

## Housing, Regeneration and Planning

# Tackling Multiple Deprivation in Communities: Considering the Evidence

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There is a long history of geographically focused programmes to tackle disadvantage in Scotland. But throughout decades of regeneration activity, many areas have remained at the 'foot of the table' of relative deprivation. This desk based report aims to:

- provide an understanding of the current context for geographically focused community regeneration activity in Scotland;
- explore the impacts of previous community regeneration interventions; and
- outline the challenges for policy makers in developing effective community regeneration approaches in the future.

## Main Findings

- The approach since 1996 has been to use relatively modest programmes as 'catalysts' to test new ways of working and to develop appropriate local solutions to problems. But there is little evidence that this has brought about significant change in the way that mainstream funds are used.
- Throughout, the programmes have been carefully evaluated. But a recurring theme has been the lack of local data to set a baseline and to measure progress - and that there has not been an agreed standard set of measurable indicators.
- Community engagement has been an important part of the approach. But the increased link to wider approaches and to community planning appears to have made effective community engagement more difficult to sustain in some areas.
- Partnership working has been an important theme. More recent approaches have tied regeneration activity into community planning. There has been a growing focus on outcomes – with clearer and more comprehensive links between national and local outcomes.
- Across Britain there is a lack of solid evidence of the overall impact of geographically targeted programmes on multiple deprivation. Such evidence as there is suggests that the gap between the most deprived areas in Scotland and the rest has not closed in any substantial way.
- There has often been an imbalance between physical, social and economic programmes. They have been run by different organisations with different priorities.
- The moves in Scotland to more flexible approaches; a reduction in the number of funding streams (and a removal of much ring fencing) and an outcomes focused approach are mirrored in England and Wales.

## About this Study

In April 2009, the Scottish Government commissioned a desktop review of the context, impacts and challenges of tackling multiple deprivation in communities. The findings formed the basis for a presentation at the Scottish Government's Evidence Event on Tackling Multiple Deprivation in Communities in June 2009.

## Methodology

The report reviewed the existing literature and drew on the author's own knowledge. Literature included relevant research commissioned by Communities Scotland and the Scottish Government; evaluations of previous programmes to tackle concentrated disadvantage (and a current review of the Fairer Scotland Fund); and academic reviews and other literature on the range of approaches to tackling disadvantage in Scotland (and more generally, in Great Britain).

## The Context of Geographically Targeted Community Regeneration

The main geographically focused programmes which were considered in the review were:

- Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal (GEAR) – 1976-1987
- New Life for Urban Scotland -1989-1999
- Priority Partnership Areas (PPAs) and Regeneration Programme Areas – 1996-1999
- Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs) – 1999-2006
- Better Neighbourhood Services Fund (BNSF) -2001-2005
- Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) – 2005-2008
- Fairer Scotland Fund (FSF) – 2008-present

The GEAR project was an early partnership approach to the regeneration of a large part of the East End of Glasgow – one of the most deprived areas of Scotland. The main approach was to change physical conditions – with the largest expenditure on housing.

New Life for Urban Scotland extended the partnership approach to four other deprived areas in Scotland (where a long term partnership approach was used). Again the focus was mainly on physical regeneration – but, over time, there was greater emphasis on health, education and community safety. Community involvement was seen as a key element, although it was acknowledged that it did not go far enough.

Twelve Priority Partnership Areas (and nine smaller Regeneration Programme Areas) were established in 1996 following a bidding process. Funding (from the Urban Programme) was made available as a catalyst for change in these areas. These areas (and 13 new areas) became Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIP) in 1999. In addition there were 14 thematic SIPs established – most focusing on young people; two focusing on minority ethnic communities and one focusing on women prostitutes.

An overview<sup>1</sup> of evaluations of the SIPs found that there was genuine progress made in developing effective (and, sometimes, innovative) methods of community engagement. And one of the most positive outcomes was the development of partnership working.

But a lack of meaningful local data made it difficult to quantify impacts. The 'catalytic' impact of the SIPs was negligible, with limited mainstream take up of the approaches. And there were concerns that SIPs focused on individual projects, with less attention paid to cross-cutting approaches.

The Better Neighbourhood Services Fund (BNSF) aimed to help local authority areas with high levels of deprivation to improve the quality of local services. A thematic approach was used – and, for the first time, progress was to be measured against the local outcomes which were agreed by partners.

A series of topic reports<sup>2</sup> found that the outcome based approach can be effective - but it needs clarity about the most appropriate indicators of change. It called for an agreed standard set of indicators of change for disadvantaged areas. And it argued for greater integration between physical, economic and social planning.

In 2005, in response to the evaluations of the SIPs and BNSF, both programmes were brought together under a new Community Regeneration Fund (CRF). The main changes were to integrate regeneration work with community planning and to use an outcomes focused approach – with a Regeneration Outcome Agreement prepared by each Community Planning Partnership.

1 ODS Consulting (2006) *An overview of the Social Inclusion Partnership Programme: Communities Scotland*

2 Tribal (2004 -2006): Scottish Executive – a total of seven topic reports were published

An evaluation<sup>3</sup> found that Community Planning Partnerships broadly welcomed the move to an outcome focused approach to regeneration – and had seen improved partnership working as a result. There were difficulties in measuring progress against the outcomes – with relevant evidence hard to find. Some concerns were expressed that monitoring and scrutiny was too intensive.

In 2008, the CRF was replaced by the Fairer Scotland Fund (FSF). This was part of a wider range of changes introduced by the Scottish Government. In 2007, the Government agreed a Concordat with COSLA, setting out a new relationship between central and local government. This led to Community Planning Partnerships having the responsibility for preparing Single Outcome Agreements – linking local outcomes to the government's national outcomes.

The Fairer Scotland Fund replaced seven previous funds which had been targeted at tackling deprivation. By consolidating these funds, it was expected that community planning partners would find it easier to integrate services and deliver outcomes. The FSF is 'ring fenced' until 2010 – but not thereafter.

Early signs<sup>4</sup> are that there is growing skill and confidence in planning outcomes focused approaches - but monitoring and reporting still tend to be output and activity based. There is a perception that partnership working has improved – with a shared focus on outcomes. The combining of the seven programmes, along with a 'lighter touch' by Government in overseeing the programme, has been welcomed. There were mixed views about community engagement – with some concerns that it had been harder to engage communities in the more thematic approaches which operated at a wider community planning area.

## The Impact of These Programmes

Across Britain there is a lack of solid evidence of the overall impact of geographically targeted programmes on multiple deprivation. Such evidence as there is suggests that the gap between the most deprived areas in Scotland and the rest has not closed in any substantial way – and that deprived areas are particularly affected by economic downturn. Some commentators suggest that without targeted programmes the gap would have widened further. There is a need to understand the impact of programmes and to improve understanding of what works. That will require agreed indicators, better data at a local level, and more focus on impact (as well as process).

<sup>3</sup> ODS Consulting (2007) *Evaluation of the Implementation of Regeneration Outcome Agreements: Communities Scotland*

<sup>4</sup> ODS Consulting (2009) *Research to inform future approaches to tackling concentrated disadvantage in the context of community planning:* Research currently being carried out for the Scottish Government

There has often been an imbalance between physical, social and economic programmes. They have been run by different organisations with different priorities. There is a need to use the current focus on outcomes to develop a stronger shared approach to tackling the problems of the most disadvantaged areas.

Some key messages relate to the tailoring of support to the most disadvantaged people in a straightforward way; reflecting local needs and priorities and engaging with communities and service users.

The moves in Scotland to more flexible approaches; a reduction in the number of funding streams (and a removal of much ring fencing) and an outcomes focused approach are mirrored in England and Wales.

The population turnover in deprived areas does not seem to be substantially different from other areas – with the exception of the very poorest areas.

## Challenges to Effective Community Regeneration Policy in Scotland

There are serious concerns about the ability to assess the impact of regeneration programmes. Reliable and comparable information about the change in small areas is not available.

There have, particularly since 1999, been substantial changes in the structures and the people involved in regeneration. There is a sense that time is needed to allow the current arrangements to bed in. More support and training will be needed on outcomes focused planning, if it is to be embedded into the way that organisations work. And it is important to make sure that communities are in a position to influence decisions about their area.

Regeneration programmes have been intended to have a 'catalytic' effect. But there is little evidence that they have had any substantial impact on 'mainstream' budgets. Given the scale of problems in the most deprived areas, 'catalytic' programmes are not enough on their own. They will need to be complemented by the very much larger mainstream programmes – as well as national policies, including taxation, welfare to work and pensions.

This suggests that future approaches to successful regeneration (by the Government and community planning partners) should:

- include a particular focus on the most disadvantaged areas, particularly in urban areas;
- use community planning and Single Outcome Agreements to ensure that mainstream budgets do tackle concentrated disadvantage;
- be relatively light touch in relation to control and monitoring – but be aware that the lack of ring fenced budgets may make a focus on the most deprived areas less likely in some areas;
- continue to improve the data available and the evidence base of what works;
- give some continuity to what happens in local areas;
- undertake impact evaluations – and make sure that these take place after sufficient time has passed for change to have happened; and
- engage fully with and be responsive to service users and wider communities.

This document, along with full research report of the project, and further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>. If you have any further queries about social research, please contact us at [socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or on 0131-244 7560.



ISBN 978-0-7559-7595-2

