



Information Note

Neighbourhood Management

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Introduction

This information note looks at neighbourhood management and the crucial role that local communities can play in improving the delivery of local services. Neighbourhood management aims to bring together services and organisations to tackle poverty and housing problems. It is about joining up services at a local level to make them more relevant to local people. In developing a neighbourhood management strategy tenants' representatives should be involved and recognised as equal partners.

This information note is divided into the following sections:

- 2.0 What is Neighbourhood Management?
- 3.0 Tenant and Resident Involvement in Neighbourhood Management
- 4.0 The Scottish Executive's Approach to Neighbourhood Management and Regeneration
- 5.0 What are the key elements of Neighbourhood Management?
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What is Neighbourhood Management?

Neighbourhood management is about joining up services at a local level and making them more relevant to local people. In order for neighbourhood management to work, local communities must be involved to identify local problems and work together with agencies to find practical solutions to these. A neighbourhood management strategy is developed to improve the conditions in which tenants and residents live and to address the improvements that local people want to see in place. A neighbourhood management strategy should be agreed in partnership with community representatives and aims to achieve some or all of the following objectives:

- ◆ To create new job opportunities;
- ◆ To make communities safer;
- ◆ To provide education and good quality, affordable housing;
- ◆ To improve the physical environment of the area and the health of residents;
- ◆ To increase the sense of community among residents.

Neighbourhood Management deals with problems such as poor housing conditions, neglected gardens and common areas, litter and fly-tipping. It also addresses problems of absent or negligent private landlords and problems related to antisocial behaviour.

In 2002, “The Learning Curve: Developing Skills and Knowledge for Neighbourhood Renewal” was published by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It states that when dealing with unpopular housing the approach taken should be focused on the needs of the neighbourhood rather than on the housing stock. This includes:

- ◆ Improving the physical appearance and condition of the stock;
- ◆ Demolition if there is too much housing;
- ◆ Promoting a positive image of the area to counter bad publicity;
- ◆ Re-thinking management and allocation policies including introducing local lettings; moving away from a needs based allocations system and marketing empty properties;
- ◆ Increasing attention to improvements for private sector homes;
- ◆ Residents having choice over priorities for new build or refurbishment and involvement in issues of estate design at an early stage.

What is Neighbourhood Management?

In making services more responsive the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit suggests that:

- ◆ Landlords operating in the area should be based in the same office and develop common agreements about levels of service to avoid variations in services received by tenants;
- ◆ Specialist staff should be appointed such as caretakers, concierges and wardens;
- ◆ Neighbourhood agreements should be created to co-ordinate service providers and that the local residents should be fully involved in this process.

Community definitions of problems and solutions are often very different from those of service providers. Therefore, tenants are vital to neighbourhood management particularly in identifying the main problems within their neighbourhoods and working jointly towards solutions to tackle them. It is important to try to get as many community representatives involved as possible. This will ensure that those who do participate are able to take breaks if necessary and do not become exhausted by the level of their participation. There also needs to be a good level of involvement from voluntary and private organisations and local and central government services.

One of the biggest challenges for local authorities is implementing a joint approach across the different departments dealing with neighbourhood management. It is important for everyone involved to learn from the successes and failures of the past and to ensure that mistakes are not repeated. Setting up a neighbourhood management co-ordination group is a useful way to plan joined-up action and to be clear of who has responsibility for what (see Section 5 for further information about this).

Tenant and Resident Involvement in Neighbourhood Management

Why is community involvement important?

Tenants and residents living within their own communities very often have different views about the issues and problems within the area than staff working for organisations. This means that tenants and residents can contribute valuable information at the start of a neighbourhood management process, which may lead to different solutions being used to solve the issues.

Staff within organisations may have a fixed idea about what is best for a particular community, but it is important to take the time to listen to what the tenants and residents are saying. The views of people living within a community are invaluable. In the past many neighbourhood management or regeneration schemes have failed to meet their objectives successfully because strategies were imposed on communities without taking account of their views.

How can communities be involved?

For a neighbourhood management strategy to work local tenants need to be involved from the start of this process. The representation of all participants in neighbourhood management needs to be agreed. Representation should be balanced, accountable and adequately resourced. Time should be built into the process to enable capacity building not only for community representatives but also for staff involved. One way to achieve this can be through joint training sessions.

Effective tenant or community participation requires:

- ◆ A variety of ways for people to get involved;
- ◆ Well-resourced community organisations with development support;
- ◆ Capacity building to increase individuals' skills and confidence;
- ◆ Time for people to participate fully;
- ◆ Public meetings to share what is happening with the local community and to seek their views about proposals;
- ◆ A community participation strategy which supports a variety of local groups across a range of interests;
- ◆ Commitment to community participation from the agencies involved.

The Scottish Executive Approach to Neighbourhood Management and Regeneration

In 2004, the Scottish Executive announced the Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) totaling £318 million over three years to improve Scotland's most deprived communities. The Minister for Communities also announced six Closing the Opportunity Gap (CtOG) objectives for tackling poverty and exclusion. The principal purpose of the CRF is to achieve the CtOG objective of "regenerating the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, so that people living there can take advantage of job opportunities and improve their quality of life".

In order to qualify for funding, local authorities were required to submit Regeneration Outcome Agreements for 3 years detailing how Community Planning Partnerships would meet this objective. In 2008, their progress will be measured against ten targets in:

- ◆ Employability;
- ◆ Education;
- ◆ Health;
- ◆ Access to local services; and
- ◆ Quality of the environment.

These targets relate to the Scottish Executive's five national priorities, which are:

1. Building strong, safe, attractive communities;
2. Getting people back into work;
3. Improving health;
4. Raising educational attainment;
5. Engaging young people.

There are 32 Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland working with regeneration objectives drawn from strategies which local authorities have to produce including:

- ◆ The Local Housing Strategy;
- ◆ Community Safety Strategy;
- ◆ Anti-social Behaviour Strategy;
- ◆ Joint Health Improvement Plan;
- ◆ Social Inclusion Partnerships;
- ◆ Homelessness Strategy.

The Scottish Executive Approach to Neighbourhood Management and Regeneration

The Community Regeneration Fund allocations over 2005-2008 will assist in the implementation of these strategies. The Scottish Executive is also providing £50 million over the three years to 2007/08 through the Housing and Estate Regeneration Fund (HERF) to provide new housing in support of local regeneration priorities.

Community Planning Partnerships will deliver their regeneration outcomes if there is successful neighbourhood management in local communities.

Long-term neighbourhood management needs to:

- ◆ Put local people at the centre of the decision making process;
- ◆ Have a joined up and long-term approach;
- ◆ Improve the quality of the local environment; and
- ◆ Recognise linked social, economic and environmental causes.

What are the key elements of Neighbourhood Management?

There is no single model of neighbourhood management that will suit all areas. For a neighbourhood management strategy to be successful the following is required:

- ◆ Some form of co-ordination group made up of local tenants and residents, the local authority, Registered Social Landlords, other public agencies, voluntary and private sectors to develop and put neighbourhood regeneration into practice;
- ◆ In some cases it is possible to appoint a neighbourhood manager or area co-ordinator with overall responsibility;
- ◆ Community involvement and training and support;
- ◆ A joined up strategy and action plan which contains long-term goals for the area;
- ◆ Devising methods to establish links with under-represented people within the community;
- ◆ Identifying clear priorities for local action and giving responsibility to each of the partners;
- ◆ Joined up systems for implementation and agreed mechanisms for sharing information, money, management and accountability;
- ◆ Joined up performance indicators based on agreed outcomes;
- ◆ Developing monitoring systems and an agreed process for evaluation.

It is good practice that tenants are included on an equal footing with all the partners within the co-ordination group. If neighbourhood management is to result in long-term change to an area then community representatives must be included in power sharing and decision making arrangements and be given the responsibility to take action.

In setting up a co-ordination group existing tenants and residents groups and other community groups should be consulted on how they wish to participate. The members of the co-ordination group should build on existing practice and relationships at a local level. This is more likely to result in long-term change than if new systems or structures are implemented by people involved in an area for the first time. You might need to think of ways to get more tenants involved. What is crucial is that the participation arrangements and agenda are jointly agreed with the local community.

What is a Neighbourhood Agreement?

A neighbourhood agreement is an agreed mini-contract, which contains the service standards and the agreed actions of the different parties involved (local community, public, voluntary and private sectors). Neighbourhood agreements are of most value when they cover not just landlord functions but also estate-based services provided by other agencies such as refuse collection, street cleaning, street lighting and leisure facilities. They can be used to secure joint standards with mixed tenure estates and developments involving a number of Registered Social Landlords.

A neighbourhood agreement's contents could include:

- ◆ A clear statement about the role of the community representatives;
- ◆ Information about the estate services provided and who has responsibility for each service;
- ◆ Agreed service standards;
- ◆ Priorities for action;
- ◆ Agreed targets for each service;
- ◆ Monitoring arrangements;
- ◆ Methods of identifying and monitoring the work of other agencies.

The community representatives and staff involved in the co-ordination group should:

- ◆ Identify specific problems;
- ◆ Agree approaches to address these problems;
- ◆ Identify officers responsible for managing these approaches;
- ◆ Monitor the effectiveness of the action taken;
- ◆ Review the neighbourhood agreement every six months.

What is a Neighbourhood Agreement?

In carrying out the above steps a co-ordination group could use the following checklist:

- ◆ Talk to local residents and staff to identify and prioritise what they see as the local problems;
- ◆ Collect facts about each problem – is it really as bad as it appears at first glance?
- ◆ Agree a position statement or vision for what the area will be like once the improvements are complete;
- ◆ Outline the steps needed to get from the starting point to the outcomes set;
- ◆ Examine the causes of each problem and links with other problems;
- ◆ Explore what is already being done to deal with each problem - are only slight changes needed or is a radically different approach required?
- ◆ Include other services who are responsible for dealing with problems such as the local Police and GPs;
- ◆ Set out agreement about what it is people want to happen and ways to achieve this;
- ◆ Examine good practice in other areas – learn from what has worked for others;
- ◆ Agree a set of actions and clarify everyone's role;
- ◆ Do a reality check – match what resources are needed to those that are available and include a risk assessment;
- ◆ Think about alternatives – what will happen if some things don't go to plan.

Once the neighbourhood agreement has been agreed and signed up to by all the parties involved, this should be publicised within the community. It should be seen as a positive step towards addressing the problems within the area and creating an improved community.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is important that the co-ordination group monitors and evaluates the progress it has made to improve local neighbourhood management. The evaluation should include the views of local people using the services to identify what changes they see happening as a result of the process of neighbourhood management and future improvements that still need to take place

In evaluating neighbourhood management some questions which could be considered include:

- ◆ Have the community representatives influenced decision makers effectively?
- ◆ Does the wider community have enough information?
- ◆ What changes in the community are for the better?
- ◆ Are these changes likely to be long-term?
- ◆ How closely have the original objectives been met?
- ◆ How much has the attitude or behaviour of staff changed?
- ◆ Who has benefited from changes in the neighbourhood?
- ◆ What methods are proving most effective and why?
- ◆ What has not worked well and why?
- ◆ Further areas that need to be developed

The monitoring and evaluation framework should be agreed by the co-ordination group in the early stages so that methods to monitor and review are in place.

Conclusion

Partnership working and a joined up approach by all the agencies involved including community representatives is the key ingredient of successful neighbourhood management. Neighbourhood management is about joining up services to make them more efficient and relevant for local people.

A neighbourhood agreement commits all partners to specific targets and actions to be delivered within the area. Regular monitoring of this agreement will help to identify if it is working well and areas that need to be developed further.

For neighbourhood management to work community representatives need to be involved from the start when priorities are being identified through to the monitoring and evaluation of the longer-term strategy.

Useful Reading

Communities Scotland (2004) "Community Regeneration Fund: Guidance on Regeneration Outcome Agreements" (Scottish Executive, Edinburgh)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2000) "Tackling Social Exclusion at Local Level: Neighbourhood Management" (JRF, York)

National Neighbourhood Management Network (2005) "Delivering Neighbourhood Management: A Practical Guide" (ODPM, Cornwall)

Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2002) "Neighbourhood Management" (ODPM, Wetherby)

Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2003) ("Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal" (ODPM, Wetherby)

Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2003) "What is Neighbourhood Renewal?" (ODPM, Wetherby)

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002) "The Learning Curve: Developing Skills and Knowledge for Neighbourhood Renewal" (ODPM, London)

Scottish Executive (2006) "People and Place Regeneration Policy Statement" (Scottish Executive, Edinburgh)

Key Contacts

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