

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

Evaluation News

SQW and its partners have been contracted by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) to continue the national evaluation of all 35 Pathfinders until 2008. It is the largest study of neighbourhood management practice in the UK.

The findings will influence national and local decision-makers at a time when policy towards local government and neighbourhood renewal is changing at a rapid pace with the introduction of Local Area Agreements.

The evaluation team has drawn up plans for the next 3 years, 2005–2008. Some tasks are still being developed, but for this year (2005/2006) the main agreed activities are as follows:

- **Annual overview** – research has now started in all 35 Pathfinders, with reports due to each Pathfinder in early October. A **national report** will be prepared after this, and also drawing on our other research strands, and will be published early in 2006.
- **Case studies** – We are also currently writing up 11 Case Studies from R1 Pathfinders, exploring our 4 key themes this year (see box 1). These will be published as **theme reports** in early 2006.
- **Non-Pathfinders** – we are studying 7 non-Pathfinder neighbourhood management initiatives to compare different approaches.
- **Action Learning Sets** – Two action learning sets have been set up, starting in September. One set will look at **housing** issues, and one will look at **roll-out** – two of our key themes for the year. We have had an excellent response so far, with nearly half of all Pathfinders participating in one of the sets. Both sets will report back by next April.
- **Household Surveys** – the second wave of surveys for Round 1 Pathfinders will be undertaken by MORI and NOP in early 2006. The questionnaire will be circulated shortly to all Managers. The survey should provide important data on what has changed in the 20 R1 areas.
- **Improving Service Data** - case studies are being undertaken in 3 Pathfinder areas by CEA to explore how we can improve the amount and quality of data about public services at neighbourhood level. This should lead to the preparation of guidance or a toolkit that all Pathfinders should find useful.

2005/6 Research Themes

Each year we will focus on 3-4 key themes across our different research strands. Following consultation, this year's research priorities were agreed as:

- Services for young people (aged 11 – 19)
- Joining up services for safer neighbourhoods
- Influencing housing providers
- Roll-out of neighbourhood management

We are aiming to produce thematic reports for each issue later in the year.

We Are Not Alone

Nearly 200 neighbourhood management initiatives have been established in England, with a growing array of approaches being tested.

A new strand of our research is studying alternative approaches to neighbourhood management and comparing them with the Pathfinder approach. This should be of interest to Pathfinders as well as local authorities and partners more generally.

We have identified, and signed up, 7 neighbourhood management initiatives from across the country and will be preparing case study reports on each one:

- **Wolverhampton** – a £1.1m per year NRF funded initiative operating across the city in 7 neighbourhoods (see over);
- **Haringey** – a local authority led NRF funded initiative operating in eight neighbourhoods across the Borough;
- **Poplar Harca, Newham** – a long standing initiative led by a Registered Social Landlord providing services for a small cluster of neighbourhoods;
- **Salford** – provides local authority led area management across three wards;
- **Benwell, Newcastle** – management of one area led by the Registered Social Landlord and funded by the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder;
- **Doncaster** – local authority led devolution of services across 15 areas Borough wide; and
- **Gateshead** – a local authority mainstream funded scheme operating in five areas across the city.

The Wolverhampton Way

SQW and its partners are finalising a case study report on the neighbourhood management initiative in Wolverhampton. It will be published later this year, but some of the findings are set out here.

In 2002 Wolverhampton's Strategic Partnership agreed to fund a neighbourhood management programme in the city. This was extended and it now covers 7 neighbourhoods, and has been running for over 3 years. It costs £1.1m per year, funded mainly from NRF, which is about £150,000 per neighbourhood per year.

It is one of the largest neighbourhood management programmes in the country. The 7 neighbourhoods cover 22,300 households, about 24% of all households in the city and nearly 50% of the city's deprived areas.

How does it work?

The programme has evolved over the last 3 years, but was closely modelled on the recommendations from the original SEU PAT4 Report on neighbourhood management as the Pathfinders are.

There are 7 pilot areas, each relatively small and based on the city's 'natural neighbourhoods' identified in a study in 2002. The areas have between 2,500 and 4,100 households, that is up to a maximum size of c.10,000 people. Most of the areas covered are deprived, but c.30% of households included are in more affluent areas; it was agreed at the outset to test neighbourhood management in a range of areas around the city.

Each pilot has the following features:

- A full-time Neighbourhood Manager, supported by a Partnership Officer (working on community involvement) and an Admin Officer. Teams are employed directly by the City Council;
- Each pilot has a £20k budget to spend each year on 'quick wins' and projects, together with a modest budget to run their office;
- Each pilot has a Managing Agent, which is a separate organisation that acts as an accountable body to that pilot; and
- Most, although not all, pilots have a neighbourhood partnership board including local residents and representatives of local service providers.

Although each Manager works in his/her own neighbourhood there is also joint working between them on strategic initiatives, and they meet regularly. Each Manager now leads on a key theme on behalf of the team, as well as working in their own neighbourhoods. They are supported by a central Neighbourhood Management Co-ordinator (and an admin officer) in the City Council.

What difference has it made?

The Neighbourhood Managers and their teams have made a unique and valuable contribution to community development, improving services and enhancing the quality of life in their pilot areas. It cannot be said that they have transformed their neighbourhoods in three years, but they are delivering a joined up approach to problem solving in the city that is unique in the city, and adding value.

The biggest impact so far has been in improving environmental services, improving community safety and improving community facilities.

The Wolverhampton Strategic Partnership are currently undertaking a full review of local area structures in the city, including discussion of whether neighbourhood management should be rolled-out more widely, and if it might need to change.

What can we learn?

- The degree of joint working between neighbourhoods is unusual, and has given extra weight to their efforts to influence services at a strategic level.
- The very limited 'project' funding has not been a problem for the Managers. It has encouraged an outward focus in their work.
- Their key added value has been in identifying, investigating and explaining joined up problems to service providers, and pushing for change. They are a responsive 'one-stop-shop for local problems' from the residents' point of view.
- The Managers appear to have benefited from being both city council employees (established systems, access to councillors and colleagues) and also attached to a Managing Agent (giving them an identity separate from the council, and based in their neighbourhood.)

Contact Details

The evaluation is being led by **SQW**, with the Cities Research Centre (University of the West of England, Bristol), GFA Consulting, Cambridge Economic Associates, European Institute for Urban Affairs (Liverpool John Moores University), Local Government Centre (Warwick University Business School), NOP & MORI.

If you would like further information please get in touch with us or visit our national evaluation website:

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