

## *Research Report 29*

Housing: A Theme Report from  
the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder  
Programme National Evaluation





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- 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
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# 1 Introduction

The aim of the theme report is to explore in more detail how Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders have sought to work with and influence housing services, affecting both social housing and private housing. Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders are attempting to pilot new ways of engaging with local service providers and their local communities, in order to promote the renewal of their neighbourhoods. This report seeks to investigate how this is happening in practice. The objective is to draw out any lessons that may help us to improve our understanding of how neighbourhood management might work, and how it could be undertaken more effectively.

This report draws on research in all 35 Pathfinders (summarised in the 2005 Annual Review)<sup>1</sup> and the findings of three case studies (appended to this report) and a Housing Action Learning Set that met during 2005/6 with the involvement of several practitioners, including neighbourhood managers. The report was prepared by Richard Meegan and Prof. Hilary Russell of EIUA, Liverpool John Moores University, with contributions from SQW.

## The Housing Case Studies

The full case studies are presented in the annex to this report. The research involved reviews of documents, and a series of interviews with a variety of people involved in the Pathfinders.

We would like to thank the participating Pathfinders for their co-operation in helping us to undertake this work, the interviewees themselves and also the authors of each case study:

- **Case Study 1 – Supporting Renew North Staffs;** Knutton & Cross Heath NM Pathfinder (Newcastle under Lyme); providing support, consultation and engagement between local residents and their communities, the organisations working to deliver the ‘Renew’ Housing Market Renewal agenda and service providers. *(Prepared by Colin Warnock, Cambridge Economic Associates)*
- **Case Study 2 – Housing Renewal;** Poulton (Lancaster) Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder; Lancaster City Council’s delegation of authority for handling its housing capital programme for the Poulton Renewal Area to the Pathfinder. *(Prepared by Richard Evans, European Institute for Urban Affairs, Liverpool John Moores University)*
- **Case Study 3 – Renewal of the Private Rented Sector;** Springbourne & Boscombe West (Bournemouth); pursuit of the Pathfinder’s housing theme to improve housing for all and the environment to provide a clean, positive and welcoming image. *(Prepared by Jo Howard, Cities Research Centre, University of West of England)*

## The Housing Action Learning Set

The Action Learning Set was facilitated as part of the National Evaluation by Hilary Russell (European Institute for Urban Affairs, Liverpool John Moores University) and Jo Howard (Cities Research Unit, University of the West of England) and involved participants from seven Pathfinders (including two of the Housing Case Studies):

<sup>1</sup> ODPM (2006) *Research Report 23 Neighbourhood Management at the Turning Point? Programme Review 2005-06*, London, ODPM

- Carol Brady, Kendray, Barnsley
- Ian Duke, Changes in Common, Greenwich
- Jo Keats, Springbourne & Boscombe West, Bournemouth
- Nick Mannion, Knutton Cross Heath, Newcastle under Lyme
- Nigel Potter, Parkfield/Mill Lane, Stockton
- Gary Smith, Transform, North Devon
- Chris Thean, Hattersley, Tameside

We would like to thank these participants for their involvement in the evaluation work and also the individuals who organised visits, gave presentations and/or took part in discussions at the Action Learning Set meetings.

## 2 National policy context

Two of the Social Exclusion Unit's Policy Action Teams were dedicated to housing issues (on Housing Management and Unpopular Housing); housing has always been a theme in the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal from its inception in 1998. However, it was only after the consultation on the National Strategy framework in 2000 that 'housing and the physical environment' became an explicit objective of the Strategy.<sup>2</sup> The National Strategy Action Plan set out the policies and funding needed to secure greater investment in housing, foster housing management, encourage mixed communities and regenerate the physical environment.<sup>3</sup> As the Action Plan emphasised, these policies were meant to run alongside the broader policies being developed for housing in England as set out in the Housing Policy Statement, *Quality and Choice: a decent home for all – the way forward for housing* that was published at the same time.<sup>4</sup>

The Statement introduced a set of policies designed to: improve the local management of housing; encourage sustainable home ownership; promote a healthier private rented sector; raise the quality of, and introduce new forms of tenure, choice-based lettings and a fairer system of rents in social housing; provide new affordable housing; ensure all social rented homes were brought up to a decent standard; change Housing Benefit; and address homelessness and other forms of housing-related social exclusion.

The basic thrust of policy was the development of a long-term programme for fostering 'decent homes' and 'decent places'. The Sustainable Communities Plan in 2003 consolidated this. Its aim was to:

- increase housing supply in growth areas and, through the introduction of Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders, address low housing demand outside them;
- provide more affordable housing for low income households and key workers;
- ensure social and private rented homes reach a decent standard; and
- promote a regional approach to housing policy.<sup>5</sup>

The findings of the Barker housing review<sup>6</sup> underlined the economic and social implications of weak housing supply and the growing problem of housing affordability.

*Homes for All* again addressed the issues of imbalances between housing supply and the need for improvements to the existing housing stock.<sup>7</sup> Its objective of increasing the supply of housing has been reinforced by the subsequent programme for extending the number of new

2 Social Exclusion Unit (1998) *Bringing Britain Together: a national strategy for neighbourhood renewal*, TSO, London and (2000) *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: a framework for consultation*, London, Social Exclusion Unit.

3 Social Exclusion Unit (2001) *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan*, London Cabinet Office and Social Exclusion Unit.

4 DETR (2000) *Quality and Choice: a decent home for all – the way forward for housing*, London, DETR

5 ODPM (2003) *Sustainable Communities: building for the future*, London, ODPM

6 HM Treasury (2004) *Review of Housing Supply. Delivering Stability: Securing our Future Housing Needs. Final Report*, London, HM Treasury.

7 ODPM (2005) *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All – A Five Year Plan from the ODPM*, London, ODPM, which together with *Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity* published at the same time, makes up the five year strategy for delivering sustainable communities.

homeowners set out in *Extending Home Ownership* jointly produced by the Treasury and ODPM.<sup>8</sup> Policies include help for first-time buyers, bringing forward surplus public sector land for housing development, changes to stamp-duty for home-buyers, choice-based lettings for social housing tenants, support for the homeless and the establishment of nine mixed communities demonstration projects.<sup>9</sup>

The Government's final response to the Barker review took policy a step further with proposals on how it intends to increase housing supply (with a target annual increase in net additions to the housing stock one third higher than that currently prevailing). These proposals include reform of the planning system, the merging of regional housing and planning functions to secure a strategic approach to housing and infrastructure needs, incorporating the implications of increasing housing supply in the Comprehensive Spending Review for 2007 and measures to secure the building of more environmentally sustainable housing.<sup>10</sup>

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.

The rest of this report looks at how Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders have been working with housing services and organisations to promote some of these policy objectives, and explores the benefits and issues of such neighbourhood working.

8 HM Treasury and ODPM (2005) *Extending Home Ownership*, London, HM Treasury and ODPM.

9 HM Treasury and ODPM (2005) *Housing Policy: an overview*, HMSO, London.

10 ODPM (2005) *Government Response to Kate Barker's Review of Housing Supply*, London, ODPM

### 3 The local housing contexts

There is considerable diversity of local housing conditions across the Pathfinder areas. This section explores some of the different challenges faced at the neighbourhood level by Pathfinders.

The Action Learning Set identified variation in local contexts in terms of:

- Regional context and housing demand: high demand and high prices, especially in the south, compared with low demand, especially in Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder (HMRP) areas in the north, although low demand can also sometimes occur alongside an inadequate supply of the type of accommodation for which there is demand; affordability is a particular issue in rural areas.
- Type of area: inner and outer urban areas and rural areas.
- Type of housing and age of stock: across the range of terraced stock, semi-detached properties, houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).
- Tenure mix: differing proportions of social and privately rented and owner occupied housing.
- Housing management: different balances between Council and RSL<sup>11</sup>-owned; single or multiple RSLs; transfer of stock to Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs).
- Housing needs vary according to local demography with specific needs associated with a high percentage of elderly people, young people or black and minority ethnic populations.
- Stock condition: variation in the quantity of poor quality stock, the extent of dilapidation and the means available for achieving the Decent Homes Standard.
- Available funding to address housing issues: ranging from HMR resources in low demand areas to a significant paucity of funding in rural areas where there may be about one hundred people for every affordable home.

The following five examples of Pathfinder areas (Boxes 3.1 – 3.5) illustrate this wide variation and the different combinations of characteristics:

<sup>11</sup> RSLs are 'Registered Social Landlords', mainly meaning housing associations in the context of this report

**Box 3.1 An inner urban area**

- 6-7,000 population, mainly private stock, one estate.
- One area identified by residents as needing demolition.
- English Partnership money and LA housing money used for purchase of 180 properties. 150 properties have now been bought and developers signed up to rebuild. 50 to go to an RSL, others shared equity options etc. Issue of affordable housing persists. Only 2 households want to return.
- Masterplanning – two future areas for demolition – 320 properties. One is terraced/1960s estate. The other has bigger properties mainly bought up by Asian families. It is next to the proposed new build site for mosque. Many own their houses outright, have invested with their extended families, and are now facing demolition and lack of alternative equivalent housing within their community. Relocation packages will not be adequate for equivalent 5-bed houses. Some muslims are also reluctant to take interest-bearing mortgages for religious reasons, making purchase of bigger properties more difficult.
- Housing Management is an issue – high number of private landlords (up to 30% in some parts) and HMOs. Private landlords will not comply until a compulsory registration scheme is brought in.

**Box 3.2 A seaside town**

- 19,000 people in the NM area with 23% population turnover because of the number of HMOs present and presence of rehabilitation centres. 1.2% BME population which is higher than the rest of town. Diverse community.
- Mainly owner occupied (49%) and private rented (40%). Shift since 2001 towards private rented because a local landlord is buying up properties. There is a split in housing types either side of the railway line that runs through the area:
- Larger Victorian properties, lots converted into hotels, rehabilitation centres, HMOs mainly owned by one landlord (c. 500 properties) who is also buying up others and demolishing to build more but not improving conditions.
- Owner-occupiers are stuck in 3 bed mid-terrace houses worth £180K that young people do not want or cannot afford.
- Increase of 'micro flats' leading to higher density population and parking issues. Local shops forced out by developers so that people need cars to reach shops. In-fill developments with people selling their garden to developers. The NM Pathfinder is trying to convince the local authority to protect areas from development through supplementary planning guidance.
- Pockets of good RSL housing which respond immediately to problems. The big private landlord does not, and there are a lot of absentee landlords and absentee managing agents who are not managing their properties well.

### Box 3.3 Edge of town estate

- 5,000 population, including 1800 council properties, 700 right-to-buys. Within a Housing Market Renewal Area. The area is in severe decline with a supply/demand mismatch in late 1990s.
- A 2-year period of detailed blueprint development process happened, with local people closely involved. An ALMO has been set up. 4 housing action areas were identified. 400+ demolitions have taken place and redevelopment is underway with 180 new units. A Housing Association has developed bungalows for the elderly and a care unit.
- The NM Pathfinder has lobbied for a balance of property types in the new build, including one bedroom flats for young people and a distribution of family accommodation around the area, as well as a mix of private development and social housing.
- There is now a waiting list for the first time for 25 years.

### Box 3.4 A London Borough

- Area has 10,700 population, which is very diverse.
- 15% private landlords; 20% owner occupied stock; 60% social rented – mainly Council, with one RSL estate.
- Council estates all have different issues.
  - There is a 1930s estate where the housing has lots of structural issues, condensation, poor heating, is too small, poor ventilation and no available funds for improvement. It has a high churn factor and is a gateway for new communities. The NM Pathfinder challenge is to influence lettings and housing management.
  - A second estate has larger properties, larger families, more generational issues and a large number of young families.
  - A third estate will probably be demolished within the next 4/5 years, which residents largely welcome though it is uncertain where they will go.

### **Box 3.5 Former mining area**

- The Pathfinder area includes a sink estate. There is gross over-supply, therefore no waiting list. Properties were built to the Bournville cottage design and are not fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century living. Cars can't pass in the street due to narrowness. Houses have large back gardens. The estate is undergoing a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer.
- The area as a whole is evenly split between social and private housing. It is within a Housing Market Renewal area. Masterplanning is being undertaken for the area.
- 550 properties are to be demolished – 25% of housing stock and 70% of social housing. 70% of these receive 100% council tax rebate. This raises a different issue of sustainability relating less to tenure and more to demographic factors and improving social mobility.
- Private landlords provide a good service because of the competition and the lack of a council waiting list. There is an incentive for landlords to join an accreditation scheme relating to the condition of private stock and its management because it gives them access to discretionary Housing Renewal funding.

The following sections indicate something of the range of responses by Pathfinders and their partners to these types of challenge.

## 4 Engagement of service providers

The extent of engagement of housing service providers by Pathfinders has been significant – with local authority housing departments, associated ALMOs and RSLs being amongst the most engaged mainstream partners across all Pathfinders.

### Local authority housing services

The National Evaluation has developed a fourfold categorisation of service provider involvement from strong (“core supporters”) through good (“friends but not always close”) and variable (“acquaintances”) to minimal involvement (“strangers”).<sup>12</sup> The 2005 review showed that **local authority housing services** were core supporters for the twenty Round 1 Pathfinders (with 70% or more of the Pathfinders experiencing ‘strong’ involvement by them) and that this involvement had strengthened over the previous eighteen months.

This includes engagement with different aspects of local authority housing departments’ work, including the management of council housing, the regulation and improvement of private rented housing/HMOs and also housing strategy and planning for capital investments.

There are good examples of local authority housing services being actively engaged:

- In *Poulton* (Case Study 2), two considerations influenced the Lancaster’s Strategic Housing Department’s decision to engage with the Pathfinder. First, Poulton is a designated Renewal Area and eligible for a significant amount of the Department’s capital programme spend. Secondly, the Department was adopting a new approach to implementation that would build on the community engagement and partnership opportunities offered by the Pathfinder. A service level agreement sets out shared objectives and a sub-group of the Pathfinder Board – the Housing and Built Environment Sub-Group, which brings together housing and built environment professionals and community representatives – has been set up to take the lead on housing and environmental issues.
- In *Staveley*, the Head of Housing, the Chief Executive and Head of Policy from Chesterfield Borough Council all sit on the Pathfinder Board and Pathfinder staff meet regularly with the local housing team and attend tenants and residents meetings with local housing officers. The Pathfinder and local Housing Office signpost residents to each other, and new tenants are given an information pack about the Pathfinder and the Staveley area in general. This joint working has led to active marketing of the Pathfinder area which, in turn, has stimulated demand for social housing.

### ALMOs and RSLs

The involvement of **RSLs/housing associations/ALMOs** was not quite as strong as that of local authority housing services in the Round 1 Pathfinders but it was still relatively good and has been strengthening. Pathfinders have essentially proved capable of engaging with all types of housing service provider to a reasonable extent.

Of the six Round 1 Pathfinders in which non-local authority social landlords/housing associations were important partners, two were newly created ALMOs<sup>13</sup> (Bolton at Home in

<sup>12</sup> ODPM (2006) *Research Report 23 Neighbourhood Management at the Turning Point? Programme Review 2005-06*, London, ODPM

<sup>13</sup> We have counted ALMOs together with RSLs, as they are arms length from the local authority.

*Great Lever* and Berneslai Homes in *Kendray*, Barnsley) and four were RSLs linked to completed or imminent voluntary stock transfer (Orbit Housing in *Heart of Burton*, East Staffordshire; Three Rivers in *Stanley Green Corridor*, Derwentside; Contour Housing in *Hattersley*, Tameside; and Aspire Housing in *Knutton and Cross Heath*, Newcastle-under-Lyme).

The *Hattersley* Pathfinder exemplifies the way that some Pathfinders have worked alongside stock transfer (Box 4.1)

#### Box 4.1 Pathfinder involvement in stock transfer, Hattersley

In May 2005, tenants voted for a transfer of stock from Manchester City Council to the Contour Housing Group. In the four years leading up to the ballot, Contour Housing (formerly known as Portico) was actively involved in the Pathfinder Board and thematic groups to promote housing and environmental management initiatives. This was an interim management measure until the transfer uncertainties were resolved and it was intended to pave the way for the housing improvement programme to be implemented if the ballot supported it.

Two initiatives were central to the interim measures – an Empty Properties Management Scheme and a Sustainable Lettings Initiative. Both involved extensive partnership working, facilitated by the Pathfinder, between Portico and Manchester City Council and local resident groups and remain important building blocks for the housing improvement programme now to be implemented.

Overall levels of service provider involvement have been generally weaker for the 15 Round 2 Pathfinders than the Round 1, reflecting their relatively early stage of development at the time of research. However, the more pronounced participation of social landlords has been indicative of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's policy of encouraging their greater involvement. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have been 'strongly involved' in twelve of the fifteen Round 2 Pathfinders and, unlike in Round 1, they have taken the lead role in four Pathfinders – as described in Box 4.2.

#### Box 4.2 Pathfinders where RSLs have a lead role

The Guinness Trust is the lead body in the **"Improving Croft and Cowpen Quay"** Pathfinder in Blyth. The Trust is the accountable body for the Blyth Pathfinder and employs the neighbourhood management team. Even though it only owns about 15% of the housing stock in the area, the Trust is leading the Pathfinder because it believes that neighbourhood management is necessary for securing the sustainability of the neighbourhood and also for developing what it sees as its wider social role locally.

Forest Homes (part of London and Quadrant Housing Trust) is the lead body in the **Team Leyton** Pathfinder in London. Forest Homes took over some 2,600 properties in Leyton and Leytonstone from the London Borough of Waltham Forest and the partnership working that developed between London and Quadrant (L & Q) and the Council in the stock transfer process provided the basis for the "Team Leyton" Pathfinder – with L & Q in the lead and the Council acting as the accountable body.

#### Box 4.2 Pathfinders where RSLs have a lead role (continued)

Wyre Forest Community Housing is the lead body in the **Oldington and Foley Park** Pathfinder in Worcestershire. Wyre Forest Community Housing is the accountable body for the Pathfinder and also employs the Pathfinder's core staff.

Maritime Housing and Riverside Housing is the lead body in the *Together* Pathfinder in Tranmere, Wirral. **Together** can be traced back to 1998, when Maritime Housing and Riverside Housing joined Wirral MBC and the Housing Corporation in the Tranmere Housing Regeneration Partnership. A local neighbourhood management office was set up and Maritime Housing also managed a neighbourhood warden scheme. "Together" is a logical development of this early foray into neighbourhood management with Maritime Housing and Riverside Housing in the lead and Wirral MBC acting as the accountable body.

### Private housing providers

The *Kendray Initiative* Pathfinder in Barnsley provides a more exceptional example of the active engagement of the **private housing sector** by Pathfinders. The Regional Director of Haslam Homes has a seat on the Pathfinder's Board and has become involved in project appraisal/evaluation work. Haslam builds for first time buyers and its Operations Manager emphasised, when contributing to the Action Learning Set, how important this involvement was for ensuring that its sales programme and marketing were right for Kendray.

## 5 Improved housing services in Pathfinder areas

Given the diversity of local housing conditions and characteristics that the Pathfinders face, it is difficult to make generalisations with respect to the Pathfinders' impacts upon housing services. Nevertheless, this section seeks to provide an overview of the different ways in which Pathfinders have influenced housing service providers to date.

The national evaluation's recent 2005 annual review<sup>14</sup> showed that whilst housing was not the area of greatest impact for Pathfinders, it did represent a meaningful proportion of their influence. The principal achievements to date with respect to influencing housing services have been primarily about encouraging the increased provision of existing services within Pathfinder areas. The rest of this section illustrates the range of activities and results.

### i) Improving housing management

The *Greater Hollington* Pathfinder in Hastings provides a good example of attempts to improve social housing management. The Pathfinder influenced the largest RSL in the area, 1066 Housing Association, to locate a neighbourhood office in Greater Hollington and this move has been accompanied by the introduction of improved housing management practices such as pre-tenancy agreements, estate agreements and acceptable behaviour contracts.

In some areas, joint working between providers has also been sought, for example, social landlord panels and forums have been established by the *Easington* Pathfinder in County Durham, the *South Bermondsey* Pathfinder in Southwark and the *Hawkinge* Pathfinder in Shepway.

### ii) Environmental improvements

A number of Pathfinders have prioritised 'grime issues'.

- *Hattersley's* "Clean Sweep Team" is a good example of a rapid and focused response to improving the local environment.
- *Kendray* has focused on improving the use of open space.
- The *Ovenden Initiative* in Calderdale has worked with the principal RSL, Pennine Housing to improve the local environment including work to remove rubbish and graffiti.
- The *Oldington and Foley Park* Pathfinder in Wyre Forest has prioritised similar environmental improvement schemes.
- In Basildon, the *Interlock* Pathfinder has a Service Level Agreement with the New Town's Housing Service Department for improvements in the street scene and environmental maintenance.

<sup>14</sup> See ODPM (2006) *Research Report 23 Neighbourhood Management at the Turning Point? Programme Review 2005-06*, London, ODPM

Environmental improvement schemes have been mainstreamed in some areas; for example:

- the street cleansing service piloted by the *Staveley* Pathfinder in Chesterfield;
- *Dewsbury West's* Rapid Response Team has been rolled out to the rest of Dewsbury and Batley, albeit in a reduced form.

### iii) Housing and community safety

Street wardens and rangers have featured in a number of Pathfinders. Chesterfield Borough Council is currently considering rolling out the Rangers service piloted in the *Staveley* Pathfinder. In *Fordbridge*, Solihull, housing and community safety issues are being connected through the work of the anti-social behaviour unit located in the estate management services of the local ALMO, Solihull Community Housing. Using its links with the Pathfinder, Solihull Community Housing has made contact with schools and is hoping to link its anti-social behaviour work into the citizenship curriculum.

Another ALMO, Bolton at Home, is actively involved in the *Great Lever* Pathfinder. It is represented on both the Pathfinder Board and its Housing and Environment theme group and has a Neighbourhood Office co-located with the Pathfinder with a shared reception. The ALMO has not only played a lead role in work on improving the quality of housing management and enhancing the physical environment to make the area look and feel better but has also got involved in crime and community safety issues, seconding a Safer, Stronger Communities Officer to engage with local residents and service providers to promote community safety. There are plans to combine the Housing and Environment and Crime and Community Safety theme groups to reflect the increasing integration of housing and environmental management and crime and community safety activity.

In Southwark, London, the *South Bermondsey* Partnership has helped to establish a RSL Community Cohesion Group to bring together the 12 RSLs operating in the area and to help to connect them with community safety agencies including Community Wardens, the Safer Neighbourhood Team and police. The Multi-Agency Tasking Team focusing on community safety issues in *Greater Hollington*, Hastings, brings together the main RSL, 1066 Housing Association and the police to exchange information on and tackle, incidences of anti social behaviour.

The Action Learning Set acknowledged the different approaches to street wardens and shared area management and discussed the issue of overlapping roles between Wardens and Community Support Officers. Lessons include the need to define their respective remits carefully and minimise potential duplication. The Action Learning Set also emphasised the importance of 'joined up planning' and 'preventative planning' to 'design out' crime and to ensure that new facilities minimise rather than encourage problems. The *Kendray Initiative's* experience of having the police and housing working together recognised that sustainable housing programmes are about more than physical design and construction and need to have an integrated social and economic approach from the outset.

### iv) Supporting older and vulnerable residents

Projects for supporting elderly and vulnerable tenants have featured in a number of Pathfinder initiatives:

- In *Stanley Green* Derwentside, for example, the local RSL, Three Rivers, has implemented 'Quality Homes for All' a handyperson scheme for elderly residents.

- A similar scheme has been supported by the Pathfinder in *Poultton* (known as ‘House Proud’), which has also set up a ‘Tenancy Support’ project to provide vulnerable residents with support and referral to specialist advice on problems such as rent arrears, debt, poor health, lack of education and skills.
- In *Cowpen Quay*, Blyth Valley, the Pathfinder has initiated work on the housing needs of black and minority ethnic groups.

Participants in the learning set emphasised the importance of recognising the presence of vulnerable groups and individuals. Developing multi-agency programmes to support these groups and individuals is an important role for neighbourhood management.

## v) Working with Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders

Five of the Pathfinders are working or seeking to work alongside Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders (HMRPs): from Round 1 *Knutton Cross Heath* with Renew, the North Staffordshire HMRP (see Annex 1); *Eastwood and Springwell Gardens, Rotherham* with Transform, the South Yorkshire HMRP and *Parkfield/ Mill Lane* in Stockton with the Tees Valley HMRP; and from Round 2 *Together*, Wirral with the New Heartlands, Merseyside HMRP and *East Blackburn* with Elevate, the East Lancashire HMRP. These are briefly described in Box 5.2.

### Box 5.2 Pathfinders and Housing Market Renewal

**Knutton Cross Heath** is one of four “Areas of Major Intervention” (AMIs) for Renew North Staffordshire. Aspire Housing has been selected to take the lead role in the programme for the area. Renew funds a project worker, community support worker and part-time administrative clerical assistant to work exclusively in the NM area on the communication, community and service provider engagement aspects of its housing renewal programme in the area. Line-managed by the Neighbourhood Manager, the Knutton Cross Heath AMI Manager from Aspire Housing directs the work of the team operationally and links it to the activities of the housing association and other partners in the housing renewal programme.

The **Eastwood and Springwell Gardens** NM area in Rotherham lies entirely within the Rotherham East Area Development Framework of Transform, the South Yorkshire HMRP. The Pathfinder is managing the masterplanning consultancy for the Development Framework in collaboration with Rotherham MBC Housing/Community Planning, the HMRP, community organisations and other key stakeholders.

The **Parkfield/Mill Lane** Pathfinder has been actively involved in rehabilitation and redevelopment schemes in the area. It jointly commissioned a ‘Neighbourhood Futures’ study and Masterplan for the first phase of redevelopment with Stockton on Tees Borough Council with funding from English Partnerships and the Single Housing Investment Pot. Nearly 200 housing units are being demolished and replaced with 100 new units. The Pathfinder has part-funded a Community Officer post to work in the Council’s Housing team to conduct community liaison and relocation work, and holds fortnightly project team meetings with the Housing Market Renewal team. The experience of the Pathfinder involvement in the first phase of the redevelopment programme was instrumental in it securing a significant role in the second phase, which, it is hoped, will be funded under the Tees Valley HMRP.

### Box 5.2 Pathfinders and Housing Market Renewal (*continued*)

The **Together** Partnership in Tranmere is working with the New Heartlands HMRP to develop service delivery for residents in two areas affected by the renewal programme. It has an important role in performing holding operations that keep communities together pending the implementation of restructuring plans whilst also trying to ensure the viability of neighbouring areas. Its role remains under review and it may be asked to reconfigure street services such as waste collection, arson reduction and environmental health functions whilst redevelopment is taking place. With other partners, it is also looking into the implications for service provision of demolishing large Victorian properties – such as arson, vandalism and the displacement of rats.

Working alongside the Elevate East Lancashire HMRP, the **East Blackburn** Pathfinder is commissioning consultants to undertake a master planning exercise of the area to address public space issues and improve the standard of the existing housing stock.

#### vi) Improving private rented housing

The case studies also provide good examples of the attempts by some Pathfinders to address the governance of private housing. A sub-group of the Pathfinder Board in *Poulton*, Lancaster has been given part of Lancaster City Council's housing capital budget and is directing some of these funds to improve run-down occupied and privately rented accommodation. It has also been asked to develop and agree proposals for a Home Zone and to administer a Townscape Heritage Initiative aimed at restoring local buildings and shop fronts of historic value (Annex 2). In *Springbourne and Boscombe West* in Bournemouth (Annex 3), the Pathfinder secured greater council expenditure on sub-standard private rented housing and more robust enforcement of requirements relating to Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The Pathfinder has also facilitated discussions involving tenants and landlords of private rented properties to identify local issues and seek solutions. A new Landlords and Tenants Accreditation Scheme has been established to promote higher standards of service and housing provision, although there has been a problem of compliance in relation to landlords of HMOs. Similar schemes have been set up by Pathfinders in *Easington* in County Durham and *Dewsbury West* in Kirklees. The *Manton* Pathfinder in Bassetlaw is also establishing a private landlords group.

The *Together* Pathfinder in Tranmere provides another good example of efforts to work with private landlords to improve services. The Pathfinder is working with Wirral MBC to develop a Tenancy Reference Scheme, which offers accredited private landlords access to tenant history and references from previous landlords. The rationale for the scheme is both to improve information sharing and to provide incentives to landlords to improve standards. Support is also given to tenants whose tenancy history might ordinarily make it difficult for them to gain access to good quality private rented and social housing.

## vii) Linking communities with service providers

The Pathfinders have engaged with service providers and initiatives like Housing Market Renewal but they have also secured community participation and brought residents and providers together in many ways. The three case studies provide good examples of community engagement activities that are both formal and informal. *Poulton* embodies the strongest mix of both varieties. It involves community representatives on the relevant Pathfinder Board sub-group reporting back to the Residents' Association (RA) and other local groups – supplemented by informal mechanisms for capacity building (pre and post sub-group briefings and informal discussions with the RA and other groups).

The *Knutton and Cross Heath* Pathfinder also works on community engagement through a variety of mechanisms – making strenuous efforts to engage residents in the consultation process around the Renew programme, securing the participation of 800 people in masterplanning, seeking out hard to reach groups, and working on longer-term mechanisms for engagement (including newsletters and an interactive web-site). It works closely with the 'Residents' Friend' recruited from the local Citizen's Advice Bureau and funded by Renew. Demonstrating the willingness of the Pathfinder and other stakeholders to listen to residents was seen as being crucial in the implementation of Housing Market Renewal programme.

The focus of effort by the *Springbourne and Boscombe West* Pathfinder was on engagement of the most disadvantaged residents – its tenants' forum was designed to act as a support group for tenants who had experienced serious problems with their accommodation and landlords.

The Action Learning Set also underlined the importance of the Pathfinders' community engagement role and the trust built by working directly with residents as the crucial building blocks in the redevelopment of Pathfinder areas. *Kendray* Pathfinder has provided a community house to facilitate community engagement. Resident consultation resulted in the prioritisation of local green space over shopping facilities. As the Impact Team Leader from *Kendray* emphasised: "*We can get away with nothing. If there is a difficult question it will be asked. Officers have to be well informed and well prepared and willing to respond. There are no token residents on Kendray, if we ask for an opinion we will get it!*" The lengthy process of community consultation and engagement has seen changes made to the housing 'Blueprint' of the local ALMO, Berneslai Homes. The changes affected the mix of housing types, design and layout and management/letting policy.

In Stockton, the *Parkfield Mill Lane* Pathfinder has part-funded a Community Officer in the Council's housing department to facilitate community liaison. It was again stressed that the Pathfinder brings community liaison skills, in relation to Masterplanning for example, that the Council does not have and also that the Pathfinder's independence from the Council is seen as a particular strength in fostering community engagement.

This section has demonstrated the range of activities of Pathfinders across different policy areas and in relation to specific community groups. It has shown that Pathfinders play various roles that bring together advocacy, service delivery and support:

- influencing and improving mainstream service delivery so that services are better tailored to meet local needs, better integrated and more accessible and understandable to residents;
- devising new and more 'joined up' multi-agency approaches;
- delivering some functions, such as masterplanning consultation and community liaison, on behalf of other agencies;
- acting as brokers and intermediaries between service providers and residents;
- promoting new housing governance arrangements in relation to RSLs;
- promoting greater investment for private properties; and
- building social capital through their community engagement and support activities.

The next section draws out some key lessons for neighbourhood managers, their partners and different levels of government.

## 6 Lessons

A number of key lessons in relation to housing can be drawn out of the Annual Review, case studies and Action Learning Set – for Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders, partners and local government and national government.

### *For Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders*

- Pathfinders cannot act on housing issues without developing relationships with key housing service providers – local authority housing services, ALMOs or housing associations – and need to promote an holistic view of regeneration rather than a solely physical one.
- It is crucial to integrate housing and environmental and crime and community safety strategies through partnership working between the police and other community safety agencies and housing service providers.
- Pathfinders have an important advocacy role to play especially in areas where there is no political will to tackle housing issues.
- Activities of service providers and funding stream ‘owners’ (e.g. different local authority departments, private landlords and funding organisations) need to be integrated around agreed priorities.
- Pathfinders need to engage with partners on their own terms but be prepared to challenge them, whilst being systematic and evidence-based.
- Pathfinders have to work through persuasion rather than enforcement but should formalise the outcomes of discussions with service providers in statements of intent or service level agreements;
- Pathfinders need to be prepared to act as mediators between residents and housing service providers, utilising their community participation and engagement structures and processes.
- Pathfinders need to engage residents and community groups in both the process of priority setting and implementation – possibly even encouraging the formal delegation of powers to neighbourhood organisations where they exist or can be established.
- Pathfinders need to work with residents and community groups in an open and transparent way and to build trust in a variety of forms that acknowledge people’s different interests and capabilities for engagement. Pathfinders also need to ensure that the spectrum of involvement opportunities is sensitive to the particular needs of ‘hard-to-reach’ groups and communities, including BME communities.
- Community/resident groups have to underpin the process of housing market renewal and, therefore, formal structures and systems need to be established to determine and endorse agreed actions and responsibilities. The sensitive management of residents’ expectations is crucial, especially where major housing market renewal is being pursued, and requires a dedicated and well-resourced public relations/communications effort.

- Pathfinders need to raise awareness amongst mainstream providers about the key role of neighbourhood management with a view to determining succession strategies and promoting sustainability within the NM area and encouraging the roll-out of the approach elsewhere.
- To develop their role, Pathfinders might also explore how neighbourhood management could provide a framework for housing management providers (and possibly other service providers) to pool resources in order to provide more consistent neighbourhood-wide housing management services across tenures and estates.

#### *For partners/local government*

- Social housing organisations should carefully consider whether, given local circumstances, it is appropriate to play a leading or active role in neighbourhood management and, if it is, be prepared to provide the necessary resources and management change.
- RSLs considering leading a neighbourhood management initiative need to identify and resolve any conflicts of interest with their core role in managing or developing housing.
- Partners need to agree to work around the constraints on the availability of housing data and be willing to share data with other partners.
- Partners need to work together to ensure that social networks are not fragmented by housing programmes and that social cohesion and inclusion, balanced housing tenure and inter-generational and racial mixes are promoted and social segregation avoided through “preventative planning”.
- Partners need to recognise that partnership working is a detailed and slow process and that Action Planning requires perseverance.
- The LSP needs to ensure that housing is not pushed down the neighbourhoods agenda with the introduction of Local Area Agreements.
- Housing providers should where possible identify the benefits to other service providers of their interventions.

#### *For regional government*

- Regional Housing Boards need to be sensitive to the neighbourhood dimension of their Regional Housing Strategies and to ensure that there are adequate ‘feedback loops’ from the housing-related activities of the Pathfinders to the regional level.
- More specifically, Regional Housing Boards and Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders should be aware of the benefits of, and consider promoting the use of, a neighbourhood management approach in significant housing redevelopment initiatives.

*For central government*

- Central government should ensure that housing is central and integrated within any further development of the ‘neighbourhoods and communities policy agenda’.
- Inspection regimes like the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and the Housing Corporation’s regulatory system need explicitly to recognise and reward the engagement of housing service providers in neighbourhood management initiatives and related inter-agency partnership working.
- While neighbourhood management initiatives usually work with partners through persuasion, the evidence shows that in relation to the private rented housing sector, securing voluntary participation can be very difficult, with enforcement of housing standards difficult to secure. This is a key issue, as some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents in deprived areas live in private rented housing.

# Annex 1

## Case Study 1

### **Supporting Renew North Staffs Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder**

### **Knutton and Cross Heath NM Pathfinder Newcastle under Lyme**

#### **Summary**

- The case study focuses on activities that the NMP has undertaken to support the work of Renew North Staffs, the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder. The boundaries of one of Renew's four Areas of Major Intervention are the same as the NMP area. Proposals are being developed which are likely to involve both significant demolition and new housing, as well as environmental improvements and provision or relocation of community facilities. Renew funded the NMP to provide dedicated staff support for community engagement and to liaise with service providers about short- and long-term implications for service provision.
- Experience here shows that neighbourhood management initiatives can provide vital contacts, local knowledge and physical presence in an area where other major regeneration activities are being proposed. Neighbourhood management initiatives can also bring a good understanding of the complex array of service provision, including an understanding of the key drivers that influence service planning. Here, the NMP's experience in understanding the needs of the area, the history of regeneration activity and service provision and the aspirations and concerns of local people meant that Renew could hit the ground running and do so effectively. As a semi-independent organisation – not explicitly tied to Renew or to a particular service provider – using the NMP in this way has also helped to gain the confidence of the majority of local people in Renew's plans for the area, and minimise the distrust which is so often associated with major estate renewal activity.

# (1) Aims, Objectives & Rationale

## Background

Renew North Staffs (Renew) is one of nine Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders funded by ODPM to tackle the worst problems of low demand for housing in England. The Knutton and Cross Heath Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder (the NMP) in Newcastle under Lyme is supporting the work of Renew in one of its four Areas of Major Intervention (AMI), Knutton and Cross Heath. The AMI and NMP boundaries are the same, and the NMP was identified early on in the development of Renew's prospectus as a key organisation that could assist in the delivery of Renew's programme for change in Knutton and Cross Heath.

Renew's intervention in Newcastle-under-Lyme is being co-ordinated by the Newcastle Strategic Alliance, a partnership involving Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council (as strategic housing authority and local planning authority), Aspire Housing (RSL, and owner of the majority of the housing stock in the area following Large Scale Voluntary Transfer from the Borough Council in 2001) and Staffordshire County Council. Uniquely in the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder programme, delivery of the Knutton and Cross Heath AMI programme is led by Aspire Housing. A key feature of the delivery arrangements in Newcastle is therefore the complex array of public sector organisations involved and the bigger challenge that this creates for communication and for resident and service provider engagement.

## Aims

The aims of this intervention by the NMP are to provide a sensitive and intensive matrix of support, consultation and engagement between local residents and their communities, the organisations working to deliver the Renew agenda, and the service providers that need to change and reshape their delivery to meet the changing needs of the area.

## Objectives

The objectives of NMP in this intervention are:

- To work with the Aspire Housing to deliver the Renew engagement, consultation and communications processes across Knutton and Cross Heath;
- Helping difficult-to-reach groups engage and participate in the Renew process;
- To project manage a "residents' friend" service;
- To support existing and developing residents organisations both directly and in partnership with key partners such as Aspire Housing and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council;
- To ensure that advice and support service providers work together to target, reshape and consult on new/improved services and improve the quality of service delivery, particularly in the parts of the AMI directly affected by the Renew programme;
- To facilitate broader linkage with other initiatives and programmes that complement Renew's objectives;

- To work throughout the Renew programme with partners across the sub-region on the adoption and development of the neighbourhood management approach to developing and improving local services for our communities.

## Justification/rationale

### Planned housing market renewal activity

Renew's early area development framework identified the need for some remodelling of certain estates in the area, and following more detailed masterplanning work a programme of estate renewal is now being appraised. It is expected to involve the demolition of 554 existing dwellings – predominantly social rented accommodation – and the construction of 508 new houses, i.e. a net reduction in housing stock of 46 dwellings, leading to a shift in tenure towards a more sustainable combination of private ownership, shared ownership and social housing in the new housing to be provided. Coupled with a range of improvements in access to local services and to the “Wammy” – a major area of open space that separates Knutton from Lower Milehouse and Cross Heath – these changes are intended to create a sense of place in order to change people's perceptions of the area and rid it of its current stigma.

The Renew North Staffs Prospectus also recognises the importance of economic regeneration in helping to revive the local housing market, and the overall programme envisages close working between Renew and Advantage West Midlands' (the RDA) North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone, particularly in terms of increasing residents' skills and supporting access to new employment opportunities.

### The need for engagement with communities and service providers

Any major programme of physical renewal is disruptive, literally causing upheaval for places, communities and individual households. Moving house is stressful at the best of times, but the knowledge some way in advance that you might have to move, or that major change will be occurring nearby, but are uncertain about re-housing options and exactly how the area will change, is perhaps even more unsettling. Amongst adults, this stress is likely to affect the elderly particularly, but it is not just confined to adults – children may suffer similar stress, in part because they may understand less of the overall picture. Some may even be bullied at school because their home is shown on a plan as one that will be demolished.

Physical renewal also places particular demands on service providers. Some families require intense levels of support through the process, for example the elderly and others being supported by social services. Movements of individuals and families to new accommodation – and perhaps temporary accommodation in the interim – can also cause uncertainty for service providers such as schools and health (e.g. how should they react to severe fluctuations in rolls and registers), and requires careful planning that looks beyond the short-term disruption to the likely position post-renewal.

Just as unsettling for communities, service providers and others such as local Councillors, is the uncertainty during the project planning process. Without any form of dedicated support for communication and community and service provider engagement, there would be multiple lines of communication and consultation coming from outside the area to residents within it, and rumours would be allowed to filter through the area unknown and unchecked. There would also be a high risk of service providers working in isolation, and a risk that vulnerable residents would not receive the help they needed in the process.

For all of these reasons, Renew North Staffs and its partners realised that intensive support is needed to communicate clearly and truthfully what the Housing Market Renewal Programme is about, what the changes it might bring to the area, engage communities in the process of project planning – including those residents who may be most vulnerable and difficult to reach – and liaise closely with key service providers whose support may be particularly needed during the renewal programme, and/or whose delivery may be disrupted by it.

### **Why use the neighbourhood management pathfinder?**

The arguments in favour of using a neighbourhood management initiative to support Renew's programme, as opposed to alternative delivery mechanisms, were that the NMP enabled the support framework to be delivered by an established organisation, based in the local area, and with a track record of working effectively in partnership with the community and relevant service providers.

It was felt that working through a different organisation would require a time to set up, time for that organisation to establish engagement with the community and service providers, and that even then there would be potential for confusion and duplication given the ongoing work of the NMP in the area.

## (2) The Neighbourhood

### The Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder

The Knutton Cross Heath NMP was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2002. Its aim is to *“improve the quality of life of residents by creating a neighbourhood where people are happy and proud to live and work and where good quality services are provided that meet the needs of the community”*. The Pathfinder seeks to enhance service provision in ways that will have a positive impact on priority outcomes in the five neighbourhood renewal themes of health, education, worklessness, housing & physical environment and community safety. It focuses particularly on two strategic themes: the environment and community safety (“clean and safe”), and lifelong learning.

The NMP has a team of 11 staff (9 FTEs) made up of a Neighbourhood Manager and Deputy Neighbourhood Manager, two Project Workers (one focusing on service provider engagement another on community engagement), an Administration and Monitoring Officer, a trainee Project Worker, a Project Worker and Community Support Worker engaged on Renew activities (roles discussed in more detail below), two part-time clerical staff (one of which is Renew-funded) and a part-time cleaner. The Pathfinder operates as an unincorporated partnership. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council acts as its Accountable Body, employs the Neighbourhood Management team and also provides financial management services.

The Pathfinder Board has 21 members and is chaired by a voluntary sector representative. All of the principal service providers are represented on the Board. The Pathfinder is located in an area of two-tier local government, with local authority service provision split between Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council who are represented on the NMP Board by both local councillors and council officers. Seven residents have seats on the Board but meetings are open to the public and many non-member councillors, council officers and residents also attend. Time is set aside at the end of each meeting for an ‘open forum’ question and answer session in which they can participate.

Feeding into the Board are six Theme Groups, each chaired by a representative of a service provider with a resident vice chair. Theme Groups have written Terms of Reference which define their purpose as playing a lead role in strengthening baseline data within the theme, developing the links between identified gaps in services and implications for service improvements, leading on the commissioning of service improvements and participating in the appraisal of proposals. The NMP also has a Community Forum and Youth Forum to feed into the development of its delivery plans and forward strategy.

### Knutton Cross Heath

Knutton Cross Heath is situated just under a mile to the north and north west of Newcastle-under-Lyme town centre and is separated from it by a dual carriageway. A predominantly residential area of 6,000 people living in 2,700 households, its economic history is centred around the extractive industries of coal mining and china clay (which have now closed) and work in the nearby potteries (which has been in steady decline). The area has some local retail and other services and is adjacent to a major employment area which has developed rapidly on the reclaimed former Holditch Colliery. Lymedale Park accommodates several thousand jobs, many in the distribution and service sectors.

Knutton and Cross Heath are home to relatively high numbers of both young and elderly people and to a very small (<1% of the total) Black and Minority Ethnic population. The Pathfinder covers a number of distinct areas: Cross Heath; The Meadows; Lower Milehouse Estate; Knutton Village; New Knutton; Saints Estates; Church Lane Area; and two new build estates. With the exception of two new build estates constructed in the late 1990s, and Knutton Village which dates from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, much of the housing stock was constructed in the immediate pre-war and post-war eras. There are variations in tenure mix, but social housing still accounts for about half of all dwellings overall.

It is estimated that half the population of the Pathfinder are amongst the 10% most deprived in England. The greatest concentrations of deprivation geographically are found in the Lower Milehouse Estate and in the Camillus Road, Bernard's Road and Moran Road Estates in Knutton. They are among the 10% most deprived SOAs on the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation, and are amongst the 3% most deprived SOAs nationally on certain domains. Key problems faced by the area are low incomes for those in work, unemployment, severe health inequalities, poor levels of educational attainment, relatively high levels of crime and the fear of crime, poor image and stigmatisation. These are principally legacies from the structural decline of the area over the last 20 years and the monolithic housing types and tenures of parts of the area.

Knutton and Cross Heath was identified in the Renew North Staffs' original 2004 submission to ODPM as one of four areas of North Staffordshire that are in most urgent need for prompt and radical intervention to revive their housing markets. The housing stock within the NMP area is generally sound, but parts of the area are suffering from collapsing demand and very high turnover rates in social housing. The Lower Milehouse estate, Charter Road in Cross Heath and certain streets in Knutton, are particularly affected, and these areas are stigmatised because of high levels of anti-social behaviour and the other deprivation problems identified above. In these and other parts of the NMP area there is also an overprovision of certain stock types, particularly large, post-war terraced housing which is less attractive to many tenants.

## (3) The Process

### Key Players and Structures – Who?

#### Organisational roles and responsibilities

Funding of £291,000 was been made available by Renew North Staffs over two financial years to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006 to enable the NMP recruit an additional project worker and a community support worker as well as a part-time clerical assistant to focus exclusively on the communication, community engagement and service provider engagement aspects of Renew's market renewal programme in Knutton Cross Heath. The NMP's Renew team also project manages a "residents' friend" service provided in the area by Stoke Citizens Advice Bureau.

The Renew-funded staff came into post on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2005. They are line managed by the Deputy Neighbourhood Manager along with other members of the NMP team. Operationally, however, their direction in relation to Renew work is provided by Aspire Housing, which is co-ordinating all of Renew's delivery programme in the Knutton Cross Heath Area of Major Intervention (AMI). The NMP's Renew team thus have a close working relationship with the AMI Manager located at Aspire, even though they are line-managed by, and based in, the NMP.

The Borough Council is the NMP's accountable body, receives and incurs expenditure on the NMP's behalf, and employs the NMP team, including the Renew-funded staff. Structurally the NMP is part of the Borough Council's Planning and Regeneration Service, though it operates independently via its own Board which in turn reports to the Government Office for the West Midlands and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. The Planning and Regeneration Service at the Borough Council also has lead responsibility for strategic co-ordination of Renew's programme in the Borough.

#### Reporting structures

This complex web of relationships, roles and responsibilities – described in Newcastle as a "virtual team" – is clearly understood by all of those concerned, and so far has not caused significant difficulty in terms of the presentation of the NMP's role or the execution of its Renew-related tasks. One reason for this is that there is clarity about roles and responsibilities, and a robust communications and reporting structure. In relation to activity in the Knutton and Cross Heath AMI, this includes:

- An **AMI Steering Group** which meets six weekly. This includes representation from Renew, Aspire, the Borough Council and County Council, the NMP and English Partnerships (which purchased a key site in the AMI as part of the Renew programme). The AMI Steering Group co-ordinates and monitors all aspects of the AMI programme. It takes reports from the early intervention projects which have been funded by Renew. In addition to the "neighbourhood management/consultation" project, these projects include voluntary purchase, early clearance, environmental improvements, masterplanning, neighbourhood wardens, stock condition survey, housing needs survey and residents' friend;
- Some of the early intervention projects have their own **Project Groups**. Each Project provides a monthly report to the AMI Manager who in turn produces a monthly AMI progress report. The NMP is represented on all of the Project Groups, but has been particularly closely involved in (and hosted) the **Masterplanning Project Group**, which

also includes Aspire, BM3 (community architects), the Borough Council, English Partnerships and two residents;

- In addition, there is a quarterly **AMI Workshop**, which brings together everyone involved in the delivery of the AMI programme to ensure good communication about all aspects of the delivery programme and discuss ways of improving co-ordination and delivery.

## Activities – How?

In the sub-sections below we review the NMP's support for Renew's AMI programme under five headings:

- General communication support;
- Community engagement in the masterplanning process;
- Home visits;
- Liaison/management of Residents' Friend service;
- Service provider liaison.

### General communication

The NMP has overall responsibility for communications in relation to the Knutton Cross Heath AMI and has delivered this support in a variety of ways. Importantly, the NMP has made use of its own structures, by debating the anticipated programme amongst its own Board and through its Theme Groups, and also by raising the topic via two events of the NMP's Community Forum (a question and answer session, and a session to trawl for ideas for environmental improvements). There is a standing item on the NMP Board agenda to update Board members on Renew and the NMP's engagement with it, and there is also a slot on the agenda at every Community Forum meeting specifically to deal with Renew matters.

More generally, the NMP's communications role involves regular meetings between the Renew Project Worker, the AMI Manager and the Borough's Programme Co-ordinator. On an ongoing basis the NMP also has responsibility for maintaining the AMI's awareness of which partner organisations are communicating what messages to whom – whether residents, service providers, other partners or the media – and ensuring consistency of approach. As part of the general communication process, the NMP has worked with the key agencies involved in the delivery of the programme to prepare a "Questions & Answers" brochure which was hand-delivered to every household.

In addition to this "above the line" communication, the NMP has made use of its extensive networks in Knutton, Lower Milehouse and Cross Heath to ensure that leading members of the community, including the most vocal, have been well briefed about the reasons for the Renew programme and the programme development process, and that their energies have been harnessed in positive ways – encouraging people to turn out at local consultation events, for example.

The NMP has also adopted a variety of methods to ensure that young people are involved in the debate about the area's future. It has made a number of visits to the local Primary Schools that may be affected by the programme to brief teachers and discuss some of the issues with young children. This serves a number of purposes: raising awareness amongst children generally; attuning the schools, as service providers, to the issues raised by the programme generally and for them as education providers; and also to sensitise teachers to the stress that children might be experiencing, in an attempt to prevent and combat bullying of those who may be directly affected by demolition and re-housing.

The NMP has also been working with young people at the Lower Milehouse Community Development Association to develop a website where they can discuss issues involving Renew and establish a "Dreamscheme" for the AMI, where the hopes and aspirations of young people can be captured and shared with others in the community, those delivering the Renew programme and service providers.

The NMP has also harnessed its existing Local Councillor Working Group to provide briefings to elected members about the Renew programme. However, as we note later, under Key Issues, this dimension of engagement has been less successful.

The NMP is in the process of setting up a Renew website for the Knutton Cross Heath area, and has harnessed the skills of two local residents to help with the technical and design aspects of that work. The residents will also help to keep the website up to date on an ongoing basis. The website will include key documents, programmes of events, and links to partners' websites. It is also expected to include a facility for residents to submit comments or messages.

There are plans to establish a bi-monthly newsletter – specifically on the Renew programme – to keep news flowing throughout the year. This is considered particularly important during "quiet" periods when the programme itself may be internally focused on appraisal and funding, rather than consultation or on the ground delivery, and when local people might otherwise be wondering what is going on.

## Community engagement in the masterplanning process

Beyond these general communication responsibilities, the NMP has played a key supporting role in the masterplanning process, by working alongside architects BM3 to ensure substantial and high quality engagement by local residents and service providers.

The masterplanning process took place over a 20 week period from January to May. It was an intensive process, with an event organised every week, including some Saturdays. The process was made even more challenging because the masterplanners took on board the NMP's advice about the area's fragmented geography and decided to hold three events each week – one in Knutton, one in Lower Milehouse and one in Cross Heath. The NMP was responsible for hiring venues and fielded staff at each event. BM3 sent mailshots to all households regarding the events, and the NMP also communicated the events programme through its own channels.

Feedback from a number of those we consulted described the NMP's role during and outside these events as helping to articulate the programme to local residents, and also helping to articulate local residents' views back to those responsible for programme design and masterplanning.

The events attracted a good level of attendance – 2,000 people attended overall, and the NMP estimates that, after taking account of multiple attendances, perhaps 800 individuals actively participated in the process. Those we interviewed for the case study with experience of similar processes elsewhere felt that the attendance levels were good, and that they generally ran very smoothly given the difficult, and at times emotive, subject matter.

The masterplan evolved throughout the 20 week programme, as comments and feedback were taken on board and the plans refined. The process culminated with a major event in May to present the draft masterplan to the community. An event was held at two locations (Knutton and Cross Heath) with a shuttle bus service laid on from Lower Milehouse to Knutton. Invitations to this event were hand-delivered to every household in the area, and 500 people attended to review the draft proposals, make comments and indicate whether they supported them or not.

In addition to helping with turn-out for these events, the NMP staff asked everyone attending for their opinions on the draft masterplan when they left the meeting by issuing and gathering in questionnaires. Of the 500 who attended, 337 returned questionnaires and 70% of these supported the proposals.

Following this event, a pack was prepared which was hand-delivered to every house (this method guaranteed delivery, and provided another opportunity to raise the profile of the initiative and keep in contact with local residents). The pack included a letter from the AMI Manager thanking residents for their participation in the consultation process, a map showing the draft masterplan and an indication of the next stages of design and implementation. It also provided information to residents about the relationship between the Renew masterplanning process, and the wider statutory consultation process which is being undertaken as part of the Borough Council's emerging Local Development Framework (the AMI area is to be included as an Area Action Plan as part of the LDF). The opportunity was also taken to get feedback about the masterplanning process – a questionnaire was included with a stamped addressed envelope, offering respondents entry into a prize draw for a laptop and digital camera donated by English Partnerships. At the time of writing, the survey forms were still being returned.

The draft masterplan is now being reviewed by Renew and the other public sector partners – some of whom will need to engage further in the scheme design process (e.g. ASPIRE, with its own housing stock, the PCT regarding health facilities, the Borough Council regarding potential relocation of a recreation centre) – before the scheme is finally costed and appraised. It will then form part of Renew's "Prospectus 2" submission to ODPM in September 2005 which will include a bid for delivery funding.

The masterplanning process has been generally regarded as very positive, but some useful lessons about timing and process have emerged which we discuss later.

## Home visits

From Spring 2005 onwards the NMP and Aspire worked together to offer personal visits to all residents who could potentially be affected by demolition if the draft masterplan is adopted (i.e. 500+ households). The process involved a letter to every affected household offering them an appointment, and the opportunity to change the appointment or opt out of the process if they wished. By the time the draft masterplan had been put to the public at the end of May, they had managed to see 100. At the time of writing (early August) over 300 home visits have been made. All of those potentially affected who want to be visited will have been seen by September 2005.

The benefits of this process have been numerous and significant. They include:

- Raising the profile of the Renew programme and helping to clarify Aspire and the NMP's roles in the process;
- Providing an informal opportunity to explain the bigger picture – the reasons behind the market renewal pathfinder and why it is operating in the area;
- Enabling detailed, one to one conversations about what the programme would and would not be doing, and providing some early information about what might be available to residents in terms of re-housing options;
- Finding out the opinions of those most directly affected about the Renew proposals (on balance, to date, those against the proposals have been in a minority, even amongst those directly affected);
- Getting feedback on the type and location of housing preferred by residents;
- Exploring any special needs that residents may have and additional service support that might be required during the delivery of the programme.

This very labour intensive process is therefore not only supporting the wider communication process, but has helped to complement other initiatives, such as a vulnerable needs survey. The home visits, combined with the systematic approach taken to each, is providing household-level data on service needs, including any special needs, that can be used to brief service providers with more accurate forecasts of future service need at different points during the programme.

It is intended that the home visits process will be repeated again before Renew's main physical programme begins.

## Liaison/management of Residents' Friend service

The NMP has joint project management responsibility along with Stoke Citizens Advice Bureau for the delivery of a Residents' Friend service in the Knutton Cross Heath area. This service is being provided across the four Renew AMIs by Stoke Citizens Advice Bureau.

The post of Residents' Friend was filled on 1<sup>st</sup> June and is an independent advocate working in the neighbourhood to resolve any issues that may arise and provide advice to local residents. Plans are being put in place by the NMP, Aspire and CAB to offer the Residents' Friend service to local residents via home visits and on an ongoing basis through a series of weekly local clinics. The project will be reviewed regularly by the NMP.

## Service provider liaison

The NMP has identified 27 different service providers – ranging from individual schools and voluntary sector organisations to Staffordshire police – to which it is offering one to one briefings on the Renew programme and its implications for them. This will be a rolling service which will focus on different issues depending on the stage of the Renew programme.

Given the nature and location of the upheaval there is a strong focus on health and social care services and on education. In addition to general overview on the programme, the meetings provide an opportunity to discuss the specific needs that specific households might face (e.g. the elderly, children at risk, problem families), the types of services that will need to be provided, and how it might be possible to address certain ongoing problems (e.g. anti-social behaviour) – rather than simply move them – as part of the relocation process.

Attention is also being given to strategic planning issues. In relation to health, the NMP is supporting this process beyond its Renew-funded staff through its Deputy Neighbourhood Manager who is seconded one day a week to the PCT support issues relating to public health service planning. Particular effort is also being given to contact with schools and the LEA, because the demolition and new build programme is likely to affect school rolls as families move around. There is a particular concern that service providers such as schools and primary care facilities provide appropriate continuity of service during *and after* the programme, so that services are at appropriate levels post-renewal. There are also opportunities, such as with the Government's PFI programme for health facilities (LIFT) and with initiatives such as extended schools, to engage on issues regarding the location of new facilities and the services they might deliver. For example, the NMP Renew team have engaged with LIFT and will help to facilitate the consultation process for the new health facility.

As part of the NMP's ongoing activity, there is also a drive to significantly improve the income and employment status of local residents by helping them to take much greater advantage of the large numbers of employment opportunities at adjacent Lymedale Park. The NMP, as part of its general activities, is engaging with Job Centre Plus, Newcastle College and other service providers to facilitate this process.

## Key Issues

Some of the key factors that have assisted the NMP in this work are:

- The NMP's local base (initially in Lower Milehouse, now in Knutton);
- Its positive track record of delivery in the area;
- A bond of trust that had been developed with many local people, assisted greatly by continuity of the NMP team over several years;
- The recruitment of additional staff with skills and personalities well-suited for the job – a housing officer background in one case, and community development in the other, both full of energy and not afraid to get out and about and discuss issues with local people.

There have been few difficulties and tensions which have hindered or detracted from the effort to date. Perhaps the only significant issue reported during the case study research was the difficulty of securing buy-in to the Renew process from some locally elected representatives, with the relationship reported to have been quite antagonistic at times. Our interpretation is that the timing of the most significant difficulties, around the 2005 General Election and County Council elections, was not a coincidence. However, there is a widespread view that the problems also reflect a more general disquiet at the role of new initiatives which sit outside local government service delivery – such as the LSP, the NMP and its Community Forum, and now Renew – and how these fit with the traditional role of local Councillors. This is a classic, modern-day tension which has been debated at various levels, including the LSP and the Borough Council. For its part, the NMP Team has continued to have discussions directly with local Councillors about NMP activities and the Renew programme through its Local Councillor Working Group. The NMP is also now invited to attend more formal lunchtime briefings for all Borough Councillors. There have also been regular Renew briefings specifically for Councillors. However, the issues encountered in this process suggest that even more needs to be done to work with Local Councillors to brief them on new initiatives at a very early stage and then provide regular, detailed updates on progress.

## **(4) Evidence of Results**

The NMP's support for the Renew programme, through communication and community and service provider engagement has been running for less than a year, so it is still too early to judge the ultimate effectiveness of the full range of support provided. However, a critical programme development stage (the masterplanning process) has been completed, and some results are already clear.

### **Impact on mainstream service providers' behaviour in improved services**

In the context of the Renew programme, the NMP is seeking to improve and reshape public services for local residents and to ensure minimal disruption throughout the programme. The NMP has:

- Identified a target list of key service providers, and developed a systematic process for briefing them on the nature, timing and scale of the Renew programme and the implications of the programme for service delivery;
- Gathered data through home visits and other feedback from local residents, on the critical support services (particularly social services and housing) for individual households. This will prove invaluable in pin-pointing and forecasting service requirements once the Renew programme gets underway;
- Started to engage with services such as health, social services and education on longer term service planning that takes into account the likely population movements and demographic changes the area will experience during and after the Renew programme;
- Engaged key service providers in the masterplanning process, by tapping into its network of contacts and inviting them to attend masterplanning events. It has also sought to influence the ways in which certain service providers – those with key roles to play in the provision of new or enhanced facilities in the area – engage with local residents in consulting upon and shaping future service provision.

This process is still at an early stage. It was always intended that this aspect of the NMP's work would "ratchet up" once the Renew proposals had taken shape and the future delivery programme was clear. The key building blocks are now in place to enable this to happen.

### **Capacity for sustainable renewal**

The NMP is seeking to ensure that appropriate communications and consultation pathways are maintained at all stages throughout the delivery programme with key service providers and stakeholders. It is also helping to provide advice, examples of good practice and support for the development of the neighbourhood management approach throughout the Renew programme across North Staffordshire.

The Renew-funded activity has enabled the NMP to:

- Make available to the process existing NMP mechanisms for consultation and engagement (the NMP Board, Community Forum and Theme Groups)

- Try new and innovative ways of engagement with residents and service providers, and – in the case of the masterplanning process – seek feedback on the effectiveness of the engagement mechanisms used
- Improve the operational capacity of the NMP team, providing it with the resources to engage at a deep and practical level with individual households and service providers
- Begin discussions about how the neighbourhood management approach might be applied in different ways beyond the AMI, in other parts of the Borough
- Share experiences, both good and bad, with neighbouring Stoke City Council which is leading on the delivery of Renew's programme in three other AMIs and adopting neighbourhood management approaches there.

These achievements have built on the existing NMP team's capacity and are being secured through time-limited Renew funding. A number of factors will influence whether they are advanced further and whether the neighbourhood management approach is embedded in the fabric of local service provision. These factors include the availability of mainstream funding to support neighbourhood management. Newcastle under Lyme does not benefit from Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, is not a pilot for Local Area Agreements, and is not eligible for the neighbourhood element of the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund. The budget constraints of such local authorities, combined with increasingly capital-focused programmes such as the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders, present challenges for funding the kinds of capacity building support such as that being provided by the NMP.

Another issue, which is particularly relevant in sub-regional initiatives cutting across different local authorities, and where two-tier authorities are operating, is that neighbourhood management as a concept is still new (less than five years old) and is still viewed as being in the experimental stage. There remain a variety of different interpretations of what neighbourhood management is and how it should work in practice. The Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder programme has provided new opportunities to deliver neighbourhood management in a variety of different contexts. However, in a pressured environment where the focus is on delivery of existing initiatives, time and energy needs to be devoted to learning, debate and reaching agreement about the future of neighbourhood management at the local level.

## **Impact on community involvement in decision-making about services**

At this stage in the Renewal programme, the NMP's primary objective has been to ensure that residents affected by the programme are given the opportunity to participate in the process and that their views and needs are taken into account. This aspect of the NMP's Renew work has clearly been a success to date. The NMP has:

- Made strenuous efforts to engage the local community, far beyond those normally undertaken in consultation exercises, including hand delivery of information and invitations to participate in events;
- Successfully harnessed the active engagement of over 800 individuals in helping to masterplan their neighbourhood;
- Influenced the consultation process to maximise turn-out, for example by facilitating events in different parts of the neighbourhood on a regular basis;

- Sought out hard-to-reach groups, by working with Aspire to offer home visits to all 500 households likely to be directly affected by the Renew programme, and by engaging with children and young people;
- Begun to work on longer-term mechanisms for engagement, including a regular newsletter and a website that encourages interaction, rather than simply giving information.

The engagement efforts in Knutton and Cross Heath have gone considerably beyond those normally associated with typical masterplanning activity. Feedback from our consultees suggests that they have paid dividends both in terms of the level of engagement, and the high level of support offered for the market renewal programme.

## Impact on the neighbourhood

The intervention discussed in this case study is part of a long-term process of change which is still in its earliest stages. The environmental, social and economic impact on the neighbourhood will not emerge for a number of years. There is no quantitative evidence at this stage on softer outcomes, such as residents' confidence in the future and attitudes to living in the area. However, our expectation would be that the intensity of the processes adopted by the NMP in the last six months, and the generally positive response from local residents, will already have brought about a positive change in local attitudes. A key task for the NMP will be to maintain and capitalise on this goodwill as the process unfolds.

## **(5) Conclusions**

### **Effectiveness**

The Knutton Cross Heath NMP has taken on the task of leading the communication process and of engaging residents and service providers as part of Renew North Staffs' programme of housing market renewal. It is early days in the process, but feedback to date suggests that the neighbourhood management approach has:

- added value to a complex renewal task by drawing on the NMP's deep understanding of the local area, its residents, the problems they face and their aspirations for the future;
- been highly effective in mobilising interest from, and engaging, local residents in the future of their area;
- allowed the market renewal programme to gain the trust of local people more quickly than would otherwise have been the case;
- enabled rapid identification of key service providers whose input is likely to be critical to the success of the Renew programme;
- captured valuable information on the needs and aspirations of those likely to be most affected by the programme through an intensive process of home visits.

### **Factors helping and hindering effectiveness**

The key factors that have assisted the process in this case include the fact that an existing neighbourhood management team was already in place, based in the area and having established its credibility with local people and many of the key service providers. Combined with a robust management structure and clear roles and responsibilities for the Renew programme, this enabled the market renewal programme to undertake its early planning phase more effectively and efficiently than would otherwise have been the case.

There have been very few obstacles encountered in the process so far. The only noteworthy problem has been the difficulty of securing positive engagement from local politicians. This was not helped by the masterplanning process occurring in the run-up to elections, but nevertheless raises an important issue about the need to ensure that effective mechanisms are established to engage local Councillors and MPs throughout a long-term process of change which is being driven by an initiative outside local authority control.

### **Lessons**

The key lessons we draw from this case study could be applied to a number of regeneration contexts, even though they have been drawn from this examination of only one aspect of a housing market renewal programme:

- "virtual teams" operating across several existing organisations can work effectively, provided there is a shared vision, a clear programme of action, clear roles and responsibilities, good management and reporting structures and regular communication;

- building trust with local communities takes time. Harnessing the skills and knowledge of organisations that have already built that trust can save time and avoid pitfalls;
- it is important to try to co-ordinate different consultation events for different purposes – e.g. a masterplanning consultation process might be done in conjunction with a statutory planning process (e.g. consultation on an Area Action Plan);
- hand delivering invitations to events and key documents may be time consuming, but it raises the programme's profile, shows a serious intent to engage with local residents, and ensures that everyone has been given an opportunity to get involved;
- attendance at consultation and other events can be enhanced if they are made accessible, e.g. by putting on events in different parts of an area, and/or by laying on transport for those living beyond reasonable walking distance from the venue;
- speaking directly to those whose homes and quality of life may be affected by a regeneration programme can be a valuable part of the communication process, but it needs to be done systematically and offered comprehensively with a clear brief to gather and then record as much useful information in the process;
- residents may want to get involved in the process in different ways (e.g. website design) and feedback can come from different forms of engagement (e.g. young peoples' video diaries, home visits to the elderly);
- after an intensive process of community engagement, it is important to ask those who participated what they thought about it and how it could be done better next time;
- some service providers may be reluctant to engage if they think that change is a long way off or not relevant to them. It is important that careful consideration is given to how and when the programme might place different demands on their service before they are approached. As with resident engagement, a systematic approach is needed.

# Case Study 1: Annex

## Key background documents

The following key documents were used in the preparation of this report:

- Renew North Staffs “Knutton Cross Heath and Lower Milehouse – Questions & Answers”;
- Knutton Cross Heath NMP “Year 3 Achievements, 2004-2005”;
- Knutton Cross Heath NMP “Year 4 Delivery Plan, 2005-2006 and beyond”;
- Knutton Cross Heath NMP Background Data Report, December 2004;
- Knutton Cross Heath AMI Update reports;
- NMP reports to the AMI Steering Group;
- AMI Steering Group minutes;
- NMP risk map for Renew activities;
- Renew organisational and team structure plans.

# Annex 2

## Case Study 2

### Housing Renewal

#### **Poulton Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Lancaster City Council**

##### **Summary**

- This case study investigates the rationale for, and resulting impact of, Lancaster City Council's decision to delegate authority for handling its housing capital programme for Poulton Renewal Area to the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder. In order to avoid housing issues taking up a lot of Board time, Strategic Housing and Poulton Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder agreed to set up a Housing and Built Environment Sub-Group of the Board comprising local councillors, residents' representatives and relevant officers. HBESG was granted responsibility for allocating housing grants, capital priorities and decide where Housing Associations should play a role in refurbishing the more run-down residential properties. It also assumed responsibility for other funding regimes such as the Home Zone and Townscape Heritage Initiative which presented an opportunity for SH and partners to maximise synergy through combining programmes and interventions.
- This experiment in delegation has persuaded Lancaster City Council's Strategic Housing Department of the virtue of:
  - becoming closely engaged in multi-disciplinary, locally accountable, local partnerships;
  - adopting a participative style;
  - presenting policy options to partners and the local community and being prepared to adopt a flexible approach;
  - shifting its focus from remedying unfitness to investing in priority areas in order to improve community confidence and the prospects for achieving wider regeneration;
  - dovetailing its expenditure programme with other regeneration funding regimes.
- The study has also shown the importance of housing organisations being assessed in terms of how effectively they contribute to wider regeneration as well as narrower criteria – in this instance, unfitness of accommodation.

## **(1) Aims, Objectives & Rationale**

The main purpose of this case study is to investigate the rationale underlying Lancaster City Council's decision to delegate authority for handling its housing capital programme for Poulton Renewal Area to the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, how this has subsequently been handled and with what results.

The challenge facing both Neighbourhood Management and Strategic Housing has been how best to persuade both homeowners and businesses to invest in an area which has witnessed economic decline, increasing numbers of unfit properties (often because landlords have neglected their properties) and high population turnover owing to the relatively large number of houses in multiple occupation, many of which have been rented out to those dependent on benefit. Preparatory groundwork undertaken both for the Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment prior to designation of the Renewal Area and also the preparation of the Delivery Plan confirmed that poor housing conditions, especially in the private rented stock, were adversely affecting quality of life and destabilising the community.

The approach subsequently adopted by the Strategic Housing (SH) Department in conjunction with Poulton Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder (PNMP) has recently received recognition at the National Neighbourhood Management Awards 2004. SH were adjudged the Best Supporting Organisation by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and praised for the outstanding quality of their work and contribution to Neighbourhood Management.

## **(2) The Neighbourhood**

Poulton Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder has been operational since March 2001. Initial consultative and developmental work was conducted by a team of part-time secondees and consultants. A Neighbourhood Manager was appointed in May, 2002 and he, along with a team of four, established a dedicated base in a town centre shopping arcade, opposite the Strategic Housing office. The work of the Pathfinder is overseen by a constituted Board of four residents' representatives (elected by the Poulton Residents' Association), six public sector organisations and two nominees each from community groups, the voluntary sector and the business sector. The Board is supported by a series of thematic sub-groups, including a Housing and Built Environment Sub-Group (HBESG), a public sector forum and an appraisal panel. In the first three years, the Pathfinder prioritised improvements to the physical environment, supporting vulnerable members of the community and promoting neighbourhood cohesion but has recently sought to place more emphasis on tackling education and training, worklessness and health issues.

The designated area, Poulton, was originally a fishing village and now comprises the historic core of the seaside resort of Morecambe. It includes most of Morecambe town centre and a substantial slice of its inner residential areas and has a population of about 5,800. It contains associated functions such as hotels and guest houses, retail and other facilities. The core area is surrounded by mainly 2, 3 and 4 storey pre-1919 terraced housing, some of which is dilapidated, while further afield there are inter-war semi-detached properties. 60% of the stock is owner occupied and most of the remainder private rented. Decline of the tourism industry over a prolonged period has resulted in relatively high levels of outmigration, unemployment, economic inactivity and poverty. The skill base is poor due to the prevalence of low-skilled jobs, seasonal work and long-term unemployment. Poulton is ranked in the top 10% wards overall on the Index of Multiple Deprivation and the top 5% wards for poor health and

unemployment. It contains a mix of mainly longstanding middle aged and elderly residents but also young people with limited disposable income, often originating from outside the area. The latter have tended to move into private rented, multi-occupied housing which was formerly holiday accommodation. The BME population is very small (1.8%) but the number of migrant workers has recently been edging upwards. Despite its problems, Poulton has its strengths such as an attractive coastal location, ornithological interest, variety of facilities and many residents' strong attachment to the town.

### **(3) The Process**

#### **Key Players and Structures – Who?**

The City Council's Strategic Housing (SH) department's decision to set up a Renewal Area and dedicate a substantial portion of its capital programme to such ends, meant that it was logical for SH to engage closely with PNMP and this in turn made it a key partner for the latter. In April, 2002, PNMP and Strategic Housing entered into a service level agreement detailing wide-ranging shared objectives which embraced the reduction of sub-standard housing conditions, promoting home ownership, improving the environment, supporting vulnerable residents, improving community safety and a commitment to community involvement and joint working. The agreement also specified which services Strategic Housing would provide (meeting housing needs, support and advice to private landlords and tenants, support for adaptations and grant assistance for home improvements), quantitative and qualitative performance measures and mutual obligations concerning dialogue, consultation, community engagement and Best Value principles.

The main vehicle for SH to engage with other relevant parties has been the Housing and Built Environment Sub-Group (HBESG) of the Board of Poulton Neighbourhood Management. HBESG was set up in January 2003 in order to avoid housing issues taking up a lot of Board time, on the understanding that its recommendations would go to the Board for ratification. SH had concluded on the basis of past experience and also Government advice that greater community ownership of its capital programme would offer advantages to all parties. Residents and councillors would be able to make a greater input into decision making and from SH's perspective the arrangement offered a local mechanism for co-ordinating different forms of housing intervention and achieving greater local accountability, legitimacy and credibility. SH had found that deployment of Renewal Area grants in another part of Morecambe on an individual needs-driven, technocratic basis had resulted in pepperpotting and community objections and dissatisfaction about the way resources had been allocated. Neighbourhood Management offered SH scope for greater community engagement. SH gave HBESG responsibility to discuss allocation of housing grants, capital priorities and the role of Housing Associations in refurbishing the more run-down residential properties. HBESG (and the PNMP Board) were also handed the responsibility for agreeing Home Zone proposals and administering the £3m Townscape Heritage Initiative (which funds the restoration of historic buildings, artefacts and shop-fronts within the recently extended Conservation Area). This presented an opportunity for SH and partners to combine programmes and interventions to achieve maximum synergy under the aegis of NMP. Reflecting its range of responsibilities, HBESG comprises two local councillors, two residents' representatives, officers from the Neighbourhood Management Team and a number of relevant city council departments (strategic housing, regeneration, planning, engineering) and the county council (environment). Many of the officers, including those from SH, also attend a Home Zone Working Group which feeds its proposals through to HBESG.

## Activities – How?

One of the initial context-setting moves was the NMP Board's endorsement of a Physical Development Plan for Poulton which mapped all the areas for treatment (e.g. priority areas for investment, opportunities for environmental improvement, vehicle and pedestrian movement proposals) and provided a useful overarching framework for developmental organisations including SH. NMP also contributed to the cost of a housing stock condition survey which subsequently provided HBESG with useful technical data about need and helped it to decide which areas to prioritise for investment. HBESG has taken forward implementation by co-ordinating the following main programmes:

*Home Zone* – this regeneration initiative has involved a major re-shaping of the local streetscape and incorporated additional car parking for residents, new streetlights and bollards, re-surfacing, traffic calming and provision of a mural. Design work has been to a high standard through use of sympathetic materials, local landmarks and symbols. Orchestration of interventions through HBESG has enabled the community to make an input to designs and SH involvement has helped ensure that this part of Morecambe has been made more attractive to first time buyers through provision of more resident-only car parking and discouraging through traffic and car parking by non-residents. The £1m, four year, scheme has been jointly funded by DoT Challenge Fund, Lancashire County and City Councils. PNMP has complemented the programme by commissioning design work for improvements to a public square in the heart of the zone and also sculpture on traffic islands. Community representatives on HBESG had a major say in the selection of a suitable contractor who subsequently completed the work to a very high standard, on schedule and showed a lot of consideration to local residents disrupted by the work. An end of scheme survey achieved an 80% response rate and revealed a high level of satisfaction with the improvements. Both design consultants (Capita Symonds) and contractors (Cumbrian Industrial) have received rewards for the quality of their work (Local Government New Street Design Award and Home Zone National Award, respectively).

*Housing Improvement Grants* – this grant scheme has been designed to encourage householders to improve their properties. As a direct result of HBESG discussions and both local councillors and resident representatives' input, SH has adopted the policy of concentrating investment in three distinct priority areas and also favouring group repair schemes as distinct from refurbishing individual properties in order to maximise visual impact and the prospects of inducing home owners in the vicinity to invest in their property. Such prioritisation has also enabled different funding programmes to be combined to best effect.

*Bespoke Housing Grants* – a grant scheme requiring applicants to carry out specified improvements in order to be eligible for grant. This has been used as a tool for converting properties from multi to single occupation through the removal of rear annexes in order to shift the balance in favour of family accommodation. Discussion of such applications within HBESG has provided extremely useful where compromises have had to have been reached concerning award of grant (e.g. exceptional cases where a grant to a landlord has been considered worthwhile to achieve improvement to a block of dwellings).

*Townscape Heritage Initiative* – a £3m scheme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund which has sought to restore buildings in keeping with their historical context and has focussed on the Morecambe Conservation Area, designated in June, 2003. The boundary of the NM pathfinder was deliberately extended to incorporate all of the Conservation Area so that THI could be integrated with other regeneration programmes. THI has comprised a number of elements including grant aid for:

- the restoration of a major hotel (Midland) and other key historic buildings;
- ensuring that housing renewal is undertaken to a sufficiently high standard;
- a townscape improvements scheme entailing facelifts to shopfronts.

The PNMP Board has acted as the oversight body for THI in order to strengthen community involvement and ownership which is an HLF requirement. This has again enabled different funding streams to be combined to maximum impact and led to important debates about the compatibility of HLF conservation policies and local circumstances and revision of grant limits to encourage take-up.

*Neighbourhood Management Capital Investment* – these relatively small contributions have sought to supply top ups and missing ingredients in order to maximise the impact of collective interventions. For example, NM has funded bollards with locally designed crests and also artwork on islands to add to the HZ's character and complement public realm improvements elsewhere in Morecambe. Such funding has also enabled SH and partners to deploy funds to provide match for external funds without leaving gaps elsewhere.

*Housing Association Partner Approved Development Programme* – Housing Corporation funding has been used to remodel and convert multi-occupied large terraced housing into quality, affordable family homes using shared ownership.

Discussions between SH, other regeneration partners, local councillors and community representatives have progressed from the strategic to the micro-level. Initially, HBESG debated types of intervention, then moved to discussing which areas should be targeted with resources and finally which properties should be improved. This also enabled residents to become acquainted with the technical and other issues at a manageable pace and steadily increase their level of involvement.

## Key Issues

Factors that have helped HBESG to function effectively have included:

- SH's willingness to move away from presenting proposals for resident approval as has been typical in the past to giving options and technical advice on what appears to be the best course of action and leaving decision making to HBESG members and the NMP Board;
- the commitment of community representatives to attend regularly, gain understanding of technical issues, report HBESG decisions back to Poulton Residents Association and other local groupings and residents and explain the underlying reasoning;

- the NM Team consciously adopting informal ways of capacity building residents by providing pre- and post-meeting briefings which has enabled them to actively participate in HBESG and provide informed feedback to the Residents' Association and other local groups and individuals;
- the way in which it has acted as a forum for parties to raise and subsequently resolve issues – for example, SH drew attention to how the additional cost of carrying out improvements to a higher THI specification was restricting take-up of housing renewal grants which resulted in Planners and HLF agreeing to cover the deficit and consequently higher take-up.

On the other hand, HBESG has encountered some hindrances:

- its discretion has been curtailed by HLF rigidly applying rules governing use of THI funds and not adapting them to suit local circumstances;
- the low take-up of THI grant for shopfront improvements on the grounds of the cost of the work and wish to incorporate features that disqualify applicants from receiving any grant (e.g. external roller shutters) and the inability to use housing and NM funding for this purpose has restricted the degree to which the programme has complemented other regeneration funding programmes;
- arguably, more could have been done by the agencies involved to address resulting affordability and take-up issues.

## **(4) Evidence of Results**

The impact of SH devolving responsibility for capital spend to HBESG and the PNMP Board is considered under four main headings:

- impact on mainstream service providers' behaviour in improved services;
- capacity for sustainable renewal;
- impact on community involvement in decision-making about services;
- impact on the neighbourhood.

### **Impact on mainstream service providers' behaviour in improved services**

HBESG has changed SH's implementation plans in a number of instances and examples include:

- persuading SH to take the brave decision of majoring on making the area look better in order to lever further private investment rather than remedying the unfitness of individual properties which is one of the key criterion on which Government judges individual housing authorities via its Best Value Performance Indicators and is hence a priority with local members;
- related to the previous point, SH have prioritised block improvements rather than funding home-owners on an individual basis;

- the proposed pedestrianisation of a street did not go ahead because of the weight of local opposition from councillors and community representatives;
- HBESG have given a mandate to SH to make exceptions to policy such as funding improvements to property owned by private landlords in order to achieve wider regeneration;
- Local authority planners serving on HBESG have sought to respond to local businesses' and homeowners' difficulty in affording high-quality improvements by increasing the THI grant ceiling from £20-40k in an attempt to boost take-up.

HBESG discussions have also highlighted where externally defined policy rules do not necessarily suit local circumstances. A prime example has been English Heritage/HLF's insistence that wooden sash windows are installed despite their impracticality given seaside weather conditions (e.g. wind, salt spray).

SH are seeking to apply the lessons learnt in Poulton to the West End of Morecambe which is currently the subject of a Master Plan and extensive housing renewal and wider regeneration. They are setting up a working group with a similar composition to HBESG there to ensure local ownership and involvement in the implementation of the Master Plan.

From a resource viewpoint, the existence of PNPM and HBESG has had mixed but mainly positive effects. SH officers believe that such locally accountable structures were critical to the success of the Home Zone bid. The ability to deploy housing resources alongside other funding streams strengthened officers' case for the city council to concentrate housing renewal resources in Poulton. Inviting the Cabinet member for Housing to join the PNMP Board also helped in this regard. Offsetting these advantages to some degree, there have been instances where PNMP have supported housing projects which do not appear to be that dissimilar to borough-wide schemes or have made comparatively generous contributions to wider surveys (e.g. stock condition survey) which suggests there has been a degree of substitution.

HBESG has also proved an effective vehicle for joint working and the co-ordination of key services, which has saved time and transaction costs. PNMP structures have enabled Strategic Housing to forge closer links with other service providers and to combine funding streams. For example, combining THI and Housing Capital resources is permitting more comprehensive treatment of mixed-use areas incorporating shop-fronts and houses. HBESG has also proved an effective means for partners to align their actions with HBESG priorities – for example, HBESG has delineated the three priority areas which will receive the lion's share of SH and other regeneration funding

Finally, PNMP promotional activities (e.g. Poulton Community Times) have increased awareness and take-up of housing services.

## Capacity for sustainable renewal

HBESG has proved a valuable forum for discussion in the sense that it has:

- sensitised service providers to local feelings and preferences and provided a valuable sounding board for both delivery agencies and residents to test their ideas;
- enabled decisions to be taken relating to housing policy which are strategically right and in the long term interest of Poulton, though not always popular with individual households who have missed out as a result;
- provided a clear context and frame of reference for SH and other regeneration organisations to work within;
- provided the means for co-ordinating and delivering all capital and housing regeneration programmes and subjecting them to local scrutiny, hence ensuring democratic accountability and local ownership of interventions and boosting their legitimacy.

Poulton NMP has recently been invited by the Lancaster LSP to share good practice on housing and other matters and it has already supplied a variety of services to the West End Partnership such as logo and web-design and advice on community consultation techniques. Such links are set to further strengthen in view of the fact that the forthcoming Local Area Agreement contains a neighbourhood management element which will apply to the West End as well as Poulton.

Because of the success of HBESG in taking forward and co-ordinating a range of capital housing and regeneration programmes, PNMP has recently established Poulton Environment Sub-Group to achieve the same ends in respect of interventions dealing with waste management, street cleansing and the green environment. It has a similar mix of community representatives, councillors and service providers.

## Impact on community involvement in decision-making about services

Resident involvement in HBESG has had the following benefits:

- community representatives' knowledge of regeneration programmes has increased and there is better understanding and awareness of the financial and technical aspects of housing renewal, the constraints facing delivery agencies and the reasoning governing difficult decisions regarding allocation of resources;
- community representatives on HBESG have grown in confidence and become an effective channel both for relaying local concerns to SH and other service providers and also providing feedback on proposals and communicating reasons for particular decisions to residents;
- community trust in the partner organisations involved has increased since NMP is seen as a local organisation working in the interests of Poulton – community representatives tend to be believed whereas that it is not always the case with officers and politicians which is partly due to local antipathy and mistrust towards organisations based outside Morecambe given the town's loss of political status in the past and the perceived dominance of Lancaster.

While only limited numbers of local residents have been directly involved in managing the Housing Capital Programme (two community representatives on HBESG and four on the Board), it is important to note that Poulton Residents Association (PRA) meetings have been increasingly well attended since the Pathfinder begun operations and now attract up to 40 residents. PNMP has also engaged residents in other ways (e.g. project consultation meetings, Planning for Real exercises).

## Impact on the neighbourhood

Officers, politicians and community representatives interviewed all thought that the delegation of power to HBESG and the PNMP Board had boosted local ownership of the improvements and confidence in both the area and service providers. A recent Housing Needs Survey has confirmed that both PNMP and SH have prioritised issues such as fear of crime and housing and environmental conditions which have the greatest bearing on how Poulton residents feel about their neighbourhood. However, interviewees found it difficult to distinguish the impact on the neighbourhood of channelling decisions via HBESG from other factors. These included channelling of a series of regeneration funds into an area with low house prices, the creation of a better managed, more attractive, street environment, better inter-agency working and well-orchestrated housing renewal. Interviewees felt that available evidence concerning increases in local house prices relative to the borough-wide and regional average and growing community confidence chimed with their own perceptions of how the area had improved (see box). Owner occupation has increased 6.5 percentage points in the period 2002-4 which is a considerable increase in a relatively short space of time. However, such indicators are not available on a sufficiently fine-grained basis to be able to disentangle different types of cause and effect.

## Relevant housing and environment trend statistics

- House prices in Poulton converged from 57% to 73% of the regional average in the period July 2001-June 2004 and the comparable figures for terraced stock (which has witnessed the most intervention) were 73% and 99%;
- In 2002, 60% of housing was owner occupied and 30% private rented whereas in 2004 the percentage owner occupied had increased to 66.5% and the percentage private rented had dropped to 22.5%;
- 50.4% of dwellings were unfit or defective in 2001 and by March 2004 this figure had fallen to 31.8%;
- In a residents' survey conducted in 2004, 80% respondents felt that it is improving whereas in the 1999 NRA survey, only 10.6% of residents respondents felt that Poulton had improved in recent years and 66% felt it had got worse;
- 70% of respondents indicated that they felt better about Poulton in the 2004 survey;
- 45% of residents were generally satisfied with Poulton as a place to live in October 2002 and this percentage increased to 57% in March 2004 (Fear of Crime Survey).

## (5) Conclusions

For the most part, Lancaster City Council's decision to devolve responsibility for allocating its Poulton Renewal Area capital budget to Poulton Neighbourhood Management has proved a success in terms of securing greater community involvement in decision-making and ownership of proposals and co-ordinating different regeneration funding streams. The approach adopted is being replicated elsewhere in the borough. SH have allowed community representatives increased scope to shape policy beginning with strategic matters and progressing to technical detail and shown a willingness to adapt policies in the light of their views. The NMP Team, meanwhile, has acted in an enabling capacity by providing informal support to the residents involved.

The main sticking point has been that the rules governing use of certain funding regimes, notably the Townscape Heritage Initiative have proved unduly rigid which has meant that the scope to adapt them to local circumstances has been limited. This case study highlights a clash between regeneration and conservation policy which urgently needs to be resolved if areas like Morecambe are once again to become attractive investment locations. The rigid way that THI is administered seems to run contrary to English Heritage/HLF's stated desire to increase community ownership of the programme and wish to see it delivered via a locally accountable partnership.

### Lessons

This experiment in delegation has persuaded Strategic Housing of the virtue of:

- targeting investment in priority areas in order to boost wider confidence, pride and investment rather than on remedying the unfitness of individual properties;
- adopting a participative style;
- presenting policy options and being prepared to adopt a flexible approach;
- becoming closely engaged in multi-disciplinary, locally accountable, local partnerships;
- dovetailing its expenditure programme with other regeneration funding regimes.

The study has also shown the importance of housing organisations being assessed in terms of how effectively they contribute to wider regeneration as well as narrower criteria – in this instance, unfitness of accommodation.

## Case Study 2: Annex

### Key background documents

The following key documents were used in the preparation of this report:

- Poulton Neighbourhood Management Delivery Plan 2004-5, 2005-6;
- Best Supporting Organisation Award submission to Neighbourhood Renewal Unit;
- Lancaster Strategic Housing/Poulton Neighbourhood Management Service Commitment Agreement, 2002-5;
- Private Sector Housing Renewal Assistance Policy 2004/5. Health & Strategic Housing Services;
- Morecambe Housing Stock Condition Survey;
- Securing Homes Lancaster City Council Housing Strategy 2002-6;
- Performance Management Report and Improvement Plan 2003/4;
- Minutes of Board and Built Environment Working Group meetings;
- Poulton Community Times articles.

# Annex 3

## Case Study 3

### Renewal of the Private Rented Sector

#### Springbourne and Boscombe West Bournemouth Borough Council

##### Summary

- This case study looks at how the NMP is working with private sector landlords to improve the provision of rented accommodation in the NM area. A key aspect of this work is the role of the Street Improvement Co-ordinator, whose job is additional to existing Bournemouth Borough Council activities and works with private landlords on strategies to improve the private rented housing stock through incentive and persuasion. She works closely with a new LA-NMP post, the Private Sector Housing Officer. They work together with and are supported by the NMP's Housing Group, Tenants' Group and Board and Planning Group to develop effective approaches to improving private housing conditions. Significant impact has been achieved on the number of eyesores and disrepairs in private rented housing stock since 2004.
- These groups and activities have improved communication and understanding between private landlords, Local Authority departments, tenants and voluntary sector organisations. The 'carrot' rather than 'stick' approach to working with private landlords has proved effective, although there is a clear determination that Environmental Health must act quickly when landlords do not respond to more informal encouragement. These activities have helped to develop a more joined up approach to housing in the NM area, but there is still room for improvement and for a more area-based approach in the Local Authority.

## (1) Aims, Objectives & Rationale

The initiative which this study considers is not a single project but an area of the Pathfinder's work, and one of its two key priorities for 2003-4. Housing was seen to be at the root of many other problems in the NM area. General aims of activities under the housing theme are to achieve:

- better housing standards for all;
- an improved environment with a clean, positive and welcoming image.

With housing identified as a key issue, the Pathfinder funded a survey of the external conditions of rented housing in the NM area in 2003, which revealed serious issues in the standards and upkeep of private rented accommodation and especially HMOs which represent 37.3% of housing stock in the area compared to 17.5% in Bournemouth as a whole, and 4.4% nationally (2001 Census), and also brought up associated issues relating to crime. Following the completion of the Housing Survey, which established the number of properties in disrepair, the number of eyesores and the extent of poor management within the HMO stock, a strategy was agreed which included:

- The appointment of a Street Improvement Co-ordinator to encourage voluntary improvements to private sector housing and take-up of grants, where the LA has no enforcement powers;
- Leverage funding to enhance the local authority's HMO enforcement team;
- Planning issues relating to density and tenure mix;
- A service agreement (Second Year Evaluation Report).

The Street Improvement Co-ordinator was recruited in January 2004 and the post runs to March 2006. The nature of the Street Improvement Co-ordinator's (SIC) role is additional to existing public service provision. The post is fixed term and unlikely to be mainstreamed since it is additional, and involves applying 'moral pressure' to landlords to improve their properties, something that lies outside the remit of the Local Authority. The NM is currently negotiating with the LA to transfer the post in-house, perhaps rolled out as a borough-wide remit.

The SIC post is two-fold. It looks at environmental issues such as street cleansing and fly-tipping, and also on the external standards of the rented housing stock such as eyesores and disrepairs. The remit therefore looks at the broader picture of housing in terms of well-being (e.g. Boscombe and Springbourne in Bloom). An additional Environmental Health Enforcement post has been created for the NM area, renamed Private Sector Housing Officer for better working relations with clients. This person works 2/5 days out of the NM office. The post is also fixed term, for 2 years. There is a possibility that it will then be mainstreamed with a remit for the whole Borough. The two posts work together to address this issues around improving conditions in private rented accommodation.

## (2) The Neighbourhood

Springbourne and Boscombe West NMP was established in 2003. It is a strong Pathfinder with a well established Board with a majority of elected residents (8), service providers and seconded representatives. The NM team is fairly small and cohesive. The Pathfinder has achieved strong community involvement in local service planning and consultation through several forums; the Tenants' Forum, the 50+ Forum, Traders' Forum and Youth Forum. It also has a strong and well-regarded Groundworkers' Forum which brings frontline workers together on a regular basis. The Pathfinder has focused on mainstreaming and added value from early on and appears to be influencing the local authority. The Neighbourhood Manager is imminently moving to take up the post of Head of Strategic Services at Bournemouth Borough Council, which one respondent described as 'the best way of mainstreaming Neighbourhood Management'.

The Boscombe West and Springbourne neighbourhoods together make up the NM area, which stretches from the close to the centre of the town west, and meets the sea in the south. The resident population of the NM area is 18,406 (all figures taken from the 2001 census). 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. There are more people employed in hotels and catering than in the borough as a whole, and more people employed in financial intermediation than nationally. Within the borough it is one of the more ethnically diverse areas. Boscombe is home to a number of drugs rehabilitation clinics and has a significant resident community in recovery.

The housing tenure mix is significant, with a lower proportion of owner occupiers (50.8%) than in Bournemouth (69.5%) or nationally (68.9%) and a vastly larger private rented sector of 39.2% compared to 20% in Bournemouth and 11.9% nationally. The majority of accommodation is either purpose built, converted flats or bed-sits. There is not a significant RSL presence in the area but private landlords are a crucial provider. The percentage of overcrowded households (21%) is double that of the borough and three times the national figure (7%).

Issues facing residents of the NM area are particularly related to the condition of private rented accommodation, since this sector houses 40% of residents. The higher unemployment statistics suggest that there might be issues for private tenants on benefits. Because of the high percentage of private rented accommodation, the challenge is not renewal as demand is high, but to encourage private landlords to improve and maintain conditions in their properties. Tenants are vulnerable because there is high demand for rented accommodation in the area and a high turnover which means there is little pressure on landlords to provide a better service. The high number of HMOs exacerbates this issue as not all are registered and it is difficult for the Borough to keep track of them. Properties in disrepair are unsatisfactory for tenants but also generate other local problems. For example, a property with household junk dumped outside invites more rubbish to be dumped, and perception of crime is higher where properties are uncared for.

### (3) The Process

The key service providers involved here are the Planning Department, Environmental Health and Housing at Bournemouth Borough Council, none of which have an area focus except Environmental Health since the creation of the new post in the NM area. Police and the Fire Service are also involved. Other key players are private landlords, tenants and Neighbourhood Management 'street reps'. There are both local and absentee landlords with properties in the area, and a few landlords with hundreds of properties. One of the biggest landlords sits on the NM Housing Group, and another significant local landlord who is also director of the Dorset Resident Landlords Association (DRLA) sits on the NM Board.

The NMP took the initiative in Year One to fund a Housing Survey that was carried out by a housing surveyor working in the Environmental Health department. It identified eyesores, disrepairs, and properties that were not registered with the Council as HMOs. This reported in early 2003. It found:

- 68 premises without proper planning permission for their current use;
- Over 150 properties in varying states of disrepair;
- 625 properties presenting an 'eyesore' – of varying degrees.

The housing survey provided the basis for planning future strategy in the NMP and in the Council's Housing and Environmental Health departments. The figures from the survey are used for monitoring purposes. Progress against these is described below. The Private Sector Housing Officer uses the FLARE database, which he can access both in the Town Hall and in the NM office which facilitates data sharing. His targets are based on the survey data.

Activities can be grouped as follows:

#### The Responsible Landlord and Tenant Accreditation Scheme

In 2004 NMP began work with Bournemouth Borough Council (BBC) on a Private Landlords' Accreditation Scheme, a different version of which had already been established in Poole. There is now one Dorset-wide model. The aim of this scheme is to improve the standards of private rented accommodation in Bournemouth, to promote good standards of management and best practice by landlords, to provide tenants with confidence in the quality and management of their accommodation, to recognise and encourage landlords who are prepared to provide good quality accommodation, to help landlords find responsible tenants and vice versa.

The Scheme is overseen by a board on which the Pathfinder sits alongside DRLA, Environmental Health, Police, the Rent Service and Shelter. It is run on a daily basis by Environmental Health. A landlord that wishes to apply must fill in a form detailing his/her properties, with a map of each one and confirming that these properties meet regulations. The Local Authority will then inspect a sample of the properties – either one or 10%, whichever is greater – with a proviso that they can carry out a spot check at any time on the other properties. In order for a landlord to apply he/she needs to belong to an association, which is usually the DRLA. The DRLA has codes of conduct and an arbitration service which are a useful recourse for Environmental Health.

The process has been slow, and in recognition of the difficulty of achieving accreditation especially for the larger landlords, NMP has introduced an intermediate stage between accredited and non-accredited, which is 'working towards'. The largest landlord is 'working towards', but this may take a long time as he has 100s of properties especially old HMOs which are sub-standard.

## An additional enforcement officer for the NM area

A need was identified by the Pathfinder for an additional post alongside the SIC who deals mainly with the exterior of properties. The local authority was not able to monitor and visit all the HMOs in the NM area, and with the evidence provided by the housing survey, Environmental Health agreed that the Pathfinder would fund an additional Environmental Health Officer for 2 years to work exclusively with the private rented sector in the NM area. This person works 2/5 days out of the NM office, and 3/5 in the Town Hall. The post is additional to existing Environmental Health services and is justified because a high proportion of the problems that this department deals with come from the NM area due to the population density and high number of HMOs. Usually, an HMO registers with the council and if it complies with standards it is accepted, and 5 years will pass before another inspection. The new post allows this time to be reduced to 2 years which improves the council's capacity to monitor standards in private rented accommodation. The Pathfinder insisted that the post should not be 'Enforcement Officer' as this would be discouraging to landlords, and the more diplomatic job title of Private Sector Housing Officer was agreed.

## The Street Improvement Co-ordinator

The nature of the Street Improvement Co-ordinator's (SIC) role is additional to existing public service provision. The post is fixed term and unlikely to be mainstreamed since it is additional, and involves applying 'moral pressure' to landlords to improve their properties, something that lies outside the remit of the Local Authority (i.e. it is non-legislative). The post therefore addresses an important aspect of housing over which the Local Authority felt unable to act '*our hands were tied*'. The SIC post is two-fold. It looks at environmental issues, street cleansing, flytipping etc, and also on the external standards of the rented housing stock such as eyesores and disrepairs. The remit therefore looks at the broader picture of housing in terms of well-being (e.g. Boscombe and Springbourne in Bloom). The SIC makes face-to-face contact with people in housing where disrepair or eyesores are visible. She encourages private landlords to make improvements through 'moral obligation' and 'cajoling', and through incentives such as informing them about grant availability and other support. Local landlords are generally willing to cooperate, and often the issue was that they were not aware of the problem (i.e. an issue of communication between tenants and landlords).

The post has evolved differently from expected and has a broader remit and has in recent months focused on 'Boscombe in Bloom' involving residents, shopkeepers, local schools and with the support of local councillors to improve the local environment. The open and creative approach to the post has allowed her to introduce initiatives such as the 'Lick of Paint' day, which brought together local people to do community wall painting, with local young people playing live music and community stalls. 17 front walls were painted by volunteers – with owner or landlord's permission. *'It inspired a few people to follow suit afterwards, because theirs looked bad next to the tidy ones'*.

Promotion of the Responsible Landlord and Tenant Accreditation Scheme is also a key part of the SIC's job. She promotes the scheme with individual landlords, tenants and letting agencies, and puts pressure on the local authority to promote it more through various mechanisms. While the Scheme is widely received as beneficial to private tenants and their landlords, it has met with a number of problems (see below). The SIC also manages the volunteer street representatives who monitor the conditions of the 130 streets in the NM area. They report directly to the LA call centre for environmental issues such as dog mess, fly-tipping etc. Street Reps are mainly concerned with environmental issues but they overlap with housing as they may spot a vacant property, witness antisocial behaviour or see household objects dumped in the front gardens of rented properties (rather than on the pavement). They report these issues directly to the SIC. These duties have evolved as an aspect of their role which were not originally part of their remit.

## The Tenants' Forum

When the Tenants' Forum was first set up, it acted as a support group for tenants who had experienced serious problems with their rented accommodation.

*At the beginning, at least half came along because they'd had horrific experiences with local landlords, some real horror stories. One woman came along with a photographic diary of the properties she's lived in, and it makes you wonder how on earth one person could be so unlucky with their landlord or their living circumstances – bathrooms with no floorboards, damp pouring down the walls, no doors on rooms.*

It has now settled down to a stable group of around a dozen, with a turnout of 6-8 at each meeting. There is no turnover now, after a period of unrest when one member wanted the Forum to become independent of NMP. When the other members did not unanimously agree, he left and set up an independent group. The core group has chosen to remain under the NM umbrella, as a consultative organisation. The Forum gives voice to disadvantaged groups, and facilitates access to services. *'There's a lot of poverty here, most of us are on benefits. It can be daunting as a new resident, and NM helps you find where things are'*. Forum members also raise questions about community safety and security in private rented accommodation, and drive an agenda around these issues. They have been involved with the Fire Brigade's agenda to improve safety within HMOs and private rented properties and accompany the fire brigade on preventive visits, because *'in some properties if a uniform comes to the door they're not going to gain access.'*

## The Planning Group

The first meeting of this new NM sub-group took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2005. It was established in response to issues raised in the Housing Group and Tenants Forum around planning applications for housing development in the NM area. The group will review planning applications for the NM area and decide whether NMP should support or oppose them. They are using the Local Development Framework and Statement of Community Involvement to lobby for or ensure wide consultation over local planning and development. Their aim is for the NM area to be recognised as an area of special concern since it is already overdeveloped and densely populated.

## Costs

- The SIC costs £53,900 over 2 years 2 months, including costs;
- The Enforcement officer for the NM area costs £60,000 over 2 years, including all costs;
- The research and feasibility study into fuel poverty 9,839.11;
- The NMP set aside £10,000 for Decent Homes Grants, but these have not been spent because of the backlog at the Council which means that no new applications can be processed;
- Street reps are volunteers and incur no costs other than a fish and chip supper every 6 weeks, and one sheet of paper each per week for recording data. The Street Reps recruitment video was done for free.

## Key Issues

The NM approach has helped to facilitate better working relations between landlords and the Local Authority (see below). This is because of the individual efforts of the SIC in particular, who plays a brokering role between the two, and cajoles and persuades landlords into cooperating rather than threatening them with legal action – ‘more carrot and less stick’ in the words of one respondent. Another helpful factor has been the joint working between Environmental Health and NMP. Information sharing had been an issue because of data protection, but this has now improved with data shared via the FLARE database which provides NM with the data they need for reporting and monitoring.

A factor that has hindered this area of work is that absentee Landlords are often difficult to locate and more difficult to motivate into responding. The SIC has developed an approach whereby she sends a photo of the eyesore or disrepair along with the letter requesting their action. This has brought better results.

Improving standards in HMOs requires a ‘change in culture’ in the Local Authority, according to one respondent who felt that the Environmental Health department is not sufficiently involved with the local community. This is an area in which the NM approach chimes with the identified gap in standard service provision.

Another issue is joined up local government. There was some concern that Planning should be more involved than it is. Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act allows local authorities to act on eyesores if landlords do not respond to a request for action, but this section is not used much by the Borough. The NM team visited Hastings which makes more use of s/215, and is now encouraging Bournemouth Borough Council to make more use of it in the same way. The Pathfinder held a briefing session on Section 215 and invited various partners. There is still room for Environmental Health and Planning to join up their work more and use this Section to improve conditions both inside and outside rented properties, but this would require additional public sector culture change.

As far as the Accreditation Scheme is concerned, there are a number of issues that hinder its progress. The accreditation forms were described by several respondents as ‘complicated’ or even ‘diabolical’. A landlord (who may have dozens or even hundreds of properties) must list all properties with plans of each property attached. One respondent felt that the guidelines were not clear and the application process was discouraging. Landlords must belong to the

DRLA (or other association, but in reality there are no others in Dorset) in order to apply for Accreditation. There is a financial cost implied in joining the DRLA and while they become eligible for benefits and discounts, this may not be sufficient incentive.

There is not enough take-up of the Accreditation Scheme. One respondent felt that the scheme needs to be made compulsory as there is not enough incentive for landlords to join, and a good deal to put them off. The scheme needs much greater publicity and more support from the Council with more thought given to how the scheme could be promoted across different council departments. Most tenants are not even aware that they are eligible and not many are since tenants are only eligible to be accredited if their landlord is accredited, and they must then wait a further 6 months before applying. However, there is some evidence that take up is increasing and respondents hope for 'a snowball effect'.

## **(4) Evidence of Results**

The Street Improvement Coordinator is 'additional' to mainstream services because the post was created to deal with issues that fall outside the Local Authority remit. Since the government cannot enforce improvement of the exterior of rented properties, landlords must be persuaded to do so in order to improve both the quality of the housing and the wellbeing of the neighbourhood. The NM approach which has been one of personal contact, cajoling and persuading and helping landlords to find out about grants to improve the properties, has succeeded in doing this. From the perspective of the Local Authority, 'Neighbourhood Management has helped to change the attitude of landlords, we're not the enemy, we want to work with them – this is the main achievement of working with Neighbourhood Management'.

- Corporate policy in the shape of the Private Sector Renewal Strategy has been shaped by the NMP input, given that much of the privately rented accommodation in the Borough is within the NMP area. The landlord accreditation scheme has also received support and is now being actively developed, despite initial scepticism within the housing department (reported in the Year Two Evaluation Report).
- Neighbourhood Management is championing the Statement of Community Involvement through its seat in a sub-group of the LSP.
- Neighbourhood Management is championing the use of Section 215 for the LA to intervene in cases of private landlord negligence over eyesores on their properties.

### **Re-allocated mainstream resources**

The NMP joint-funded with SRB a Fuel Poverty and Energy Debt Action Programme Feasibility Study which was carried out by the Dorset Energy Advice Centre across 800 homes in the NM area with a view to reducing carbon emissions. The Street Improvement Coordinator facilitated access to the HMOs in the area, to encourage landlords and tenants to participate in the survey. This study identified the need for cavity wall insulation. As a result of the survey, the Pathfinder was able to persuade the LA to provide grants for private landlords to install cavity wall insulation, since it is not in the interests of the landlord to invest in this but by doing so carbon emissions can be significantly reduced.

## Re-shaped mainstream service

The Pathfinder was successful in influencing Environmental Health to provide an additional officer for the NM area – although the post is temporary and funded by NM and it is unlikely that the Council would mainstream the post with reference only to the NM area. The Pathfinder is trying to get the Environmental Health and Planning departments of Bournemouth Borough Council to be more area-based. They have been successful in influencing the council to make Street Cleansing area-based, i.e. the Council has mainstreamed the NM *approach*, although they have only picked up 50% of the cost of the NM Safe and Clean team. The Private Sector Housing Officer for the NM area is an area-based Environmental Health Officer. His job is to enforce compliance with standards, but his approach is the ‘NM way’, which is to persuade and cajole rather than threaten whenever possible – *‘it makes a huge difference to have personal contact’*. While the exterior of properties falls outside the Local Authority’s jurisdiction, poor conditions *inside* rented properties can be acted on. The problem in the past (according to all respondents) has been that while the LA had the powers to enforce landlords’ compliance with regulations they had not used these powers, or had been very slow in reaching this point, allowing poor conditions to continue over months. NMP’s agreement with Environmental Health over the new post of Private Sector Housing Officer is that he should always begin informally but move to enforcement quickly if there is no response from the landlord.

## Joining up of services

The SIC works with Environmental health, Planning and Housing in the Local Authority. The NMP was described as *‘very good at linking agencies up. They’ve always included landlords – we’re all on the housing group and tenants too. The group is quite difficult with classic enemies facing each other but sitting together and talking to each other. It puts people on an even footing; everyone’s opinion is equally valid’*. Another respondent described NMP’s role as that of bringing people together; *‘Neighbourhood Management makes people in the Local Authority listen, and bring people to the table who wouldn’t otherwise be there’*.

## Improved access to increase take-up of a service

The area-based Environmental Health post increases access to this service for tenants and landlords, and increases the Local Authority’s enforcement capacity.

The SIC has had an impact on eyesores and disrepairs in private rented accommodation; *‘she has remarkable powers of persuasion – she’s had great success’*. She has done a great deal of the work of contacting landlords and informing them of the incentives to improve their properties – especially the home improvement grants and free cavity wall insulation. The Neighbourhood Management approach of personal contact and persuasion has improved landlords’ relations with the Local Authority, increased the number of HMOs registered with the LA, and helped take up of the available grants.

The capacity of the NMP to sustain its impact on local housing is strong, because of the capacity and effectiveness of its Board, Housing Group and Tenants’ Forum. These are effective Forums for deliberation, information sharing and decision-making. The NMP is also widely respected by service providers and perceived to enhance their capacity to deliver.

The acting Neighbourhood Manager sits on the Corporate Community Planning Group which feeds into the LSP Steering Group. She has raised the issue of the Statement of Community Involvement in this forum, which has influenced discussion in the group.

The Pathfinder works well with all relevant departments of the council, and now has an Environmental Health Officer sitting in their office, working with them on private housing issues in the NM area. Relations with Environmental Health are excellent, but there was some feeling that the Planning department could be more responsive.

The Year Two Evaluation Report noted particular progress in the relationship with Housing after a shaky start. The 'Poor' grading for Housing in the CPA may have acted as an incentive, but the Private Sector Housing Strategy has been significantly shaped by NMP involvement. Housing and Environmental Health saw the Neighbourhood Management Housing Group as a 'key consultee' in this strategy, since 40% of HMO is in the area and they were able to use the NMP being there to access people in the area. However, they do not see the NMP's aims to reduce density within the area as 'realistic'. The NMP has now set up a Planning Group which will work to influence the Council's Planning department over applications for new builds and conversions into flats and HMOs with reference to the Local Development Framework and the Statement of Community Involvement. At present the group is made up of residents, but expects to include and work with service providers in the course of time.

The Housing Group is a useful and effective forum for interaction and deliberation between service providers including private landlords, tenants and voluntary sector organisations. Discussions in this group have resulted in appropriate interventions, such as the fuel poverty survey and cavity wall insulation grants. Through dialogue between tenants, landlords and the Local Authority it became clear that there needed to be an incentive for landlords to install insulation, since while it would clearly benefit tenants and the environment, it was not in the landlords' financial interests. It was also through dialogue between these parties that an understanding was reached to rename the new Enforcement Officer and cast his role in a less confrontational light. One respondent described the Housing Group as a forum where 'people can speak for themselves and not through others– tenants are empowered to do it for themselves'. A tenant also commented that through NMP activities *'we've met [private landlord] who we wouldn't have dared to approach otherwise'*.

According to several respondents, the Tenants' Forum played a very important role in the Accreditation process, and was consulted on several key aspects.

Impact on the neighbourhood has been significant. The Pathfinder's work with the private rented sector has been successful in reducing the number of properties in disrepair from 160 in 2003 to 128 in 2004-5; eyesore properties have been reduced from 465 in 2003 to 372 in 2004-5; 200 HMOs were non-compliant with the registration scheme in 2003, of which 62 complied in 2004-5.

## (5) Conclusions

The Pathfinder's work with the private rented sector has been successful in reducing the number of properties in disrepair from 160 in 2003 to 128 in 2004-5; eyesore properties have been reduced from 465 in 2003 to 372 in 2004-5; 200 HMOs were non-compliant with the registration scheme in 2003, of which 62 complied in 2004-5. Sign up to the Landlords and Tenants Accreditation Scheme has been somewhat disappointing with the baseline of 1 landlord in 2003 increased to 3 now in 2005-6, but with 8 'working towards'. It is important to recognise however that one landlord can signify 100s of properties as is the case with one of the 'working towards' landlords. The Scheme needs greater publicity and either simplification of the application process, or assistance offered to landlords.

NMP has facilitated greater communication and understanding between service providers and tenants and has helped to change the attitude of landlords towards the council and vice versa. Its community involvement structures have played a key part in the process. The Housing Group is a useful and effective forum to facilitate this interaction, identify issues and find realistic and workable solutions in an arena which has traditionally been quite hostile. One respondent felt that the fact that everyone turns up for the meetings was a good indicator of how useful they found it. The 'Tenants' Forum gives voice to disadvantaged groups and also acts as a support group for tenants and a forum to signpost them to the services they need to access.

### Lessons

- **Communication.** Forums such as the Accreditation Scheme board, the NM Board and especially the NM Housing Group and Tenants Group have enabled dialogue and the search for common solutions, or at least a greater understanding of the constraints faced by each party;
- **Balance between persuasion and enforcement.** As far as possible, encouragement works better than enforcement, and leads to good relations in the longer term. A respondent described how private landlords have grievances over how they are expected to pick up the tenants that RSLs and LA-Housing have evicted or cannot house, but are not given information about them;
- **Seeing the bigger picture** – The Local Authority divides up aspects of housing into different departments, and so dealing with a problem may present great difficulties to a tenant. The increase in joined up working between NMP, Planning and Environmental Health and Police is an important start, but this needs to be developed further. 'People think housing is bricks and mortar and its not, it's a people game' (case study respondent).

### Possible Implications

- Wider use of Section 215 may be recommendable – it would be useful to compare notes with other Local Authorities on how they are using this legislation;
- There is a need to make the Responsible Landlords and Tenants Accreditation Scheme compulsory, if it is to be effective, and for a much more joined up and enabling approach to be taken by the Local Authority to promote it through staff and interventions across different departments;
- To further improve joined up working in Housing and Environment, it may be necessary to decentralise all relevant departments to work as area teams, along the lines of Street Cleansing (piloted by NMP).

## Case Study 3: Annex

### Key background documents

The following key documents were used in the preparation of this report:

- Delivery Plans 2004/05, 2005/06;
- PMF 2004;
- Minutes of Housing Group meetings;
- Springbourne and Boscombe West 2003/2004 Second Year Evaluation Report;
- 2001 Census and NM Area Census Factsheet;
- Landlord's Accreditation Scheme Application Form.

