

North East Neighbourhoods Network

Area & Neighbourhood Working in the North East



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AREA & NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING IN THE NORTH EAST

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INTRODUCTION

This is a snapshot of area and neighbourhood working¹ in the North East carried out by local authorities, their partners, and voluntary/community-led organisations. The research was undertaken by the North East Neighbourhoods Network (NENN) in early 2010. The prime focus of the research is on area and neighbourhood working as a mechanism for service improvement through partnership working and community engagement. It does not encompass area and neighbourhood working as a mechanism for service delivery e.g. as employed by many social housing providers.

The purpose is to provide a reference tool for those interested in networking and sharing practice. It is part of wider networking activity undertaken by the NENN in 2009/10, predominantly funded by the North East Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (NE IEP) with some support from the North East Empowerment Partnership (NEEP). This research arose out of previous research undertaken for the NE IEP in 2009 on the integration of neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood management. One of the issues identified was the lack of awareness of neighbourhood management – both in terms of its nature and spread across the region. Given that neighbourhood management means different things in different localities and there is no universal coverage across the region, this scoping includes all approaches to neighbourhood and area working across the region.

There are two sections. The first section provides an overview and commentary of the picture in the region. The second section is more factual and describes the arrangements in each local authority area.

Note there are some limitations to the report:

- This is a snapshot and changes are bound to occur. Localities are constantly reviewing their arrangements and pressure on local authority budgets may impact in the coming year.
- Though the information from networking activities has provided an opportunity to offer comment as well information, this is not an evaluation of area and neighbourhood working in the region. There is no attempt to make judgements about effectiveness.

Methodology

The first section is based on:

- a survey completed by 25 managers and front-line staff with responsibility for area and neighbourhood working
- interviews with a small number of managers with lead responsibility for area and neighbourhood working.
- discussions at three NENN seminars and three NENN peer group meetings held in 2009/10 – 60 participants in total from 10 of the region's 12 local authority areas. The final seminar, *What Future for Neighbourhood Working* provided much of the material for the section on future opportunities and challenges.
- reports from, and observations of, local workshops to facilitate greater integration between neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood management
- an analysis of local authority and partner documentation

¹ Place-focused working below local authority level

The second section is based some interviews, public documents/websites and documents provided by local authorities/partnerships. The information has been checked for accuracy by the lead contact for each authority.

North East Neighbourhoods Network (NENN)

The network was set up its current form in 2009. It is a development of the North East Neighbourhood Management Network, a peer support group network that has been operating successfully since 2006. As well as local representatives, Government Office, the NE IEP, and NEEP have all taken part in activities during the last year. NENN's delivery partner is Safe in Tees Valley (SITV) that hosts the North East Neighbourhoods Resource Centre which provides advice and training for neighbourhood warden services in the region.

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Acknowledgements & accuracy

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SECTION ONE – REGIONAL OVERVIEW

1. Definitions & Scale

One of the challenges of painting a picture of area and neighbourhood working is the different use of labels and language by local authorities and partners. For example, what is understood by the term *neighbourhood management*? Gateshead, Redcar & Cleveland, and Hartlepool all have a *neighbourhood management* service. Whilst there are some similarities between Gateshead and Hartlepool, the Redcar & Cleveland model is very different. There are actually more similarities between the Gateshead and Sunderland approaches, though Sunderland uses the “area” label rather than “neighbourhood”.

Does size matter? There is no shared understanding in the region about what constitutes an “area” or “neighbourhood”. For the purposes of this exercise, “neighbourhood” is taken to mean the smallest geographical area that communities might relate to. In terms of population, this may be a few hundred to a few thousand. “Area” is taken to mean a larger geographical area, which typically includes several neighbourhoods. For example, South Tyneside has divided its district into six areas for the purpose of its area forums, but has identified around seventy neighbourhoods within the district.

The language used by local authorities and partnerships does not consistently follow this definition. For example, Hartlepool is divided into three neighbourhood management areas, each with a population of around 30,000, similar to the scale of South Tyneside’s area forums. The smallest Area Action Partnership in Durham covers a population of around 8,000, whilst the largest covers over 90,000.

Does this matter? Yes and no. The language probably does not matter except that it sometimes causes confusion. For example, whilst there is a fairly common understanding of what is meant by *neighbourhood policing*, the same cannot be said for *neighbourhood management*. One of the lessons from recent attempts in the region to encourage greater integration between neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood management is that the lack of a common definition and model for neighbourhood management is a barrier to integration. Indeed, this was one of the drivers for this report.

There is a debate about scale. Research and experience suggests that most individual citizens relate to a neighbourhood rather than a larger area for such issues as clean, safe, green and opportunities/facilities for children and young people. There is also evidence that community involvement in area/neighbourhood working tends to be greater at a neighbourhood level rather than an area level. Conversely, some service providers generally find it easier to engage at an area level because it is less resource intensive. However, there are variations depending on the purpose of the engagement and nature of the service.

2. Purpose of Area and Neighbourhood Working

Whatever the labels, structures and local variations, some common purposes have emerged from the research. All approaches in the region share a universal aim of improving mainstream public service delivery by making them more responsive to the specific needs of areas or neighbourhoods. Within this overall aim, the most common purposes are:

- *Community engagement*: consulting with communities and creating opportunities for them to influence decisions that affect their area. Keeping communities informed.
- *Community development/responsibility*: supporting communities to become partners in problem solving and/or delivering their own responses and solutions.

- *Partnership working and integration of services*: formal and informal partnership working between service providers. Only a minority of formal partnerships involve residents/community representatives as formal partners.
- *"Bending" mainstream services* to be more responsive to the needs of the local community
- *Understanding & promoting neighbourhoods*: gathering a range of data and local intelligence to develop a detailed picture of neighbourhoods to help determine priority issues and actions. Using this data to act as an advocate for neighbourhoods.

There are other purposes, but these are less universal:

- *Democratic engagement*: member development; a place for representative and participative democracy to come together.
- *Delivery and influencing corporate strategies*: a bridge between district strategies/plans and neighbourhoods.
- *Performance Management*: systems for the formal scrutiny of service delivery at an area/neighbourhood level
- *Closing the gap*: a focus on improving quality of life indicators in the most disadvantaged areas

It does not necessarily follow that a statement of purpose leads to action to fulfil that purpose. There are variations in practice between authorities and initiatives.

3. Structures

All local authorities/partnerships have some form of structure for area or neighbourhood working.² The most common local authority/LSP structure is some form of area forum/network/committee that covers several neighbourhoods. However, there are exceptions to this. For example, Newcastle's structure is ward-based, covering a population size similar to neighbourhood management initiatives. Some districts have a two-tier structure. For example, Northumberland has both Area Committees and Community Forums. Middlesbrough has ward level community councils that come together in area clusters.

As government funding has come to an end for neighbourhood management, there are fewer neighbourhood based initiatives. Several have closed in the past year: Jarrow, North Tyneside, Peterlee and others are due to end soon. However, a few are continuing and there are some emerging developments. All the New Deal for Communities areas are continuing in some form and have included neighbourhood management principles and/or programmes in their succession strategies. Bridging NewcastleGateshead is continuing to support neighbourhood management in Newcastle and Gateshead. Some social landlords maintain a commitment to neighbourhood management. Example: Home Housing. ICCQ in Blyth has delivered commissions for Weeks of Action and Neighbourhood Agreements in other parts of Northumberland, and beyond. Some Town Councils that have a history of working in areas that have benefited from neighbourhood management are keen to sustain the approach. Examples: Stanley, Peterlee. There are some instances of community-led neighbourhood partnerships. Example: Prudhoe Community Partnership.

In terms of partnership structures and officer support, there has undoubtedly been a shift of focus away from neighbourhood level towards area level. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is no longer a neighbourhood focus in terms of action. Many authorities/local partnerships recognise the need to focus activity on priority neighbourhoods. Examples: Neighbourhood Agreements in Gateshead, Neighbourhood Plans in Hartlepool.

² Details of arrangements for each local authority area are contained in Section Two

4. Tools

Apart from having some kind of structure at an area or neighbourhood level, there are no tools which are common to the whole region. The tools in use include:

Area/neighbourhood plans – typically driven by district-wide Community Strategies/Local Area Agreements with some local considerations. Some of the smaller stand-alone neighbourhood initiatives have plans that are driven primarily by neighbourhood priorities. Examples: New Deal for Communities neighbourhoods, Darlington, South Tyneside.

Problem-solving groups around a particular theme or issue. Typically involving partner agencies, sometimes involving ward members and occasionally wider community representatives. A mixture of standing groups and task and finish groups.

Neighbourhood agreements or charters. These set out what services can be expected and what the community can do to help. There are a mixture of approaches to developing agreements e.g. standard district-led process/template, more neighbourhood focused *Weeks of Action*. Examples: Gateshead, Newcastle, Northumberland (ICCCQ).

Devolved budgets. The most common are small funds for environmental/community safety improvements and/or “community chests” that offer grants to community groups. There are a variety of arrangements for allocation of funding e.g. ward member decision, ward member in consultation with area/neighbourhood forum, independent community panels. Examples: Durham, Northumberland. A minority of area/neighbourhood structures are directly involved in external fundraising/income generation to support local initiatives & projects.

Participatory budgeting. Only in use in a few areas and most common at a neighbourhood initiative level. Examples: Newcastle, Back on the Map (Sunderland), West Middlesbrough Trust

Co-location of services. Fairly rare in the region, but there are a few examples: Hartlepool, Jarrow, Prudhoe

Direct service delivery. Though this research is primarily concerned with influencing/co-ordination and not service delivery, there are examples of structures that seek to do both. Examples: Redcar & Cleveland, some of the Northumberland Community Partnerships.

5. Future of Area and Neighbourhood Working

5.1 Challenges

Demonstrating Value for Money

There are gaps in the evidence base to demonstrate that area/neighbourhood working makes a difference. This is not to say that it does not add sufficient value, rather that not enough attention has been given to the production of evidence. Particularly important will be evidence that the approach is facilitating more efficient delivery of public services. Attribution is an ongoing challenge. Such evidence will be all the more important as public spending comes under closer scrutiny.

Member Development

Supporting member development and establishing a clear role for ward members is key. Area and neighbourhood working is generally viewed as a useful vehicle for developing the role of local members as community champions. The research suggests that there are variations in practice throughout the region. Whilst the area structures tend to have

a formal role for ward councillors, the level of involvement and commitment varies, not just between authorities, but within authorities. Member commitment and understanding to partnership working and community engagement is variable. This ranges from a genuine commitment to going through the motions and running area forums/committees like any other formal council committee.

Variations in commitment, capacity and skills

This variation is not confined to members. The same could also be said to apply to council officers and partner agencies. The reasons for this appear complex. For some, this is a different way of working which requires new understanding and skills. Strong political commitment from the centre of each organisation appears to be an important factor.

Variations in resources

Ending of some central government funding and pressure on mainstream local government budgets are putting pressure on resources. Despite this, every local authority/partnership in the region has some mechanism for an area/neighbourhood focus. However, varying political commitment means there are also varying levels of resource provided for area/neighbourhood working. Whilst some have a service dedicated to the process, others have one or two officers. Whilst it is too simplistic to argue that more resources equals more change, the lack of resources in some authorities is clearly a restraint on activities and potential for change. There is a specific concern about fewer resources for community development.

Corporate v Neighbourhood

Area/neighbourhood structures are concerned with both the strategic and the operational: the big and the small. Linking corporate and neighbourhood priorities is an ongoing challenge. This is not just an issue of conflicting priorities; it's also about where area/neighbourhood working fits within wider structures. Generally speaking, top-down area structures tend to have better links with corporate structures whilst neighbourhood-led initiatives tend to have better links with communities.

Neighbourhood level partnership working

The national evaluation of neighbourhood management pathfinders identified community involvement in the deliberative process via partnership working between residents and service providers as a key success factor. Residents tend to have less opportunity to be involved as equal partners in area structures.

5.2 Opportunities

Policy Context

The policy context of devolution of powers and responsibility is positive for neighbourhood and area working. The principles of devolution and customer-focused public services are supported by all the main political parties. The new coalition government's Big Society policy aims to "promote decentralisation and democratic engagement by giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals".

Working together: More for Less?

In an era of reducing public spending, efficient service delivery is more important than ever. Area and neighbourhood approaches should be well placed to identify efficiencies

through partnership working and more integrated services. For example, an integrated approach to community engagement and development. Many public services and departments employ community engagement and development as a tool for service improvement. An integrated approach across agencies has the potential to deliver a better service at lower cost.

Corporate/Neighbourhood link

Though this has been recognised as an ongoing challenge, it is one which area/neighbourhood working should be able to address through research, facilitating communication, and influencing policies & practices. Regional experience suggests that this role is well understood, is being fulfilled to some extent, but will always be an area for continuous improvement.

Front line staff

Supporting front-line staff to work together and be responsive to communities at the point of contact has the potential to deliver a more effective and efficient service at a neighbourhood/area level. This has been a characteristic of some the DECATS³ pilots and North East neighbourhood management initiatives.

Community Responsibility

There is a long history of communities adding value to public services whether it is through volunteering, raising additional funding, and/or running projects and services. However, this has not always been fully recognised or supported. The potential added value that communities can bring is all the more important in the context of reducing public funding. As part of its "Big Society" vision, the coalition government has stated its intention to make it easier for communities to be involved in running services. Network participants have identified that partnership working between services and communities should be given more of a priority. Though there are examples of communities adding value without any support from mainstream services, some investment, advice, and support will be required in most instances.

Better links with Neighbourhood Policing

Regional and national research suggests that collaboration with neighbourhood policing is one of the more successful areas for neighbourhood management. Regional research and experience suggests that despite this, there is potential for improvement.

6. Future of the North East Neighbourhoods Network

The challenges and opportunities identified during 2009/10 provide an agenda for the work of the network in the coming year. There is an opportunity for the NENN to help address the regional variations in skills and knowledge and to share ideas. Experience of the NENN in the last year has demonstrated a strong demand for networking opportunities for sharing practice, ideas, and skills. A key issue will be to continue the work started in 2009/10 to support local services to develop their evidence base. The proposed theme for 2010/11 is *More for Less* with a focus on three elements:

- Community Responsibility
- Partnership working: informal and formal
- Stronger local evidence base through improved self-evaluation

³ Delivering Efficient Corporate and Transactional Services
<http://www.localpartnerships.org.uk/PageContent.aspx?id=136&tp=>

SECTION TWO

ARRANGEMENTS IN EACH LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA⁴

DARLINGTON

Community Partnerships

Community Partnerships have been established in each of Darlington's 11 priority wards. The main aim of a Community Partnership is to improve the quality of life for the residents of the area it represents. Members meet regularly, consider all aspects of community life and seek ways, in partnership with others, to identify what needs to be improved and develop responses. Five year Local Action Plans have been developed by the partnerships by each of the areas.

Though the partnerships respond to local issues, they are also integral to Darlington's Sustainable Community Strategy: *One Darlington: Perfectly Placed* which is concerned with economic prosperity & jobs, safer communities, good education, decent housing and better health, fostering a new sense of community among residents, and "closing the gap" on disadvantage.

Community Partnerships are resident-led and are supported by Community Development Workers. They work with partners such as the local authority, the Police, Primary Care Trust, local businesses and schools and take a lead in regenerating their local neighbourhoods by identifying issues, developing projects to address these issues and securing external funding. There is a Community Partnerships Steering group which brings together representatives from each of the local partnerships to share practice/idea/issues and provide a link with the Darlington Partnership.

What do the Community Partnerships do?

The 11 Darlington Community Partnerships are at different stages in their development but are already making a difference. For example: new play areas and parks, summer play schemes, community events, environmental improvements/activities, intergenerational project, sports activities.

Contacts & links

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<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/ConnectingwithCommunities/CommunityPartnerships/CommunityPartnerships.htm>

Further information on the community partnerships steering group:

<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/ConnectingwithCommunities/CommunityPartnerships/communitypartnershipsteeringgroup.htm>

⁴ As at June 2010

DURHAM

Area Action Partnerships

There are 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) within the County Durham boundary. The AAPs are quite diverse in terms of both their geographical area and the size of the resident population. East Durham AAP is the most highly populated with a total of over 92,000, whilst Weardale has only just over 8,000 people. Each partnership has a small budget and is supported by County Council staff. Each is made up of elected members from organisations such as the County Council, town and parish councils, and health, police, fire service, community & voluntary groups, and the public. AAPs meet at least six times a year and public area forum meetings are held at least twice a year.

The AAPs are intended to be a key way of engaging with both local people and other organisations and partnerships that operate within the area. The main priority of the AAPs is to ensure that action is taken to deliver quality, cost effective services that will meet the needs of the local area. They aim to reflect the interests of the local communities that they serve and encourage residents to take an active interest in their local area.

The functions of AAPs are based around four themes:

- Engagement with communities - shaping local identities allowing them to have a clear, strong voice
- Empowerment - involving the local people to help shape decisions, policy, and services
- Local action resolving local issues quickly and effectively by targeting key priorities
- Reviewing performance - improving access to local performance information to help understanding of service requirements

There is no standard approach to engagement at a neighbourhood level – this is left to each partnership to consider given their local circumstances.

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Community led

There are a few community partnerships, though they vary in the level and scope of activity. A small number run services and deliver projects e.g. Shotton Partnership. Much of the county already has parish or town councils and it is intended the whole county will be parished following the electoral boundary review. Durham had three government funded neighbourhood management pilots in Stanley, North Peterlee and Easington/Horden which have all ceased as funding came to an end. However, Stanley and Peterlee Town Councils are interested in adopting a neighbourhood management approach, subject to availability of resources.

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GATESHEAD

Neighbourhood Management

Neighbourhood Management is part of Gateshead's long-term plan to ensure local services meet local needs, expectations and are accountable to local people by:

- bringing service providers together with each other and with local people
- changing or realigning local services as appropriate
- creating structures to shape and fund future service delivery

The council's aim is to "to improve the quality of people's lives, by providing communities with someone they can turn to who has responsibility for dealing with problems at the neighbourhood level; committing service providers to redesign the way services are delivered and ensure that service providers are held to account by the local community for the quality of services they provide."

The council has a mainstream neighbourhood management service located within Community Based Services. There is a small team of area co-ordinators and partnership officers who work at an area and neighbourhood level. The Gateshead Community Network also supports neighbourhood working in some areas e.g. by undertaking neighbourhood level community consultation and surveys.

Area Forums

The Council aims to work more closely with neighbourhoods, so that local people and communities have more influence over the services they receive.

In order to achieve this, the council:

- is strengthening the role of ward councillors as champions for their local community
- has set up an Area Forum in each of the five areas of the borough, led by local ward members. The Forums bring together the Council, the Health Service, the Police, the Fire Service, the Gateshead Housing Company, the voluntary sector, Nexus and other local organisations to co-ordinate and monitor local services, solve problems and help local people to have a voice. They do not have any delegated budgets. The meetings are open to the public.
- has reorganised the Cabinet so that each of the five areas has a Cabinet member with direct responsibility for what happens in the area. This gives local communities a direct link into the Cabinet.

Some direct service delivery is being organised on an area basis. For example, small multi-skilled teams who provide environmental services such as like street cleansing, ground maintenance and removing graffiti. There is also a neighbourhood warden service. The Gateshead Housing Company involves partners and residents in identifying neighbourhood issues and developing responses e.g. regular estate walkabouts open to residents and agencies.

Neighbourhood Working

Though formal structures are at an area level, the council recognises that neighbourhoods are not all the same. It aims to research the needs of neighbourhoods and develop appropriate responses. For example:

- There is a dedicated neighbourhood management team which works closely with residents and partners in areas covered by the Bridging Newcastle Gateshead Initiative
- Neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood agreements in priority areas

- There has been a government funded neighbourhood management programme for the Wrekenton area, based on the national pathfinder model, though it is due to close in June 2010.

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HARTLEPOOL

Neighbourhood Management Strategy

Hartlepool has a Neighbourhood Management Strategy which aims to promote democracy by a strengthening community influence, improving services and outcomes for local people. The Neighbourhood Management vision is for Hartlepool to be *a place where people have pride and want to live and stay, with everyone taking part, and everyone understanding each others' needs.*

The strategy for delivering this vision is:

- Ensuring appropriate governance is in place that enables the meaningful participation and empowerment of communities in local government decision making processes, supported by effective community development work that increases cohesion and enables all sections of the community to make a positive contribution.
- Shaping public services around the residents and communities that use them, by ensuring joined up services across the Authority at a local level that add value to other services such as Neighbourhood Policing, Health Services, and the Private and Voluntary Sector.
- Improving quality of life and tackling deprivation in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods by ensuring services are responsive to local need through good quality community planning that facilitates effective and sustainable change.

The main objectives are to:

- Empower local people to have a greater influence
- Increase community cohesion
- Promote the involvement of everyone in making a positive contribution especially children and young people
- Improve services by making them more responsive to local need
- Improve outcomes for local people particularly in our disadvantaged areas
- Increase resident satisfaction with their local area as a place to live
- Build trust and confidence between service providers and communities

This strategy complements existing Community and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies and contributes towards locally adopted outcomes and targets. In particular the strategy contributes towards Outcome 28 *'Empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and the delivery of services* – measured by the percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions in their local area (NI 4), and Outcome 30 *'Improving quality of life and ensuring service providers are more responsive to neighbourhood needs with particular focus on disadvantaged areas* – measured by the percentage of residents who feel satisfied with their local area as a place to live (NI 5).

Neighbourhood Management Delivery

Neighbourhood Management in Hartlepool is now mainstream funded. Hartlepool is split into three areas: North, Central and South. Each area has a consultative forum which considers local issues and concerns, and information on what's happening in the area. The forums aim to ensure that residents are better informed about the way council services and other public services are run and allow residents to get involved in the decision making process. Each forum is made up of local councillors and resident representatives. A Councillor acts as chair and a locally elected resident representative is the vice chair. Service providers are in attendance and meetings are open to the public. There are also police and community safety forums for each of the three areas which feed into the area forums. There are close links between neighbourhood management and neighbourhood policing.

Each area has a Neighbourhood Manager plus Neighbourhood Coordinators (Highways & Environmental services), Community Development Officers, Anti-Social Behaviour Officers and Environmental Supervisors. A variety of tools are used including community development, neighbourhood agreements, action planning, participatory budgeting⁵, problem-solving groups, co-location of services and staff. The Central Area co-location service delivery point was awarded Exemplar status by the Home office in 2009.

Though each of the three areas covers around 13,000 households, intervention at smaller neighbourhood level in priority neighbourhoods is part of the town's strategy and practice. Neighbourhood Action Plans have been produced for priority neighbourhoods linked to themes of the town's Community Strategy/Local Area Agreement, but tailored to neighbourhood issues.

Each forum has an £87,000 minor-works budget to address local needs on environmental, highway, community safety and housing issues. There is Community Pool which provides grants to community groups, with priority being given to disadvantaged areas, but it is not delegated to area forums.

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Hartlepool New Deal for Communities – “Hartlepool Revival”

The Neighbourhood Management Project in the Hartlepool Central Area will play a key role in the NDC mainstreaming and succession strategy, particularly in the areas of community safety and environmental services, and it has created and strengthened structures that will enable NDC residents to influence the delivery of services beyond the lifetime of NDC. The NDC Neighbourhood Management Project is now an integral part of Hartlepool's Neighbourhood Management mainstream service.

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⁵ Hartlepool is one of 17 Participatory Budgeting Pilots

MIDDLESBROUGH

Neighbourhood Management

In April 2009 Middlesbrough Council mainstreamed its Neighbourhood Management activities into three teams covering the North, East and West of the town with a single Neighbourhood Manager presence for the Hemlington ward in the South of the town. The teams focus on undertaking activity in those wards which have the highest levels of disadvantage in the town. They combine a neighbourhood management focus on improving service delivery through partnership working with high levels of community engagement.

Each neighbourhood has its own plan highlighting actions to improve the quality of life for local residents. The key to neighbourhood working is co-ordinating and maximising the use of local resources (funding, staff, expertise, facilities, untapped potential in local people) and working in partnership to focus those resources towards local priorities. The whole approach is underpinned by a focus on the development of positive, supportive and effective relationships with residents and services alike.

Community Councils

There are 23 ward level community councils across Middlesbrough. They are the first level opportunity for community involvement. The councils are funded by Middlesbrough Council, meetings are held every 6-8 weeks. The councils are ward councillor-led groups which provide information, identify local issues, seek local solutions where possible with front line services, and refer issues to agencies and/or Cluster Groups. The community councils also encourage local community action.

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Middlesbrough Partnership Community Forum/Cluster Groups

There are four (North, South, West and East) Cluster Groups across Middlesbrough which meet together on a quarterly basis as the Middlesbrough Partnership Community Forum. The Community Forum is a vehicle for engaging with residents in Middlesbrough about issues that affect their areas. It provides a mechanism for residents to influence the work of Middlesbrough Partnership and key service providers including the Police, Primary Care Trust and Middlesbrough Council. Each Community Council elects up to four Community Forum (Cluster Group) members at their AGM who can represent the views of their community. Ward Councillors are automatic members of their Cluster Group.

Cluster members represent their Cluster Groups on the Partnership's thematic groups which include:

- Supporting Children and Young People
- Creating Stronger Communities
- Creating Safer Communities
- Securing Environmental Sustainability
- Enhancing the Local Economy
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing

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West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust

Formerly a New Deal for Communities Programme, a key succession objective is the ensuring the "community continues to be involved in deciding the future of West Middlesbrough and further improvements to the local area". As part of its succession strategy, the Trust's Neighbourhood Management Group is continuing. Tools include the *U-Choose* community grants programme which uses a participatory budgeting model.

Contact:

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NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

Policy

Newcastle's approach to neighbourhood management and community empowerment aims to:

- Strengthen community leadership and devolution of decision making, with ward members better supported to act as advocates for, and leaders of, communities.
- Provide a comprehensive evidence-based understanding of our communities, their concerns, needs and aspirations; along with the means to performance manage, with them, improvement and change.
- Improve community involvement with greater empowerment giving people the confidence to become involved.
- Improve local delivery of services with identified local needs clearly being addressed.
- Join up organisations and activity at a neighbourhood level where things are best dealt with at that level.
- Support the delivery of key regeneration programmes by helping to ensure that they are relevant and responsive to local needs.

Ward co-ordination: Neighbourhood Charters

Each of the wards of the city has a Ward Committee consisting of three local councillors. Council officers and other public services attend. The Committees are supported by Ward Co-ordinators. The committee consults and works with local residents and businesses, agencies and voluntary and community sector organisations to identify local issues and develop responses. They also provide a link between city strategies and neighbourhoods. Although ward co-ordination is not new, it has been revamped as a key element of the city's community engagement strategy. Local needs/issues have been re-appraised using consistent research tools. A wider range of community engagement methods are being tried. *Neighbourhood Charters* are being developed for each ward. The charters are local agreements between the community, the council, and partners such as the police and health service. The purpose of a charter is to help to deliver more responsive services at a local level to improve the quality of life.

Each Ward Committee has a small grant aid budget which can be used to provide financial assistance to community groups or voluntary organisations. Ward budgets range from 20k to 45k, depending on size and the level of disadvantage. Priority is given to those projects which help combat social exclusion and help promote community cohesion. For example grant aid has been given to community organisations for general running costs, equipment, summer play activities, community festivals, day trips, establishment costs, small scale building and environmental improvements.

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Neighbourhood Response Teams

There are neighbourhood response teams (including wardens) who are responsible for keeping neighbourhoods clean and green and taking a more strategic and proactive approach to finding solutions to longer term issues. There are 12 Neighbourhood Response Managers, each responsible for two wards, who work closely with Ward Committees and local residents. The NRMS are involved in a range of partnerships developing environmental projects to benefit neighbourhoods. Each ward has a *Ward Capital & Support Fund* for local priorities which meet the criteria of the fund.

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Neighbourhood Management

There is no mainstream neighbourhood management service, but there are several neighbourhood management initiatives in the west end of the city. *Benwell Neighbourhood Management* is an award-winning resident-led initiative managed by Home Group Ltd in partnership with Bridging NewcastleGateshead, Newcastle City Council, and Northumbria Police. The initiative seeks to respond to any local issues, but has a particular focus on housing, environment and community safety. It has used Weeks of Action to develop community charters. Its focus for 2010/11 will be on neighbourhood agreements and community cohesion.

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Scotswood and West Benwell Renewal area delivers a neighbourhood management process named "Managing Neighbourhoods Through Transition" with a dedicated Neighbourhood Manager, employed by the council & funded via Bridging NewcastleGateshead. Based within Localised Services, the brief is to manage Scotswood and West Benwell development area through the transitional phase. Local objectives, neighbourhood interventions, and solutions to issues are guided by local residents. Scotswood NM does not have a dedicated and funded team but draws upon mainstream services to target local priorities. The process also leads and supports a range of regeneration activity and programme delivery with a focus on engagement, involvement and communication. Void and land management of the clearance areas are also part of the process. Over seven years the process has achieved a range of community and social benefits, winning awards for improving quality of life.

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The successor body to Newcastle New Deal for Communities, *Centre West*, is a new neighbourhood organisation, led by local people. Using a local asset base and employing neighbourhood management principles, Centre West is seeking to bring ongoing change to communities and to make sure residents have a voice in local decisions.

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Area based regeneration

As well as delivery of major housing regeneration in areas such as Scotswood and Walker and intensive targeted socio-economic regeneration in Cowgate, Area Based Regeneration has developed and is delivering an approach based around local regeneration strategies. The latter identify the physical, social and economic needs of areas within the City's five Strategic Commission areas and establish projects and multi-agency response accordingly. Key to the approach is partnership working with the public, private, and third sector, with the communities of these areas playing a vital role in ensuring that they contribute toward shaping and improving the place in which they live.

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IDEA Web link

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=17599605>

NORTH TYNESIDE

Area Forums

There are four Area Forums which aim to:

- increase democratic participation by local people
- encourage openness and transparency
- assist the council to achieve Best Value and continuous improvement in service delivery
- play a role in scrutiny and in holding the executive to account
- complement partnership working by providing a mechanism for the views of residents to be fed into the various partnership boards and the North Tyneside Strategic Partnership
- develop area plans to inform the Community Plan
- improve community leadership for the benefit of the whole area.

The forums provide an opportunity:

- for people who live and/or work in the area to discuss issues of common concern
- for local people to understand and influence the way in which services are provided in their area

The Area Forums are consultative bodies with no decision-making powers. They are led by ward councillors, with partner agencies in attendance, and open to the public. The ward councillors at each Area Forum, in consultation with local residents, make recommendations on how some of the environmental, roads and pavement budget is spent in a particular area.

Neighbourhood Working

The area forums cover a fairly large geographical area and each includes a number of neighbourhoods. The council has a small resource to support community engagement and limited neighbourhood tools such as surveys, walkabouts, drop-ins, and ward surgeries. VODA, the voluntary sector co-ordinating body, also provides some support for community engagement, but with limited resources. There was a neighbourhood management initiative in part of the Riverside and Chirton Wards but this project was time limited. The lessons learnt are now being rolled out as part of the wider engagement work with communities.

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NORTHUMBERLAND

Area Committees

There are three local authority area committees covering the north, west and south east of the county. Each covers a wide geographical area. These are council-led advisory and consultative committees. The Area committees administer the Community Chest for their respective area. These are grants to support local action by community and voluntary sector organisations £90,000 is available to each area. In addition each councillor as a small ward budget.

Area Partnerships

Parallel to the area committees are the three area partnerships of the Northumberland Strategic Partnership. Area partnerships are made up of representatives of elected councils (county, town, parish), Chairs of Community Forums, service providers and VCS representatives.

Area partnership purpose:

- Community leadership – identifying priorities, influencing, advocacy
- Encouraging development of more responsive services
- Partnership working
- Ensuring that the community voice is heard

Instrumental in fulfilling this role is the preparation and subsequent implementation of an Area Implementation Framework (AIF). This AIF outlines the aspirations and ambitions of those communities living in South East, West and North Northumberland. This involves defining specific targets for its geographic areas aimed at “narrowing the gap” between the most deprived and more affluent communities.

Community Forums

Covering smaller geographical areas than the area partnerships, 27 Community Forums are being established across the county to:

- Help the council and the NSP to be better informed about the different issues for the different communities of Northumberland
- Create an opportunity for the wider community to come together to share local knowledge and concerns and meet with public sector providers to work together to tackle local issues and suggest solutions
- provide another way in which communities can communicate with the democratically elected representatives from unitary and local councils

There is a protocol on how Community Forums operate. They are about facilitating partnership working at a local level rather than being organisations in their own right. The forums are gatherings of people and organisations who are willing to work together to improve the quality of life in their towns, villages and neighbourhood. The forums are chaired by a locally elected Chair and supported in administration by the appointment of a locally based “host”. Chairs come from a range of backgrounds that include parish and town councillors, community activists such as trustees of local community organisations. Hosts include parish councils, local CVSs and development trusts.

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Community led

In addition to the County Council and Strategic Partnership structures, there are some community led arrangements in particular localities. Most areas have a parish or town council. Some areas are covered by community partnerships which typically bring together local communities, business, town/parish councils, voluntary organisations, and the County Council. The majority of these are also social enterprises, operating as

Development Trusts. For example, Prudhoe Community Partnership is a development trust which runs public services, promotes local partnership working, acts as an advocate for the town, and undertakes regular community consultation. Another example is the Improving Croft and Cowpen Quay (ICCQ) Partnership in Blyth. Hosted by Guinness Trust, it uses the influencing model of neighbourhood management. Recently it has been commissioned to develop neighbourhood agreements in other parts of the county.

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Prudhoe Community Partnership

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REDCAR AND CLEVELAND

Area Committees

The borough has five Area Committees. Because of the geographical nature of the borough, area committees cover whole settlements rather than neighbourhoods e.g. Redcar. Their remit is primarily the cleaner, greener, safer agenda and is there to support aspects of the delivery of the Local Area Agreement in areas/neighbourhoods and to respond to local issues. The Area Committees are led by local ward members, with service providers in attendance. Though the meetings are open to the public, they operate as committees (mini-cabinets) of the council. Meetings include a well-used section on questions from the public. Questions are mainly about environmental issues/services. Each area has a local delegated grants budget of £4-6k per ward to be spent on environmental and community safety improvements.

Neighbourhood Management

There is a recently established neighbourhood management service which is concerned with direct service delivery, community involvement and co-ordination. In April 2010, the borough introduced radical changes in service delivery. Front line council services including inspection (highways, play areas etc), clean & green, countryside, libraries and school crossing patrols have been reorganised on an area & neighbourhood basis. Staff have been re-designated neighbourhood inspectors/workers and line-managed by neighbourhood officers. Staff will be encouraged to respond to local needs and take a more "joined up" approach. Libraries will be service delivery contact points.

The new service is not just about direct service delivery. It will be overseen by nine neighbourhood managers who will have a neighbourhood focus. They will:

- ensure the council and partner services meet local needs
- take the lead on development of neighbourhood plans
- champion neighbourhoods & draw in additional resources
- facilitate community involvement
- act as a link officer for ward members

Community action planning has been undertaken recently with support from the NE IEP.

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SOUTH TYNESIDE

Community Area Forums

The borough is divided into six areas, each with a Community Area Forum (CAF). Their remit is to support the delivery of the Local Area Agreement in areas/neighbourhoods and to respond to local issues. CAFs are led by all the local ward members, with service providers in attendance. Though the meetings are open to the public, they operate as committees of the council. Levels of public attendance vary but is typically 10-20. Each area has a local delegated grants budget of around £60k to be spent on environmental (70%) and social (30%) projects.

Neighbourhood Working

Though there is an area structure in place, the borough recognises that residents tend to relate to neighbourhoods rather than areas. It has identified around 70 distinct neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood Action Planning and intervention has taken place in selected priority neighbourhoods using a variety of neighbourhood initiatives, including neighbourhood management. Though the commitment to neighbourhood working continues, it is now predominantly supported through area teams rather than neighbourhood initiatives. The council also supports 21 community centres with local management committees.

Area Teams

There are three area teams of officers, each working across two CAF areas. The purpose of area teams is to lead area and neighbourhood working to improve the well being of our communities, and reduce inequalities, by:

- Developing a greater understanding of area and neighbourhood priorities, opportunities and challenges by gathering and analysing community intelligence
- Engaging communities to have a greater voice in local decision making and the delivery of services at an area and neighbourhood level by developing appropriate opportunities and mechanisms
- Developing and coordinating plans at an area and neighbourhood level which bring together partners actions to address both strategic and local needs and priorities
- Supporting and advising elected members to respond to the needs of communities and champion issues at an area and neighbourhood level
- Developing and sustaining existing and new geographical working arrangements and structures
- Working with communities to enable them to identify needs, clarify objectives and take action to meet these

Area and neighbourhood working: 10 principles

1. *Working with residents* – residents are the local experts who will design and influence the services they receive
2. *Working with Community Champions* – the important role of the elected Councillor and the power of local democracy
3. *Working in partnership* – through the Local Strategic Partnership, Community Area Forum and Neighbourhood Partnership
4. *Making a difference* – Being solution focused and working with communities to performance manage and evaluate the services we deliver
5. *Creating self-sufficient and sustainable communities* – breaking the cycle of dependency and co-producing outcomes with residents
6. *Tackling inequality and improving cohesion* – being inclusive and targeting the whole community
7. *Understanding the evidence* – working with residents to understand the results of consultation as well as information analysis
8. *Being flexible* – to meet changing needs and circumstances, recognising the diversity of our communities
9. *Maximising Value for Money* – balancing demand and ensuring efficiency

10. *Building capacity* – community development and building capacity of our stakeholders

Review

Following a recent evaluation, arrangements for area and neighbourhood working are under review. Though a decision has not yet been made, a strengthening of neighbourhood working is being considered via a “total neighbourhoods approach”.

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STOCKTON

Area Partnerships

There are four Area Partnerships (APs) that bring together the voluntary and community sector, Ward Councillors, local business, agencies and residents associations to influence services provided within their areas. They are open to the public. Typical public attendance is 15-35.

Area Partnership role:

- Provide a mechanism for consultation and engagement on the community priorities /spatial element of the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement. The information provided, where possible, should be drilled down to the specific Area Partnership Board geographical area or lower.
- Provide a mechanism to engage resident groups in their geographical area.
- Feed resident views into the LSP board and feed information/consultation back into their constituent resident groups.
- Provide a mechanism for the community to challenge public sector, third sector and private sector performance/activity.
- Provide a mechanism for the community to influence policy development and action planning for their spatial areas.
- Responsible for allocating some of the Local Transport Plan Funding and the area based part of the Communities Fund.
- Provide a mechanism for awareness raising of external funding opportunities and as a partnership, to potentially bid for funding or support an organisation to run a project on behalf of the partnership.

Neighbourhood Management

Parkfield and Mill Lane

Originally a national neighbourhood management pathfinder, this award-winning neighbourhood management programme continues to operate with a reduced level of resource in the Parkfield and Mill Lane area. Using a neighbourhood management influencing model it seeks to improve the quality of life and local services by bringing service providers and residents together to identify local priorities and develop responses.

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St. Ann's Development Board

The St. Ann's Development Board managed a government funded neighbourhood management programme based on the pathfinder model. The board is made up of local residents from the neighbourhood, including local Ward Councillors. Service Providers attend the Board as advisors. Government funded came to an end in March 2010, but the partnership is still in place.

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SUNDERLAND

The city of Sunderland is divided into five areas, each with an Area Committee led by elected members. Each area also has an Area Network made up of voluntary and community groups. The Area Network is represented on the Area Committee. The area structure aims to facilitate effective local working between residents, statutory, voluntary, and community organisations which will lead to better, more responsive services.

Area Committees

Area Committees cover between four to six local authority wards. They meet on a regular basis, act as a focal point, bring together people from those wards: all elected members that represent a ward within that area, Local Strategic Partnership representatives, service delivery partners, and representatives of the Area Network.

Each local Area Committee has lead responsibility for the development of a Local Area Plan (LAP), which:

- supports delivery of the city-wide Local Area Agreement at an area level
- identifies the main priorities for the improvement of the area
- sets out actions in response to identified issues

Area Committees:

- oversee the effective implementation of area plans
- monitor the quality, effectiveness, and performance of mainstream services delivered by the council and other main providers in the area
- actively encourage local residents to become involved in decision making on matters which affect them

Each area is supported by a small cross directorate officer team led by an Area Officer. There are delegated budgets:

- Strategic Initiatives Budget - c£250k to support the delivery of the Local Area Plan
- Community Chest – c£50k for smaller community led projects

Though the structure is based around areas and not neighbourhoods, there is recognition that not all neighbourhoods are the same. Some of the actions by an area committee may focus on specific neighbourhoods.

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Area Networks

Area Network meetings take place in each of the five areas of Sunderland, bringing together local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations to work together. Area Networks aim to:

- develop and share good local VCS practice
- develop the capacity and influence of the VCS across the City through the development of the Sunderland Community Network at an area level
- maximise the opportunity to have constructive dialogue and partnership working between the Council, other public services, and the wider VCS

Three delegates from each of the Area Networks represent the VCS (not their own organisation) at their local Area Committee, influencing strategic policies and practice that affects local communities and the VCS. These delegates take forward issues on behalf of the whole VCS in their area and report back, providing a two-way flow of communication between the Network and the Area Committee. One of these delegates co-chairs their Local Area Network. The council provides a community development co-ordinator in each area to support the engagement of local people. The Area Networks are administered by the Sunderland Community Network.

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Back on the Map

Back on the Map is the New Deal for Communities programme for Hendon and the East End of Sunderland. The £54million programme runs from 2001 to 2011 and is delivering improvements to the area in housing and environment, health, community safety, education and employment. Tools include a community-led partnership, community grants allocated using participatory budgeting model.

Back on the Map will continue beyond March 2011 as a charitable trust. Neighbourhood Management is part of the succession strategy. The NDC set up and funded a Neighbourhood Management model in Hendon ward in partnership with the City Council which will engage with the local communities to see better delivery of mainstream services. Back on the Map itself will have its own small staff team who will work with, and be co-located with, the NM team.

Back on the Map will have three specific aims:

- to support the community to have an influencing role
- to continue to build a stronger community and
- to contribute to the creation of a better place

The latter is largely housing driven. Back on the Map is now the largest private landlord in the area and has succeeded in advocating Selective Licensing for private landlords which will run as part of the NM model. Back on the Map has its own landholdings and will be developing new housing over the coming years. There will be a new Board of trustees, with a majority drawn from the local community.

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