A summary series of recent research from Communities Scotland

No 11

Community regeneration and neighbourhood renewal: a review of the evidence

The Scottish Executive has now published a community regeneration statement entitled Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap. The statement builds on the past experience of community regeneration approaches and draws on the findings of consultation events and on a literature review of the evidence base on community regeneration and neighbourhood renewal. This literature review reviewed research evidence on five key themes to inform the development of the statement: connections between ‘people’ policies and ‘place’ policies, the role of partnership, the role of community, how to achieve effective service delivery and understanding neighbourhood change.

The main findings of the review are that:

- Place policies address the social exclusion suffered by the 38 per cent of Scottish households that live in deprived areas. People policies are important for tackling the social exclusion of households both outwith and in deprived areas. The relationship between people and place policies is important but insufficiently understood.

- There is no ‘right’ model in terms of partnership structure, however community organisations must be empowered to work on a ‘level playing field’ with institutional players.

- Mainstream services are vital to social inclusion due to impact on quality of life, the long term nature of regeneration and the fact that they constitute the majority of expenditure in deprived areas. Fragmentation and poor standards are barriers to service delivery.

- There is a vital relationship between local government modernisation and neighbourhood renewal. Local authorities provide leadership, vision, joined-up corporate strategy, and devolved control over service priorities, and need to be encouraged and supported in this.

- With exceptions, good community participation is yet to be embedded in partnership or governance. Many residents feel disenfranchised, having little control over renewal or service delivery. Local service partnerships are the way forward for many neighbourhoods.

- The need for enhanced community capital suggests an important role for asset-based regeneration organisations including housing associations which enable deprived neighbourhoods to help themselves.

- Recommendations include community-led strategies for renewal and service delivery; better ‘vertical’ integration of neighbourhood, area, local authority and regional initiatives, support for new, efficient governance structures at the neighbourhood and area levels; asset-based development by experimental community regeneration organisations; review of opportunities offered by voluntary transfer of housing stock; and definition of logical neighbourhoods for action and information collection.
Introduction

Long term targets for neighbourhood renewal set out by the Minister include reduction of inequalities between communities, and increases in residents’ satisfaction with their neighbourhoods by:

- devoting dedicated resources to initiatives that drive up standards in priority areas and for groups facing disadvantage;
- making sure that services are organised around the needs of individuals rather than for the convenience of the agencies that deliver them;
- involving communities in the renewal of their own neighbourhoods; and
- ensuring that mainstream programmes are directed at reducing inequalities.

In light of this, the purpose of this analysis was to produce a review directly relevant to Scotland’s needs and to assess existing research on the five key themes.

Place and people policies

Place policies are useful for addressing the social exclusion suffered by the 38 per cent of Scottish households that live in deprived areas. People policies, including benefits, employment programmes and sectoral initiatives, such as for elderly people or the farming community, are important for tackling the social exclusion of households outwith deprived areas. People policies supplement what neighbourhood renewal is able to achieve, a relationship that is clearly important but insufficiently understood.

Neighbourhood renewal, although not sufficient for social inclusion, is useful for a number of reasons including an increasing concentration of disadvantaged households in social housing and the fact that neighbourhoods are an ideal level for local participation. However, different neighbourhoods may require different packages of intervention including deprived neighbourhoods in declining compared with prosperous urban economies, formerly industrial rural settlements, and remote settlements dependent on agriculture, forestry or seasonal tourism.

Partnership

There is no ‘right’ model for neighbourhood renewal in terms of partnership structure, however community organisations must be empowered to work on a ‘level playing field’ with institutional players. Good partnerships foster integration: physical with social and economic development; time-limited initiatives with mainstream service delivery; and neighbourhood initiatives in the context of strategy at higher spatial levels: the area (a group of neighbourhoods), the local authority and the ‘travel-to-work’ sub-region.

There is a vital relationship between local government modernisation, partnership and neighbourhood renewal. Local authorities provide: leadership in establishing a vision for the local authority area and its neighbourhoods, now within the Community Plan; joining up corporate strategy; devolving the setting of service priorities, within the framework of best value; and rethinking of local democratic processes and the roles of councillors, so they are champions of neighbourhoods. Local authorities need to be encouraged and supported in this agenda.

The Role of Community

With exceptions, good community participation is yet to be embedded in partnership or governance. Many residents feel disenfranchised, having little control over renewal or service delivery. Renewal policy could be made more community friendly by reducing the bureaucracy of partnership and emphasising community-led evaluation of partnership processes and outcomes.

There are good ideas from America including community development corporations and intermediary organisations which focus expertise and package finance for local partnerships.
However the evidence is that good initiatives are only of marginal value if the innovation is dwarfed by the scale of deprivation. European literature points to the value to neighbourhoods of a high degree of integration between renewal and mainstream planning and policy, and between spatial levels of governance.

The need for community capital suggests an important role for asset-based regeneration organisations, which enable deprived neighbourhoods to help themselves in a longer term, sustainable process. Scotland has good experience in terms of community-based housing associations, but the opportunities offered to renewal by housing stock transfer must be grasped or they will be lost.

**Effective Service Delivery**

Mainstream services are vital to social inclusion due to impact on quality of life, the long term nature of regeneration and the fact that they constitute the majority of expenditure in deprived areas. Barriers to better service delivery are fragmentation and poor standards. Fragmentation occurs because service delivery is divided between government departments, centrally and locally, and not 'joined up' to deliver a quality package of services. Another barrier is failure to establish, monitor and achieve high standards of service which reflect local requirements.

Local service partnerships can make an important contribution to neighbourhood renewal. In the neighbourhood or area (a logical group of neighbourhoods), local service partnerships can empower residents to enter into partnership with the local council and other providers and to have a real stake in monitoring the quality of service delivery.

**Understanding Neighbourhood Change**

Despite thirty years of effort, achievements of neighbourhood renewal are patchy and the evidence base is weak. However, targeting of interventions is effective when the needs of groups, such as the elderly, disabled, single parents or youth are addressed by tailor-made projects within the neighbourhood, managed by residents. There is evidence that caution should be exercised in assuming that tenure diversification reduces social exclusion. There is also evidence that neighbourhood renewal is dependent, in part, on the achievement of economic regeneration at higher spatial levels.

**Types Of Neighbourhoods Requiring Intervention**

As a result of the analysis in this report, four types of Scottish neighbourhoods are identified which may require renewal, and for which policy may need to be specifically tailored:

- neighbourhoods in urban travel-to-work regions characterised by historic economic decline, such as in Glasgow or Inverclyde;
- neighbourhoods in prosperous urban regions, such as council estates in Edinburgh or Aberdeen;
- rural settlements or smaller towns with a formerly industrial economic base, such as coalfield rural settlements of South Lanarkshire, or the former textile village of the Renton in Dunbartonshire; and
- rural settlements or areas with a mainly agricultural, forestry or tourism base, such as in the Highland and Islands or the Borders. Researchers divide these further into: accessible commuting areas, tourist and retirement areas and areas of population and employment decline.

**Recommendations**

The report makes a number of recommendations, linked to the five key themes:

- integration of people and place policies from a national perspective in terms of
aggregate achievement of social inclusion and reduction of poverty, and from a local perspective derived from systematic, case studies.

- community-led strategies for renewal and service delivery to enable residents to develop their own agenda for change.
- better 'vertical' integration of neighbourhood, area, local authority and regional initiatives.
- support for new, efficient governance structures at the neighbourhood and area levels.
- asset-based development by experimental community regeneration organisations, including review of opportunities offered by voluntary transfer of housing stock.
- defining logical, workable neighbourhood boundaries for sustained action and information collection on neighbourhood websites.
- ten-year programme for systematic assessment of social inclusion initiatives using longitudinal studies that track both areas and individuals. Action research to encourage innovation and risk-taking in partnership and more constructive monitoring and evaluation.

The Way Forward

This review was commissioned to support the work being undertaken by the Scottish Executive to develop a community regeneration statement for Scotland.

The statement, Better Communities for Scotland: closing the gap is available on the Scottish Executive website, www.scotland.gov.uk or from Ian Sirrell, by telephone, 0131 244 1537 or by e-mail communityregeneration@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

About the Study

The review was carried out by Michael Carley, Professor of Planning and Housing at Edinburgh College of Art/Heriot-Watt University. Four sorts of documentation were examined: published material, all unpublished annual reports of Scotland’s Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs) for 2000/01, interim or final evaluations of some SIPs, and Scottish Homes internal Community Regeneration Monitoring Reports.

Related Research

The following research is available on the Scottish Homes Archive Web site: www.scot-homes.gov.uk/archive/

Lessons for Community Capacity Building (July 2001)

Empowering Communities: The Impact of Registered Social Landlords on Social Capital (June 2001)

Financial Exclusion: The Potential Role of Registered Social Landlords (April 2001)

Community Regeneration in Scotland: Issues for Registered Social Landlords (March 2001)

Tenure Mix and Neighbourhood Regeneration (March 2001)

Framework for Assessing the Impact of Registered Social Landlords' Wider Role (February 2001)

Supporting Voluntary and Community Activities (November 2000)

Connecting Communities in Urban Scotland (October 2000)


Further Information

For further information about the study contact Ralph Throp, by e-mail: thropr@communityscotland.gov.uk or by telephone, 01463 711272 ext 2221. Copies of the report are available from Susan Rogers, rogerss@communityscotland.gov.uk or telephone 0131 479 5012 at the address below.

The full literature review is available on our website, www.communityscotland.gov.uk

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