and constraints.
- Some SLAs appear simply to codify existing service levels. But this is an important starting point because it defines quite clearly the current entitlements of residents (which may not always be transparent or widely understood) and provides the foundation for considering service improvements as part of a wider process of negotiation and development.
- The well researched analysis of local problems together with the presentation of evidenced proposals for service changes can be effective in influencing providers to review their approach to delivering a service. This may require use of research and analysis to an extent that is unusual for many regeneration

partnerships but is essential for an enabling organisation like a Pathfinder.

- Generalised audits of services and expenditure need to be approached very carefully. Audits and research should increase understanding and awareness of the effectiveness and efficiency of the processes and procedures for targeting and delivering local services - not just provide estimates of expenditure and activity.

And Results...

- It proved easier to make earlier progress in developing action on the ground with respect to crime and community safety (with the Police) and local environmental conditions (with local Councils).
- So far, the changes to local services as a result of Pathfinders can mainly be described as 're-shaping' rather than 'joining up' or 'bending' services - although some of the reshaping could lead to more fundamental changes as the Programme unfolds.
- Many of the initiatives supported by Pathfinders have so far originated from service providers rather than from the Pathfinder's own processes. This is no bad thing where changes are in line with Pathfinder priorities but partnerships will need to be more innovative and proactive where they have to assert their own priorities over those traditionally held by the service providers.

What is the National Evaluation?

The NRU has commissioned the National Evaluation team to evaluate the Pathfinder Programme 2002 – 2004 to learn the lessons from the Programme.

The evaluation is being led by **SQW**. Other members of the evaluation team include Cities Research Centre, (University of the West of England, Bristol), GFA Consulting, University of Cambridge Department of Land Economy, European Institute for Urban Affairs (Liverpool John Moores University), NOP & MORI.

Contact? This news update has been prepared by SQW Ltd. on behalf of the national evaluation team. If you would like further information please get in touch with us or visit our national evaluation website:

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More Key Findings from Year 1...

Establishing Partnerships

- It takes time to develop a partnership to the point where it can be outwardly focused and effective. The Round 1 Pathfinders have taken over 18 months from the time they were selected to establish themselves in practice. It's important to allow for a 'foundation phase' at the start of a neighbourhood management initiative.
- Boards should not be too big to do business. Most have 15-25 members and more than this is certainly too unwieldy. The average Pathfinder Board has 21 members with a spread of members across different sectors. Board membership evolves and Pathfinders are continuing to increase resident involvement.
- Partnership structures should be kept simple and focused – a Board and 3-4 theme groups, maybe with specific networks to support specific groups (e.g. a Key Officers Group, a community forum). It is easier to add new groups and structures later than de-construct a large existing organisation. Generally, residents and service providers should meet and work together in at least some of these groups.

Strengthening Boards

Some examples from Pathfinders...

- Resident Board members meet with the Neighbourhood Manager before Board meetings, for briefings on issues and to give them an opportunity to ask questions. Regular written briefings are also sent to Board members between meetings to keep them informed. (Springbourne and Boscombe West, Bournemouth)
- The Chair meets resident Board members for a pre-meeting in advance of Board meetings, to ensure they understand the agenda and the key issues. The first hour of each Board meeting is set aside for board development, including training and presentations. (Kendray, Barnsley)
- Each Board meeting is open to the public and now has an 'open forum' slot where local people can raise issues with the Board. This approach is a variation on the previous practice of making board meetings open and allowing questions throughout, which proved too disruptive and time consuming. (Knutton and Cross Heath, Newcastle under Lyme)
- The Board meeting is divided into 'formal' and 'informal' parts with the informal session being used to receive presentations from service providers and others to update and inform the Board. (Great Lever, Bolton)

Board Membership Across the Pathfinder Programme, April 2003				
Groups	Board Membership across the 20 Pathfinders		'Average' Pathfinder Board membership	
	No.	%		
Residents	131	31%	7 residents 7 service providers (all) 3 councillors 2 community groups 2 voluntary groups 1 business	
Community groups	35	8%		
Voluntary groups	33	8%		
Work related organisations (e.g. JobCentre Plus)	14	3%		
Local authority officers	26	6%		
Local councillors	66	16%		
Business	22	5%		
Health organisations	19	5%		
Schools or colleges (not LEAs)	17	4%		
Police	17	4%		
Other Service Providers	36	9%		
Total Members	416	100%		21 members

What's Next?

The National Evaluation team is in discussion with the NRU about a revised work programme which is likely to involve:

Dissemination

Work is progressing on disseminating the findings from the evaluation so far in the form of a report and input to renewal.net, as well as at events.

Second Annual Review

The main fieldwork will be the second annual review of the Pathfinders, at the end of Year 2, in the spring.

Pilot Study on Measuring Service Changes

Measuring changes in public services is a challenge for all, not least as the amount and quality of available data is variable. We will be doing a pilot study to examine what data is available and how we might make the best of this, both for the evaluation, and for Pathfinders.

SurveyReporter Website

The Consumer Survey, conducted by MORI and NOP in all 20 Pathfinders in early 2003 is now available online.

The website contains an explanation of how the surveys were done, and has a user-friendly analysis tool, to allow detailed analysis of the survey.

Where is it?

www.sqw.co.uk/nme/

... and follow the link to the SurveyReporter website.