



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme National Evaluation

Annual Review 2003/04 Key Findings



Neighbourhood
Renewal Unit

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Annual Review 2003/04 Key Findings

The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal identifies the improvement of core public services as a key challenge for deprived neighbourhoods. Turning around areas of multiple deprivation will require improvements to mainstream services in order to deliver streets and neighbourhoods that are safe, clean and well managed, good schools, decent accessible health services and a better quality of life.

Neighbourhood management has been developed as a process that can help deliver some of these improvements in deprived areas, by "...improving and joining up local services and making them more responsive to local needs."¹

To test out the potential of neighbourhood management, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) established a Pathfinder Programme in 2001. There are now Pathfinders in 35 deprived areas. Many Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and local authorities are also trying out different neighbourhood management approaches, and there are now over 200 initiatives operating in England, funded from different sources. The new neighbourhood element of the 'Safer and Stronger Communities Fund' is also likely to lead to more initiatives in future years. It is a rapidly growing area of practice.

The NRU has been evaluating the progress and early impacts of the Pathfinder Programme, in order to improve our understanding of 'what works' in neighbourhood management.

This summary presents the key findings from the National Evaluation team's detailed review of the 20 Round 1 Pathfinders. It draws on research from the first two years of the Programme in order to:

- assess progress in partnership building and programme delivery;
- assess the nature and extent of early results; and
- identify lessons that will be of value to other neighbourhood management initiatives.

The report has the following sections:

- Introduction
- Progress in building Pathfinder capacity
- Progress in delivering programmes
- Improving services: results and impacts
- Conclusions

1. Introduction

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) launched the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme in 2001 to test out a new approach to neighbourhood management in a range of deprived areas throughout England. The Programme is testing the model of neighbourhood management proposed by the Social Exclusion Unit in 2000. 20 Pathfinders began work in April 2002, and a further 15 Pathfinders will be operational in 2005.

SQW and its partners were appointed by the NRU to evaluate the progress of the 20 Round 1 Pathfinders over their first two years. This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Programme's second full year of operation, 2003–04. The evaluation is based on a comprehensive review of Pathfinders that was undertaken by the research team in March–April 2004.

This report on key evaluation findings focuses on the following questions:

- What progress have the Pathfinders made in building their capacity and implementing their programmes?
- What impacts are emerging as a result of Pathfinder activity, and why?
- What lessons can we learn from the experience of implementing neighbourhood management?

The Pathfinders

The 20 Round 1 Pathfinders were given initial approval and development funding in the summer of 2001. They started delivering their programmes in April 2002. They each have £1.5 million over seven years to cover management and administration and project funding. The Pathfinders have the same overall approach with each having:

- a clearly defined target area, covering (typically) 10,000 – 15,000 people;
- a full-time neighbourhood manager, as part of a small team;
- a board to steer the initiative, including local residents and service providers;
- a handful of thematic working groups to develop ideas and projects; and
- an 'accountable body', usually the local authority.

Within the same broad model of approach, there is considerable diversity in the nature of neighbourhoods and in the specific local needs and solutions being pursued.

2. Progress in building Pathfinder capacity

Pathfinders have made good progress in developing their capacity to engage with partners and deliver their programmes. By the end of Year 2, the capacity of most Pathfinders was sufficient to allow a clear focus on programme development and delivery. Boards, neighbourhood managers and their teams were largely in place with almost a complete complement of staff. Most had offices in the target area and most had working structures and a good level of engagement with both local residents and service providers.

The process of establishing credible neighbourhood partnerships has taken longer than originally envisaged, but has now largely been achieved. The second year of the Programme has seen the Pathfinders consolidate their positions with partners and grow in confidence.

The overall structure of partnership is largely the same for all 20 Pathfinders. Pathfinder boards had an average membership of 22, over a third of whom were local residents (with five Pathfinders holding resident elections), nearly one fifth local councillors and about one third mainstream service providers. Half the boards are chaired by a neighbourhood resident and nearly three quarters include a senior local councillor who is a member of the local council's cabinet or executive body. The average size of the neighbourhood management teams was 6.5 FTE including the manager and a complement of staff to provide finance and administration, community development and policy and programme support. On average, the teams had 85% of their staff complements in place at April 2004.

The overall level of engagement with both local communities and service providers is good in most Pathfinders. Most Pathfinders have established networks of service providers and residents and use task and theme groups to develop ideas and activities, in addition to more formal board meetings. Over the last year the use of working groups has gained more emphasis. Most Pathfinders had close relationships with their local authorities as their accountable bodies but more tenuous links with their Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

Programme issues

Within the broadly positive context of the Pathfinders' progress in building capacity, the evaluation has also identified a number of issues for the NRU and Pathfinders to address:

- deepening and broadening resident engagement to improve accountability to the local community;
- developing the capacity and the role of the boards particularly with respect to growing their leadership role;
- ensuring that staff teams are of an appropriate size for the task in hand;
- improving engagement with BME groups; and
- improving links to LSPs, with a more proactive approach by LSPs to promoting and championing the work of the Pathfinders.

Transferable lessons – building capacity

The Pathfinder model of neighbourhood management has achieved progress with a structure that has a board representing residents and key service providers and an executive comprising a neighbourhood manager and team. These are usually linked into horizontal networks that involve service providers and residents. They sit within a vertical set of relationships that foster political and provider championing at the strategic level and interaction between key providers and residents at operational levels.

More specific lessons that have been learned include:

- **Keep it simple**

It is more important to put the basic building blocks in place – and quickly – than to enter into often protracted discussions about the detail of complex structures and procedures.

- **Use an accountable body**

Most Pathfinders found it very useful to be able to use the legal, financial and personnel systems and resources that already existed in their local authority, rather than spending valuable time ‘reinventing the wheel’ on internal systems.

- **Mixed boards work**

The neighbourhood management boards need to include resident and community representatives, local councillors and service provider executives (at levels that can commit their agencies).

- **Engagement requires different approaches**

Residents need to be engaged in a variety of ways (including elections) that are participatory and deliberative (not just consultative) and equal opportunities issues must be addressed.

- **Working groups and networks are valuable mechanisms to develop initiatives**

The boards must exercise leadership and delegation and this will be assisted by the establishment of theme groups to carry forward service provider engagement and networks and forums for resident involvement.

- **Early recruitment gives momentum and continuity**

Early recruitment of the neighbourhood manager is essential to ensure momentum and continuity in the early development phase. It is also important to recruit a supporting team as early as possible, providing support to the manager and covering finance, administration and monitoring, policy and programme development, community development, and communications and learning.

- **A neighbourhood office raises the profile and can help build relationships**

The team's office should be located within the target neighbourhood and preferably involve sharing of space with others engaged in community development and/or service provision (to avoid the creation of a neighbourhood management silo).

- **Learning and evaluation are important tools**

Neighbourhood management needs to build in a culture and process for research and learning that involves the community and key service providers. This can provide valuable information on how local services are performing and how they might need to change, findings on how well pilot projects are working, as well as information on the progress of the partnership in achieving its objectives.

3. Progress in delivering programmes

In general, the Pathfinders both extended and deepened their relationships with many service providers – seeking out and engaging some new providers at the same time as focusing their efforts through more intensive involvement with specific key providers.

Which service providers?

The strongest involvement achieved has been with the police, council environmental, housing and leisure services, schools and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). The table below shows, across the Programme, which service providers have been most involved to date, in terms of their membership of boards and involvement in working groups and programme development:

Strength and nature of service provider involvement with Round 1 Pathfinders	
High Involvement	Police
	LA – environmental services
	Local school(s)
	LA – housing department
	LA – leisure services
	Primary Care Trust
Medium Involvement	Jobcentre Plus
	LA – youth services
	Local FE/HE college
	Fire service
	Housing association/ Registered Social Landlord (RSL)
	Connexions
Low Involvement	Learning and Skills Council
	LA – social services
	Public transport bodies
	Probation service

Programme focus

The patterns of Pathfinders’ expenditure and involvement with providers generally revealed the greatest focus on ‘liveability’ issues of community safety, environment and housing, as well as local health. Some Pathfinders proved to be adept at focusing on one or two key priority areas to good effect.

Overall, the ability to spend Programme funding to target improved, with 90% of their overall budget of £13.3 million actually spent in 2003–2004. The average spend was £600,000 per Pathfinder in 2003–04 of which 30% was on management and administration (M&A), reflecting the nature of the Programme.

Methods of working

For many of the Pathfinders their most productive work with service providers was often outside formal board meetings – in one-to-one relationships or through thematic working groups or service provider networks. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) have not been used as much as originally envisaged, and their value appears to be mainly in making service entitlements more explicit, or as a sign of commitment.

Programme issues

With respect to the process of developing and delivering programmes the evaluation identified a number of issues for the NRU and Pathfinders to address:

- Strong relationships with local authorities can prove to be very effective partnerships. All Pathfinders need to identify those councillors and officers who can act as ‘champions’.
- Some Pathfinders are still spreading their limited resources too thinly and need to have a clearer and sharper focus on priority issues and key providers.
- The relationships that have already been established between service providers and Pathfinders require ongoing work to strengthen and deepen them to increase the scale and scope of service improvements. Pathfinders also need to consider whether there are key service providers who have not yet been significantly involved but should be.
- There is a need for Pathfinders to think more about how they can help residents to hold service providers accountable for services more easily.
- Pathfinders are generally not sufficiently focused on, or skilled at, collating and using local data (baseline, service performance) or evidence (what works) in decision-making procedures. Some Pathfinders have used research, learning and evaluation processes to good effect in persuading service providers to review their services.

Transferable lessons – delivering programmes

Some of the more specific lessons that have been learned by the Round 1 Pathfinders include:

- **Programmes with clear priorities are more effective**

Some Pathfinders prioritised one or two specific services early in their programme, and have been successful in facilitating tangible changes from them, with impacts that have been obvious to, and welcomed by, local residents. Identifying clear local priorities at an early stage can help to build momentum and deliver change more effectively than seeking to make progress on lots of services simultaneously;

- **Working with, and understanding, mainstream service providers is essential**

It is important to engage with the relevant key service providers to understand how they allocate and use their resources in the neighbourhood and what evidence they will need to change their behaviour and practice to bring about the desired improvements.

Service providers are constrained from improving services in the neighbourhoods for a variety of reasons – these include short-termism and risk aversion, information and communication failures and a lack of capacity and inclination to manage change in ways that are innovative and involve local communities.

- **Information and evidence can persuade service providers to change their services**

Drawing together information about local need and the cost and performance of local services can be a powerful way of influencing service providers to review or even change the way they deliver certain services. A number of Pathfinders have successfully presented a case for change to local providers – including environmental services and housing departments.

- **Some service providers are more interested in neighbourhood renewal than others!**

The experience of the Pathfinders clearly shows that some service providers are generally predisposed to get involved and are interested in neighbourhood management, whereas others are far less interested at the outset. In the early stages of an initiative, there is good sense in working with willing partners, to establish momentum, accepting that some partners may take longer to persuade. Interested providers such as the police, PCTs and local authority environment departments seem most sympathetic at least in part due to their existing nature as area-based services with some local flexibility of decision-making.

4. Improving services: results and impacts

Pathfinders were successful in influencing a growing number and range of changes to local services over the year.

The most responsive service providers – those actually changing the way that they deliver some of their services – were the police, local authority environment and housing services and also Primary Care Trusts. The greatest momentum achieved so far has been within the ‘liveability’ services related to crime and the environment.

The research looked for four main types of improvement in local services:

- changing corporate policies to favour the deprived area;
- re-allocating (‘bending’) mainstream service resources to the deprived area;
- re-shaping mainstream services, whether changing the operation of a single service or joining services up; and
- improving access to increase the take up of services in the deprived area.

The most common type of observed change so far has been the re-shaping of a service in some way by an individual service provider.

It is too early for many of these service changes to have produced tangible improvements in outcomes although there are indications of reduced crime rates and improved environmental conditions in some Pathfinder areas.

Pathfinders have generally ‘added value’ most effectively through:

- improving the networking of local service providers and flows of informal information between them;
- communicating local resident priorities back to providers; and
- enabling pilot projects to improve services by mainstream service providers – improving the local environment.

The most significant changes to services tended to involve pilot projects originating from service providers, with the Pathfinder using its infrastructure and capacity to facilitate the pilot. Successful pilots may then subsequently be rolled out to other neighbourhoods by the provider. Research suggests that some service providers were constrained from piloting innovations in their own right for a variety of reasons. The Pathfinder value added in these situations was, therefore, in setting up the community and service provider engagement networks that enabled providers to test their ideas, to work with others and to take risks that otherwise would not have been pursued as readily or robustly.

Challenges

To date, the positive changes being made to services are relatively modest in scale. Making progress beyond the 'liveability' services has also proved more difficult.

Pathfinders did not make as much progress in the joining up of services between providers, as they have in working with individual providers. There are a few exceptions to this, where Pathfinders have persuaded providers to co-locate some services in the same facility – e.g. a 'one-stop-job-shop'. The possibilities for joining up between providers need more exploration.

The 'bending' of resources (re-allocation of resources to a Pathfinder neighbourhood) was also less frequent and most commonly associated with securing additional police resources. Only time will reveal the sustainability/permanence of these types of changes.

Examples of changes to services

Community safety

The police have been the most responsive service across the Programme, with different types of response:

- Many Pathfinders have secured additional police officers and community support officers allocated to their neighbourhoods, mainstream-funded, with some also paying to provide additional officers at their own expense.
- In a number of areas, the increase in policing has often gone hand in hand with a more neighbourhood-focused policing approach, with police officers dedicated to the neighbourhood and sometimes even based there and co-located with other services. A local base can mean that officers are able to make better contacts with residents and other providers in the neighbourhood. This provides a more high profile police presence in the area, and greater accessibility and continuity of contact with the same officers.

- A few Pathfinders have also worked with their local police forces to pilot new working practices, with a view to rolling out methods that work. Examples include property marking initiatives to deter burglary (as in Hattersley, Tameside) and new protocols to improve the detection of domestic violence (Great Lever, Bolton).

The increase in policing resources, and greater emphasis on visible 'community policing' is an example of neighbourhood managers working with a trend, and adding value to it, rather than necessarily being solely responsible for prompting it. A question for the future will be the sustainability/permanence of these increases in resources, and the prospects for mainstreaming those officers currently funded by Pathfinders.

Environmental services

With respect to environmental services (particularly street cleaning and waste removal), local authorities have generally been responsive and in some cases have completely reorganised the way that their service is delivered. These are some of the most significant changes to local services with which the Pathfinders have been associated. Addressing local environmental issues has been a consistently high priority for most of the local communities in Pathfinder neighbourhoods. Common changes include:

- more responsive ways of listening to local residents' concerns about 'grot spots' and fly tipping;
- greater mechanisation of street cleaning to improve speed and efficiency (e.g. using 'green machine' sweepers); and
- more co-ordination between different environmental services – street cleaning, graffiti removal, waste removal, etc. – with some even integrating.

Pathfinders have often funded some of these improvements, such as the initial capital investment in new equipment, and have sometimes funded a short-term increase in services, but the mainstream service providers themselves are generally funding the continuation of these improvements. Prospects for sustainability seem good. Pathfinders involved in these sorts of significant changes include Great Lever (Bolton), Springbourne and Boscombe West (Bournemouth), Hattersley (Tameside), Parkfield/Mill Lane (Stockton), Staveley (Chesterfield), Poulton (Lancaster) and Changes in Common (Greenwich).

Pathfinders have benefited from a national trend within local government towards the modernisation of these services, but have clearly added value as well as prompting and accelerating these changes. In many cases, the improvements are being rolled out across the relevant local authority. In these cases, the neighbourhood manager's role has been to assist the piloting of change, although they often do not play any ongoing role in service delivery.

Housing management services

Local housing managers of social housing have generally been responsive to neighbourhood managers, although the types of changes made vary between areas, and can be modest in nature. Local authority housing managers seem to have been more responsive than RSL managers so far. Types of change include:

- The introduction of new choice-based lettings schemes for council housing (e.g. Gospel Oak, Camden) and other initiatives often come from the housing provider with a view to using the Pathfinder neighbourhood as a pilot, before rolling out, if successful.
- Local housing managers often have some funds at their discretion, and a number of Pathfinders are working with local housing managers to jointly fund environmental improvements or new play areas (e.g. Greater Hollington, Hastings). In some cases, modest capital budgets have been delegated to Pathfinder-based theme groups (Poulton, Lancaster).
- A few Pathfinders are working with their local authority to influence capital investment strategies (Changes in Common, Greenwich), or to work as part of Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders (Knutton Cross Heath, Newcastle under Lyme). These are longer term initiatives with few results to show to date.
- A handful of Pathfinders, particularly those in coastal towns, have identified poor quality privately rented accommodation as an issue and have found ways to persuade the local authority to invest more resources in addressing this problem. In Springbourne and Boscombe West (Bournemouth) a Pathfinder-funded housing survey of local privately rented housing has led to a new strategy to improve the regulation and refurbishment of privately rented properties. This is an example of information about local need (in this case through a survey) influencing a service provider to change its focus.

Health

PCTs have also been responsive across the Programme, although the nature of changes to services to date is generally on a small scale. Many PCTs recognise that a neighbourhood focus can help them with tackling health inequalities, improving take-up of public health services and involving local people more in service planning. This has contributed to their being open and responsive to approaches from neighbourhood managers.

There are three typical sorts of response that PCTs (and other associated health organisations) have been making:

- PCTs are interested in gathering better evidence on local health needs, for example through 'health audits', and are explicitly interested in making local services better attuned to evidenced need. This has yet to work through the service planning system to deliver much change to services, but underlines the importance for neighbourhood managers to better equip themselves in regard to gathering or generating local data on needs and services. So far, PCTs have been working with neighbourhood managers to undertake these needs assessments.
- A number of PCTs, often jointly with the Pathfinder, have funded a new, or re-located an existing, community health worker into the neighbourhood, to be based there and work to improve the take-up of services. This represents a modest increase in resources for the neighbourhood and can result in closer networking with other services.
- In a few neighbourhoods local GP surgeries are making changes in working practices, for example more flexible opening hours (Greater Hollington, Hastings) or referring patients on to a wider range of non-medical services – e.g. sport/exercise opportunities (Staveley, Chesterfield).

Education

Although a number of Pathfinders have good links with local schools, progress to date in securing changes or improvements to services has proved more difficult than in other themes.

The most common sort of initiative has been the joint funding of projects, for example, outreach workers to promote basic literacy and numeracy with pre-school children in playgroups (Eastwood and Springwell Gardens, Rotherham) and improving transition arrangements from primary to secondary schools (Interlock, Basildon). Projects are perhaps more likely to be concerned with tackling the social context within which schools work than they are to address educational attainment in schools directly. The exception to this is the Full Service Schools' initiative being implemented in Greater Hollington, Hastings, where schools are the centre of work to improve access to services.

In a handful of areas, local colleges of FE/HE have also responded to neighbourhood managers, with improved outreach services to increase the take-up of adult learning opportunities by local residents or improved links with other services, such as schools.

Worklessness

Responses from job centres have been mixed within the 20 Pathfinder areas. Some have been very positive; in Hattersley (Tameside) the 'step ahead' one-stop-job-shop has been opened, with job centre and other related training and employment services co-located in a neighbourhood centre, to make their services more accessible and more joined up. Others have provided more modest support, through location of job advisers part-time in a neighbourhood facility or piloting new ways of outreach (Changes in Common, Greenwich). Generally, however, job centre managers have only responded modestly to neighbourhood management initiatives.

5. Conclusions

The national evaluation studied the 20 Round 1 Pathfinders in their first two years of operation to assess the extent to which neighbourhood management may be able to “enable deprived communities and local services to improve local outcomes, by improving and joining up local services, and making them more responsive to local needs”.

The overall conclusions after two years of the Programme are as follows:

- **Credible neighbourhood partnerships**

Most Pathfinders have successfully built credible neighbourhood partnerships, capable of engaging key service providers and local communities in meaningful ways. The core cost of running these partnerships is relatively modest at £200–300,000 p.a.

- **Using ‘quick wins’ well**

Delivering ‘quick wins’ can raise aspirations locally and help to establish the profile and reputation of neighbourhood partnerships.

- **Improving neighbourhood networking**

Neighbourhood managers have been able to improve the networking and informal flows of information between the frontline workers of service providers in their neighbourhoods.

- **Modest improvements to some service**

Neighbourhood managers have been able to prompt and/or accelerate modest improvements to some mainstream services in their neighbourhoods. Most progress has been made in three ways:

- Liveability – the greatest momentum, and the most tangible changes, have been secured through helping to re-shape ‘liveability’ services addressing local environmental and community safety issues.
- Understanding local needs better – identifying and communicating local issues and needs to service providers has helped to raise the profile of neighbourhoods, encourage change and improve the targeting of services.
- Reshaping individual services – changes to services, where they have happened, have generally affected individual services.

There are also some important challenges and questions that remain for the Programme:

- Many of the changes to services that have been secured so far have been relatively modest in scale. It remains to be seen whether larger scale changes, and more joined up service delivery, can be delivered as the Programme unfolds. The sustainability of some of the changes made will also be tested over time.
- Most progress to date has been with liveability services, together with some local health services. Progress in securing change with other service providers has proved more difficult.

The evaluation has identified a number of operational challenges within the programme, for the NRU, Government Offices, Pathfinders and service providers to consider. Addressing these may improve the effectiveness of Pathfinders and the prospects for further change. In particular, it will be important to explore whether there are greater flexibilities and incentives that can be given to the more reluctant service providers to encourage closer working with neighbourhood managers and other services.

The future of neighbourhood management

Neighbourhood management is becoming an increasingly popular approach in neighbourhood renewal. It is a concept that makes a lot of sense to both policy-makers and practitioners. The evaluation highlighted the benefits that the Pathfinder approach in particular can bring to deprived areas. It also raised questions, on the basis of what has been achieved so far, about the sorts of changes that the approach may have more difficulty in delivering.

The debate on how to 'roll out' neighbourhood management now needs to become more sophisticated as we learn more about it in practice. The Pathfinder Programme is a significant experiment but there are other approaches being piloted at present – at different geographical scales, with different types of partners and using different tools. Some focus on the direct delivery of specific services at a very local level, whereas others are more concerned with influencing those services without becoming part of the delivery chain.

The challenge for policy-makers is to understand which approaches deliver which benefits so that the most effective solutions can be identified. The findings from this evaluation – reflecting the ground-breaking work of the Pathfinders – are an important source of evidence and should be brought together with learning from other neighbourhood management experiments to allow a thorough exploration of how best to improve mainstream services in deprived areas.

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