

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

## National Evaluation starts in earnest...

The National Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme began in the spring of 2002 with a 'scoping stage' to lay firm foundations for the future. This initial stage was completed during 2002, and the main stage of the evaluation is now underway.

In the first half of 2003, the evaluation team will be undertaking three main activities:

- **Consumer Survey** – a survey is to be undertaken in each Pathfinder area between January and March 2003. This is an important part of the Programme's baseline, and will allow progress in each area to be tracked over time. The survey will be repeated in each area at intervals during the Programme's lifetime.

The main aim of the survey is to explore the experience that people have of public services in their areas. The survey will also provide data that will be of use now in defining priorities and strategies. All data will be freely available to Pathfinders, and will be useful in reviewing and developing local services.

To help the evaluation team pick out what changes are likely to be the result of neighbourhood management activities, rather than just general improvements in public services, the survey will also be undertaken in some broadly comparable neighbourhoods where there is no neighbourhood management, to allow comparisons over time. All surveys are to be undertaken by NOP and MORI.

- **1<sup>st</sup> Year Annual Review** – in March/April the evaluation team will be undertaking an independent 'end of first year' review of each Pathfinder. The aim will be to identify the progress made in the Programme's first year and highlight good practice.
- **Case Studies** – a small number of focused case studies are planned, to explore particular service areas in selected areas.

More information on all of these activities, and other future plans, can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

## What is the National Evaluation ?

The **Neighbourhood Renewal Unit** is committed to evaluating the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme during its seven year life. The evaluation will make an important contribution to learning lessons from the Programme and sharing these with others across the country. As the first stage of this, it has commissioned a national interim evaluation to cover the first two years of the Programme, from 2002 – 2004.

The evaluation is being undertaken by a national team led by **SQW**. SQW is a regeneration and economic development consultancy with a long track record of undertaking independent evaluations. Other members of the evaluation team are:

- **Cities Research Centre, University of the West of England, Bristol**
- **GFA Consulting**
- **University of Cambridge, Department of Land Economy**
- **European Institute of Urban Affairs, Liverpool John Moores University**
- **NOP & MORI**

The Project Director is Geoff White and the Project Manager is Tim Thorlby, of SQW.

The long term aims of the evaluation are:

- **To identify how the effectiveness of the Programme could be improved** – learning lessons along the way and feeding these back to the Pathfinders and to the NRU and others;
- **To assess the extent to which the Programme meets its objectives** – assessing the longer term impact and success of the Programme and understanding 'what works'. These lessons will be shared with others.
- **To assess the Programme's value for money** – identifying and comparing the costs and benefits of the programme and defining the case for funding such initiatives.

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

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# Early findings from the scoping stage...

The first research done by the evaluation team was the preparation of 'scoping' reports for each Pathfinder in June 2002. These provided a summary 'snapshot' view of each Pathfinder just after their first Delivery Plans had been approved. The findings of all 20 scoping reports were then drawn together in an overview report on the whole Programme, and submitted to the NRU in August 2002.

The findings have been useful for the evaluation team in planning the rest of our activities, and have been considered by the NRU and fed into their ongoing management of the Programme. Some of the early findings are summarised below.

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## Summary Findings

The research was undertaken in May/June 2002, at a very early stage in the development of the Pathfinders. Much will have changed since then, although the issues raised may often still be relevant.

### Diverse areas

- Although all Pathfinders have some core things in common – they are focused on small areas, they have about 2,000 – 5,000 households – they differ quite significantly in many other ways:
  - **Physical nature of the area** – some neighbourhoods are mainly social housing, whereas others have a greater mix of social and privately owned housing. In some areas, the poor condition of local housing is a major issue, whereas in others, it may not be.
  - **Social characteristics** – the nature of the communities differs a lot too. Some have large and diverse ethnic minorities, others less so. Some areas have high population turnover as people come and go regularly, whereas others are more stable.
  - **Nature of the location** – Pathfinders can be found in seaside towns, in inner urban areas in large cities and on the edge of smaller towns. They are also spread throughout England, with at least one in every region.
- Pathfinders also differ in the nature of local institutions and organisations. Some were established as new partnerships, while others already existed. A total of 11 Pathfinders are located in 'two-tier' local authority areas, where there is a District and a County Council, with the rest in Metropolitan or Unitary areas. 12 are in areas that qualify for Neighbourhood Renewal Funds. Nearly all have the benefit of other regeneration programmes operating in the same areas – SRB, Sure Start, etc.
- The diversity of local conditions is good for the Programme, because it means that neighbourhood management is being piloted under a range of circumstances, which will help to test its strengths and weaknesses. It also means, however, that the solutions to local problems are likely to differ between areas, and that what works in one area may not be

relevant to another. This is why it is especially important for Pathfinders to use baseline data to understand the issues in their own neighbourhoods.

### Pathfinder structures

- At the time of doing our research Pathfinders were still putting together their teams and Partnership Boards. There was much similarity of approach, although a few differed – e.g. Woolwich Common's Board also runs a Sure Start scheme.
- A review of representation on Boards (last June) showed that, across all 20, 60% of all Board members were local residents, Councillors or representing community groups. This is a sign of a high degree of community involvement in decision-making within Pathfinders.

### Engaging partners

- At the time of the scoping research, Pathfinders were still establishing relationships with the local community and a wide range of service providers, using a variety of approaches, both formal and informal. Good progress was being made in most places. This is a key issue that the evaluation will revisit in its work in 2003.

### Baselines and programmes

- Much baseline information had been collected by many Pathfinders, although there were often gaps. Securing information about local services and expenditure, however, proved very difficult, and is part of a wider problem – little data exists at a neighbourhood level.
- Many Pathfinders, in their first Delivery Plans, had struggled to move from their baselines (identifying local problems) to identifying a related, but focused, set of outcome targets to pursue. The evaluation suggested that clearer prioritisation was necessary, with more specific and realistic outcome targets.
- The scoping research also detected a tendency in many areas to focus too much on delivering 'projects', at the expense of engaging in the long term process of changing public services. Neighbourhood management is an innovative approach, and should be different from previous programmes like SRB. For Pathfinders, **'the process is the programme'**.

### Publications

- *Scoping Research: Main Findings and Implications for Stakeholders* – This is the summary of the overview report. It will be available on our website, and hard copies will shortly be available from NRU. A summary in the form of a Powerpoint Presentation made to the Neighbourhood Management November 2002 Conference is also available on our website.
- *Good Practice Guide* – a guide to improving baselines, setting outcomes and risk assessment. This draws on some of the experiences Pathfinders had in putting together their first Delivery Plans. To be published soon by NRU.

# What is the Consumer Survey ?

**A detailed survey is to be undertaken by NOP and MORI in each of the 20 Pathfinder areas around England.** The same questions will be asked in every area. The survey will provide information about the quality of life in these neighbourhoods, the needs and priorities of local people, and their experiences and views on local services.

The National Evaluation team is organising the survey, and it is being undertaken by NOP and MORI in January – March 2003. It is an important part of the national 'baseline' for the Neighbourhood Management programme, and will provide useful information for Pathfinders.

- **Why is the survey being done ?**

The main aim of the survey is to help the Evaluation team assess the impact of Pathfinders on their neighbourhoods over time. The Pathfinder Programme is due to run for 7 years, and its purpose is to improve the quality of life for people who live in the Pathfinder areas.

This survey is the first one being done by the National Evaluation team – it is the 'baseline' survey. It will be repeated again later in the 7 year Programme, probably in the middle of the Programme, and again at the end. A limited repeat survey will also be done in a few Pathfinder areas in early 2004 to look for 'early progress'. By comparing results over time, it will be easier to see what changes have been occurring.

The information provided by the survey will also be useful now, as it will tell us more about each neighbourhood, the people who live there and the services being provided to them. A lot of statistics and information are available today, but often very little of it relates to specific neighbourhoods – so it is of less value to local initiatives. This survey will provide a lot of new information of direct relevance to each specific Pathfinder neighbourhood.

- **What questions are being asked ?**

One of the most important aims of neighbourhood management is to influence the way that public services are delivered, to make them more 'joined up' and more appropriate to the local community. This is why the survey focuses on people's views of local services and local quality of life. It is called a 'consumer survey' because we are particularly interested in the views of local people.

The survey asks local people for their views on:

- their neighbourhood and what it is like to live there;
- which services they have used in the last year;
- how satisfied they have been with the various services; and
- what improvements are most important to them.

- **How big is the survey ?**

To interview every household in an area is very expensive, and often not necessary. For this survey, we are taking a sample of 500 households in each area. Undertaking these 500 interviews is enough to ensure that the survey results will be representative of the views of the whole community.

Statistically speaking, the sample size is big enough to say that the survey results will be accurate to within 7% or better, at the 95% confidence level. This means that if we interviewed everyone in the neighbourhood 95% of the time the 'true' answer would fall within the range of our findings. This is standard practice for this type of survey.

- **How are households chosen to take part ?**

Households are chosen at random in each neighbourhood from a database of addresses, and will be sent an advance letter from the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister).

- **How will the interviews be done ?**

Each interview will last an average of 20 - 25 mins, and will be done face-to-face by an interviewer, who will call at the pre-selected addresses from our sample. All interviewers are trained by NOP and MORI, many are very experienced, and *they always carry Photo-ID cards*. If someone does not have an ID card, they are not a genuine NOP/MORI interviewer. Anyone who wishes to check the identity of an interviewer can call the Survey Helpline, the number for which is given in the advance letter.

If no-one is in when the interviewer calls the first time, they will call back at different times. This means that the number of houses called at is kept to a minimum. The interviewer will arrange to do the interview

at a time that suits the householder. If a household does not wish to be interviewed, the interviewer will not call back again – *participation is entirely voluntary*.

All interviews are confidential. No-one outside NOP/MORI will know who has been interviewed or what they said. No details about individuals are given to other organisations.

A small number of people who are interviewed will be contacted at random by NOP/MORI after the survey, to check that the interview took place, and to ensure that they were happy with the way that the interview was done. This 'quality control' procedure ensures that the survey is done professionally and is reliable.

- **Who are NOP and MORI ?**

NOP and MORI are two large social research companies. They both have a lot of experience in undertaking complex social surveys, including surveys in deprived and multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. Their logos are shown above.

- **Will the interviewers only speak English ?**

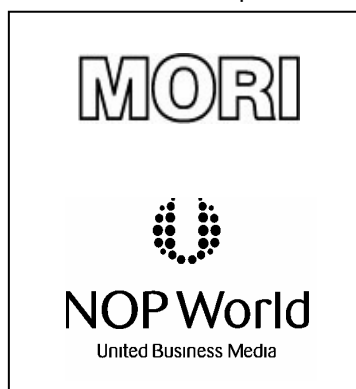
No. NOP/MORI interviewers themselves are from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and some speak other languages. They can also arrange for interpreters to help with an interview.

- **Who is paying for the survey ?**

The National Evaluation has been commissioned by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and is funded by them.

- **Will the information be publicly available ?**

Yes. All the survey findings will be made available to Pathfinders, and will be useful in developing local services.



## Pathfinder Annual Reviews

As well as the Consumer Survey (see p.3), the National Evaluation team are also undertaking an '**end of year 1' review** in all 20 Pathfinders in March/April.

This will be an opportunity to see what progress has been made during the year, what good practice or innovations might be emerging, and to see what issues have arisen. The research from all 20 areas will then be drawn together into an overview report, for the NRU, and submitted in May/June.

Five **case studies** will also be done during this time, in five Pathfinders, giving us the opportunity to look in more detail at some specific activities. More information about these, and the Annual Review, will be given in the next newsletter.

The reports from our Annual Review will be available by the end of April and will feed into discussions that Pathfinders will be having with their relevant **Government Office for the Region** representatives. The Government Offices provide the funding for Pathfinders on behalf of the NRU and are formally responsible for assessing the performance of Pathfinders. The National Evaluation are not responsible for this, and are independent, although our research will help to inform discussions.

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## Future evaluation plans

After this current stage of research is completed in June 2003, the National Evaluation has two further stages:

### Stage 3 (summer/autumn 2003)

- A larger wave of in-depth **case studies** and **thematic research** will be undertaken across all Pathfinders. The themes and priorities will be influenced by the findings of the current stage of research.

### Stage 4 (Nov 2003 – March 2004)

- An '**end of year 2' annual review** will be undertaken, very similar to that about to happen this year, to see what progress has been made during the second year in each Pathfinder.
- In a small number of Pathfinders (yet to be determined) the **Consumer Survey** will be repeated (after about 12 months) to look for early signs of change. This is an interim survey only, in a few areas, and will be followed by a full follow up survey in all areas in perhaps two years time.

This activity takes us up to **spring 2004**, at which point the current contract for the evaluation expires. The NRU will decide at this point how to proceed with the National Evaluation.

## Local evaluation

The work of the national evaluation should be regarded as complementary to local monitoring and evaluation. All Pathfinders monitor their spend and activities already, but further local evaluation work can also be very valuable.

Much general advice is already available on the best ways to plan and implement local evaluations (see Renewal.Net below). The national evaluation team will also be providing specific guidance on local evaluations for neighbourhood management initiatives.

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## We are not alone....!

**Neighbourhood Management has caught the interest** of many policy makers and practitioners and there are now a growing number of pilot projects around the country, together with a growing range of research on the subject.

The National Evaluation Team has already established links with some of these other research teams (and some team members are part of them) and will try to keep Pathfinders up to date on related research. Some of the work being done includes:

- **New Deal for Communities National Evaluation** – much research is being done on the 39 NDC Partnerships. Some are piloting neighbourhood management, and many are aiming to 'mainstream' their programmes of regeneration. Detailed research is being done, including a case study on mainstreaming. The reports and findings are being fed into the NRU's *renewal.net* website (see box below) and the evaluation also has its own dedicated website: [www.ndcevaluation.adc.shu.ac.uk/ndcevaluation/](http://www.ndcevaluation.adc.shu.ac.uk/ndcevaluation/)
- **Audit Commission** – The Audit Commission (who inspect and regulate local authorities) undertake research into neighbourhood renewal and promote good practice. Recent case studies and research (including an interview with a Pathfinder Neighbourhood Manager) are relevant to neighbourhood management. See [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk) for more information.

### Want to find out more ?

... for those wishing to know more about neighbourhood management and the Pathfinder Programme:

#### Neighbourhood Management

*The original report of the Social Exclusion Unit's Policy Action Team 4 on Neighbourhood Management is at:* [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu)

#### Pathfinder Programme

*Background information on the Programme can be found on the NRU's website at:* [www.neighbourhood.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk)

#### Neighbourhood Renewal

*The NRU's new 'one stop shop' for good practice in regeneration can be found at:* [www.renewal.net](http://www.renewal.net)