



# The End of Regeneration?

Improving what matters on  
small housing estates

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# About the Young Foundation

The Young Foundation brings together insight, innovation and entrepreneurship to meet social needs. We have a 55 year track record of success with ventures such as the Open University, Which?, the School for Social Entrepreneurs and Healthline (the precursor of NHS Direct).

We work across the UK and internationally – carrying out research, influencing policy, creating new organisations and supporting others to do the same, often with imaginative uses of new technology. We now have over 60 staff, working on over 40 ventures at any one time, with staff in New York and Paris as well as London and Birmingham in the UK.

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THE END OF REGENERATION  
First published in Britain in 2010 by

The Young Foundation  
18 Victoria Park Square  
London  
E2 9PF  
UK

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Printed by Solopress on 9lives Offset paper (FSC certified 100% recycled fibre) using vegetable inks.  
Cover illustration by Claire Scully. Designed and typeset by Effusion.

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# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who supported this project through giving their time and expertise. For varying reasons we would like to specifically thank: Yusuf Abdullah, Angela Borsos, Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Jackie Fox, Mandy Harris, Susan Hood, Keith Kintrea, Neil Kirby, Emma Leatherbarrow, Adrian Moran, Ian Moran, Inspector Alastair Orenca, Faye Radbourne, Mark Raymond, Tracey Richardson, Graham Stratford, Chris Wadhams and Tricia Zipfel.

## About the project

This project was funded by the Tenant Services Authority and managed by the Chartered Institute of Housing.



# Introduction

The ideas, approaches and lessons in this toolkit are based on work with residents and agencies on three small estates in Coventry, Kent and South Shields. Over nine months a team from the Young Foundation worked with people living and working on the estates to understand the reality of local deprivation and disadvantage. Over 130 people were involved in the work.

The project had three aims:

- take a holistic and innovative approach to thinking about deprivation by exploring the underlying problems keeping households in poverty, not just the surface symptoms
- involve people living and working on the estates in developing practical and rapid responses to alleviate local needs
- develop a practical and effective approach that could be shared with other small estates

The aim of this toolkit is to encourage local authorities, housing associations and other public agencies to think differently about how to break the cycle of entrenched poverty and disadvantage on small housing estates. It is designed to provide inspiration and practical support for professionals and practitioners in local government, housing and other statutory services. The stories are specific to the three neighbourhoods involved in this project but the lessons and approaches are transferrable to other areas.

This toolkit is accompanied by a comprehensive research and policy analysis, with recommendations to local and central government based on our work in the three estates.

## Deprivation and small estates

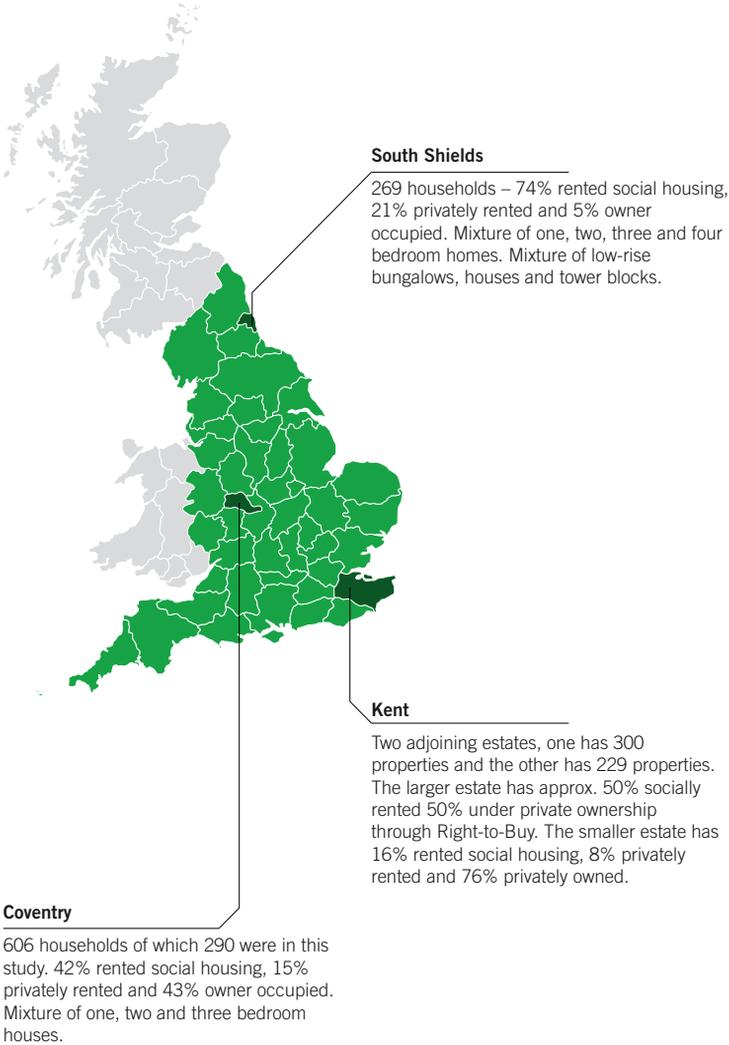
Up and down the country there are many small pockets of social housing where people experience persistent and profound deprivation. Often these are the most disadvantaged households in an area and are clustered together on one or two streets of a larger estate or in a corner of a neighbourhood.

All the usual indicators of deprivation are concentrated in these small areas: unemployment, low educational achievement, poor health, crime and anti-social behaviour – as are other problems, like higher than average rates of domestic violence or conflict between neighbours. Rightly or not, these areas tend to develop a reputation for being the worst places to live locally. Many people who are able to will try to move away, leaving behind those who are most vulnerable and in need.

This is a familiar picture to anyone working with disadvantaged communities of all sizes but on very small estates these problems are often intensified. Commonly the most deprived households are also the most socially excluded. Agencies and local politicians struggle to engage these residents so consequently they lack

a voice. As a result real experiences of poverty are often not heard and much-needed resources may be directed to other neighbourhoods instead.

**Figure 1: The Three Estates (the Young Foundation)**



Some estates are simply too small to attract substantial regeneration investment like Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding and New Deal for Communities (NDCs) programmes, which have channelled investment to deprived neighbourhoods in the past decade. And the other conventional approaches to revitalising neighbourhoods that may be funded out of mainstream budgets are often not appropriate for the most deprived small estates. Neighbourhood management, neighbourhood policing, ward forums, community committees or estate action groups (sometimes with small project budgets) all aim to improve

areas by engaging residents in decision-making about local needs and priorities. Yet there are a host of practical, social and emotional barriers that stop the most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents from getting involved in these. Some of the examples given by residents involved in this project were mistrust of public agencies, fear of reprisals from neighbours and lacking confidence to take part in meetings.

Arguably, both national and local approaches over the past decade have focused too much attention on addressing the symptoms of deprivation – crime, grime, anti-social behaviour – while too little emphasis has been placed on addressing the underlying social issues that keep particular neighbourhoods and estates in poverty.

Pressures on public sector spending for the coming years will mean local authorities and public agencies need new approaches to tackling old problems. The Small Estates Taskforce is a simple and practical way of working, designed to help practitioners and professionals to think differently about tackling entrenched deprivation, to develop practical and innovative responses, and rapidly put these into action.

## **What is in this toolkit?**

This toolkit describes the Small Estates Taskforce model and how it worked in practice in three small housing estates in England.

The toolkit has four sections. Each one contains case studies, practical examples and a summary of lessons learnt from the project:

- section one describes the Small Estates Taskforce model
- section two provides a step-by-step guide to running a Small Estates Taskforce
- section three looks at life on the three estates involved in this project; it describes the underlying social problems identified by residents and agencies and the practical initiatives developed by the local Taskforces
- section four is about ideas and inspiration; it includes case studies and examples of innovative projects and initiatives from around the world.

# 1 What is a Small Estates Taskforce?

In this section, we explain how the Small Estates Taskforce model works and the principles behind its development. Drawing upon learning from this project and over four years' work with deprived neighbourhoods across the country, we argue that regeneration should focus more on supporting the social and emotional needs of people living in deprived areas, as well as physical development and improvements to local services.

**What is a small housing estate?**

In this toolkit small estates are defined as areas of mixed housing with fewer than 500 households and a neighbourhood geography that gives them a distinct local identity.

**What is entrenched deprivation?**

Entrenched deprivation is defined as persistent and profound poverty and disadvantage that is characterised by multiple complex problems (such as generational worklessness, very low income, low educational achievement, chronic health problems) and is resistant to interventions to improve quality of life for people.

**What is the Small Estates Taskforce?**

The Small Estates Taskforce model brings together residents and agencies to work together for a limited period of time to understand the root causes of entrenched deprivation and develop innovative, practical and rapid responses.

## An innovative approach to tackling deprivation

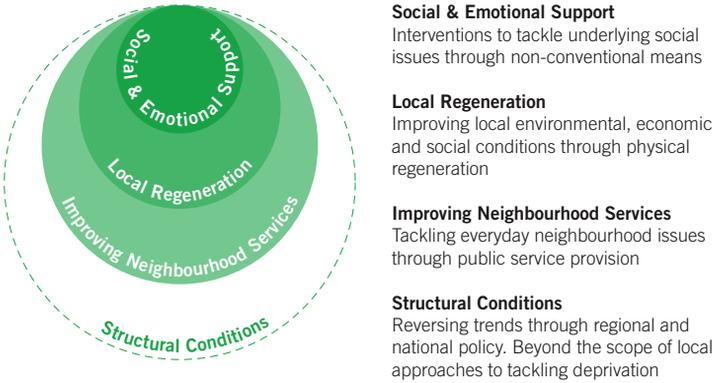
Drawing on learning from this project and over four years of work with deprived neighbourhoods in different parts of the country, the Young Foundation has identified three strategic approaches to tackling deprivation at the local level. These approaches are inevitably influenced by regional and national structural conditions, such as the economy and systems of power. However, whilst structural issues can significantly impact on local life, they are beyond the scope of localised strategies.

It is very unusual for local agencies to work together in a co-ordinated way to combine social and emotional support, local regeneration and improving neighbourhood services to tackle local deprivation.

Instead, they tend to focus on improving neighbourhood services like housing management, street cleaning or neighbourhood policing. If regeneration funding is available, improvements to the physical realm or new physical developments – often housing or retail led – are common approaches. On occasions neighbourhood regeneration includes initiatives to tackle localised worklessness or develop the local economy, although this is not widespread.

Very rarely do public agencies concentrate on social and emotional support to tackle entrenched deprivation.

**Figure 2: Strategic approaches to tackling local deprivation (the Young Foundation)**



The Small Estates Taskforce model focuses on this: encouraging residents and agencies to think about how underlying social problems contribute to, or intensify, experiences of disadvantage and poverty. The model uses familiar ways of working – action research, community engagement, rapid action planning and local partnerships – and focuses them on developing innovative, practical and rapid responses to alleviate these problems, and emphasises rapid local action as an objective over community empowerment.

The Taskforce model has been developed around six principles, designed to address problems that are specific to working with small, deprived housing estates. These are:

## 1 Thinking about deprivation in a holistic way

Much is understood about the complex and multi-dimensional nature of deprivation. Yet many public agencies still work in isolation from each other, resulting in many un-co-ordinated interventions being directed at disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Often these focus on tackling the symptoms of deprivation, like anti-social behaviour, graffiti, fly-tipping, dirty streets and vandalism, not the underlying social causes.

The Small Estates Taskforce model shifts this emphasis to focus on underlying social issues that intensify or contribute to deprivation on small estates. The aim is to identify immediate and long-term changes that can be made to improve quality of life for residents.

## 2 Using real voices to explain local problems

Official measures of deprivation, such as super output area (SOA) or ward statistics, can disguise the real extent of poverty and disadvantage in very small estates. This is because data is skewed by the presence of more affluent (or at least less deprived) households in other parts of the area. As a result resources are allocated to other estates or neighbourhoods that appear to have more pressing social needs.

**“Hearing these stories is invaluable. We rarely get this kind of information from the ground.”**

— Head of a Council Service, South Shields

Another problem arising from relying on statistical evidence is that many public services rely on complaints reporting as an indicator of local problems. In very deprived areas with multiple problems many issues go unreported, often because poor service is accepted as normal or because people don't trust public agencies. Anti-social behaviour is a frequently cited example. It is well recognised that official figures do not reflect real experience in places where residents fear violence or intimidation from neighbours – factors which can be amplified through proximity on an estate of a few hundred households.

**“Facilitator: What one thing would you like to see done on the estate?”**

**Service Manager: Get rid of reporting mechanisms as the way of allocating resources**

— Agencies workshop in Coventry

Another problem arising from using statistical evidence to identify deprivation is the difficulty in translating a general picture of disadvantage into the reality of peoples' individual experience. What does it mean to be a single mother living in a high-rise flat with chaotic and disruptive neighbours? Or to be an elderly man who is isolated, lonely and feels his community has changed beyond recognition?

**Real voices, local problems:**

The Small Estates Taskforce relies almost exclusively on first-hand accounts from residents to understand the reality of local problems. Stories and anecdotes about day-to-day problems and long-term experiences of life on the estates are collected through conversations with people living and working locally.

Public agencies like the opportunity to hear local stories. They offer refreshing, unedited messages about local life that can challenge existing perceptions about local problems.

### **3 Local people influencing outcomes, but this is not about empowerment**

The people who are living and working locally are central to this model. Ideally, a group of residents should be involved throughout the life of the Taskforce. However, the process is not about 'community empowerment' as it is typically recognised.

This is for two reasons. First, if community capacity is low, it will be difficult to involve residents in meaningful decision-making. Building community capacity takes time and commitment from agencies; time that will halt the momentum of the Taskforce, and may detract from developing practical initiatives to tackle pressing problems. The Taskforce model is about using local views and opinions to design rapid interventions.

Second, this way of working gives equivalent footing to the views of professionals working on the estates alongside those of residents. Residents involved in this project sometimes found it difficult to talk about problems with parenting or family life, domestic violence or change on the estates, preferring to focus on more tangible issues like crime and housing. In part this is because problems are entrenched and have come to be seen as normal, but also because they are sensitive and emotional subjects. However, the views of professionals working locally – such as estate officers, doctors, teachers, community health workers, social workers and those working in family support services like Sure Start – provided useful insights to life on the estates, exposing some of these more sensitive issues, and provided a valuable insight into understanding local issues. It is important to take into account evidence about what people do as well as what they say.

## 4 Focus on practical and rapid action

The model is designed to deliver innovative, practical and rapid responses to local problems.

To achieve this, the Small Estates Taskforce has been designed as a temporary body, set up for nine or 12 months to focus on prioritising a small number of issues and developing a small number of realistic and achievable actions. The aim is to generate commitment and momentum from all agencies involved and to demonstrate tangible results to residents. The speed of the process means it is not suitable for developing comprehensive regeneration proposals to tackle all the problems on an estate.

### **Practical and rapid action:**

- set clear timetables and deadlines
- focus on action, not drawn-out consultation exercises
- draw in people when you need them; not everyone will need to be involved at every stage or in all the details of the Taskforce
- appoint an independent chair to facilitate meetings.

## 5 ‘No holds barred’ ideas generation

The Young Foundation’s work on social innovation has found that organisational culture, hierarchy and bureaucracy are often obstacles to developing new ways of working. Where deprivation is entrenched the mindset of local agencies and residents can also be entrenched. People find it difficult to put constraints like lack of funding aside and concentrate on new ideas and approaches.

The Small Estates Taskforce model focuses on ‘no holds barred’ ideas generation. The aim is to free agencies from everyday constraints to focus on generating the right solution for local problems, even if that solution is a radical one. The question of *how* things can be done should come *after* the question of *what* can be done.

### **Generating radical solutions:**

- there are lots of creative techniques for helping people think differently (see page 32 for ideas)
- think about the dynamics between people before brainstorming sessions take place; to make people feel comfortable about giving feedback and suggesting ideas it might be better to separate residents and agencies, or frontline workers from management
- use practical examples and ideas from other places to provide inspiration.

## 6 Involve agencies that can make things happen

The Small Estates Taskforce model depends on having commitment and involvement from the right mix of people including: people who have direct experience of working on the estates, people who can galvanise residents to take part, and people who can take decisions, instigate action and allocate resources. Getting the right mix is essential:

- involving relevant people who can make decisions, as well as those who will be important in the delivery of the action plan, is essential
- if senior officers are invited to take part and delegate responsibility downwards, make sure it comes with the authority to make decisions
- involving the local agencies that can act on the priority issues is important, even if they are not used to working together.

**Practical lessons: Findings from the three estates**

The emphasis on looking at the three estates as whole places with interconnected problems, rather than focusing on one issue like anti-social behaviour or housing standards, brought to light a range of complicated social issues facing residents.

The problems identified were not new. However, this approach brought together council services, public agencies and professionals who would not usually work together to collaborate at a very local level. Gathering the local conversations and sharing these stories with the Taskforces allowed professionals to share ideas and co-ordinate their work with other frontline staff and agencies.

The following problems were identified by residents and agencies on the three estates (see section 3 for more detailed descriptions):

Unemployment is the greatest cause of deprivation and disadvantage but creates larger problems because people lose their friends and social supports as well as jobs. Where unemployment is high the effects are amplified across a community, impacting on shops, pubs and centres of social life.

Low self-esteem creates difficulties for residents, in particular around having the confidence to use local services or seek support.

Deprived estates are stigmatised; the estates were described as neglected, and in one in particular, residents are stigmatised and looked down upon by some local agencies and service providers.

Family instability and parenting problems play a part in perpetuating deprivation on these estates. Many of the children of unstable families have low self-esteem and low aspirations inherited from parents and grandparents.

Estate culture creates particular problems for young people who want to broaden their horizons and better themselves. Strong networks of extended family or peers put pressure on young people to 'stick with what they know' and not to challenge the way things are done locally.

## 2 Running a Small Estates Taskforce: A Step-by-Step Guide

In this section, we describe the process of setting up and running a Small Estates Taskforce. We discuss the main phases of the model, drawing on practical lessons from our work in the three small estates and providing tips based on what did and did not work for us.

**Figure 3: Small Estates Taskforce: Step-by-step guide (the Young Foundation)**



## **Phase 1 Understanding the root causes of local deprivation**

### **Step 1: Building support and securing commitment from local agencies**

The Small Estates Taskforce model needs support and commitment from local agencies because the final action plan will involve them in delivering change locally.

Building support for the Taskforce and negotiating with agencies to secure their commitment to the Action Plan is an on-going process. However, involving a wide range of organisations at the beginning of the Taskforce is an important step to securing long-term support. Requests for support from agencies will range from attending meetings or workshops to leading on actions once the Taskforce

disbands. However, the first step is to gain a commitment from agencies to listen to the findings from the local investigation, and depending on the issues identified, to commit to take part in the Taskforce.

### **Getting started: things to consider**

The local context will be vital in determining whether this approach is appropriate and there are issues to consider before any work begins.

### **Who should start the process?**

The Small Estates Taskforce model could be started and managed by anyone who is living or working on a small estate, from a group of residents to a housing association or local authority officer. It could be led by a neighbourhood management partnership covering several neighbourhoods, a Children's Centre, a headteacher or community development worker, anyone wanting to tackle the causes rather than the symptoms of the estates they cover. Equally, the model could be instigated at the senior level; politicians, chief executives or service managers who want to break the cycle of poverty and deprivation on particular estates. Those who start the process will inevitably form what we call the Core Development Group

### **Commitment to the approach:**

Not everyone will agree with the principles; decision makers may be uncomfortable with the emphasis on qualitative data and community development workers may not be happy that action is prioritised over empowerment. It is important that whoever leads the process is committed to the principles of tackling underlying problems with rapid and practical solutions

### **Local capacity:**

The strength of local agencies and their capacity to be involved in highly localised partnerships needs consideration. Changing the fortunes of people living on the most deprived small estates is a challenging, time-consuming process. Experience suggests that in areas where neither residents nor agencies are willing to commit themselves to involvement, this model is not appropriate; even if there are two or three committed people driving the process.

### Getting support for the Taskforce

From the start of our work on the three estates we spent time talking to councillors and officers to explain the project and explore what role they could play. This included speaking to:

- ward councillors
- executive officers, including children & young people and housing
- police inspectors
- street scene managers
- children’s centre managers
- primary school & secondary school head teachers
- community workers
- active local residents.

## Step 2: Conversations with residents

This step involves talking to people living and working locally to understand what life is really like on the estate, and how this experience compares to official analysis of local problems.

“ **Life growing up is hard as hell.  
Family and me ain’t doing too well.  
Half a dozen locked in a prison  
cell. And this is my story to tell.**

— Chorus from a song written by a young person in Coventry

The idea of ‘formal interviews’ can be intimidating for both residents and for people conducting them. It is better to think of this step as ‘organised conversations’ that can be carried out with one or two people in their own home, or with a group of residents or a local organisation in a community centre. Organised conversations should be carried out with a wide range of people living on the estate, including different age groups, ethnicities, religious groups, genders, length of residence and tenancies. The more conversations that are conducted, the more detailed picture of life on the estate will emerge. However, a limit on numbers should be set in order to fit the rapid timetable for the Taskforce. The aim is to enter into an open discussion about problems that allows residents to voice their views in a variety of settings, not to run a conclusive research study.

### **Practical lessons: Who did we talk to?**

We talked to 16 residents from each estate in an in-depth conversation of more than an hour. They were asked a range of questions about how living on the estate shapes their lives, day-to-day and over time. Questions included:

- how long had they lived on the estate?
- what had brought them there?
- had they been given a choice about moving to the estate?
- did they enjoy living on the estate?
- did they have friends and family in the neighbourhood?
- what were their sources of practical and emotional support?
- and what were their aspirations for the future?
- what kind of problems did they and their neighbours deal with on a daily basis?

They were also asked about important changes in their lives – such as having a baby, starting or losing a job, or retiring – and what kind of support they had needed, and received, from local services.

These conversations were supplemented by less structured discussions with groups of residents that took place in community centres, shops, schools and in some cases, walkabouts in the neighbourhood.

### **Practical considerations:**

- Most people felt comfortable talking freely about their lives. However, it is useful to have a list of questions to break the ice or help the conversation progress. For example, residents involved in this project were asked about their first memory of life on the estate.
- It is important to investigate local problems but it is also vital to talk about the good things; the tangible and intangible assets that could be the springboard for local change. These assets can play an important role when it comes to action planning.
- It is important to keep conversations with residents focused on underlying social issues not the symptoms of local deprivation. Residents who often talk to the council or other agencies will be used to discussing things like the state of the local environment or anti-social behaviour issues. While these are important factors in everyday quality of life, they should not dominate conversations. Ensure residents are aware of what conversations are about before they agree.

As well as interviewing current residents, it is helpful to speak to people who have moved away from the estate. This helps to understand why people might want to move and if the change has helped to improve their quality of life.

### Step 3: Conversations with agencies

Formal interviews with the local authority, local public agencies and community organisations are an essential part of the Taskforce model.

These conversations should involve a broad range of individuals, from those who work at the frontline in highly individualised and sensitive services, such as child protection, to those who work at a strategic level and are responsible for budgets and allocating resources.

Agencies and local organisations can bring a different and valuable perspective to local conversations. This is because many agencies are involved in work to support vulnerable families and individuals who are hidden from other residents, for example, work on domestic violence, alcohol abuse or parenting. It is important that the perspective of people who are working with residents is given an appropriate weighting alongside the opinions of residents.

Many of the most vulnerable and excluded residents on deprived small estates will not be comfortable taking part in interviews or group discussions. There is a risk their experiences will not be considered. This raises important questions about representation and local voice. However, the aim of the Small Estates Taskforce is to provide a model that encourages agencies to think differently and focus on rapid and practical local action, and not explicitly to develop community empowerment.

“ **There is little understanding of what good parenting is... children get very little emotional warmth**

— Interview, South Shields worker

**Practical lessons: Who did we talk to and how?**

<b>South Shields</b>	<b>Organised Conversations</b>	<b>Informal group Conversations</b>	<b>Total</b>
Residents	11	8	19
Ex-residents	2	0	2
Councillors	3	0	3
Agencies, services & local professionals	12	0	12

\* 12 interviews with practitioners included:

- community support worker at local mosque
- police sergeant & PC
- waste supervisor
- student welfare officer (secondary school)
- primary school head teacher
- housing area manager
- ASB officer
- voluntary sector youth club manager
- housing officer

**Step 4: Telling decision-makers about local issues**

Once all of the conversations are completed, they should be summarised in a report that can be presented to the local authority and all the relevant local agencies.

“ **Teenage parents can't rely on their own parents to look after their babies** ”

Interview, Coventry Worker

Stories and real experiences should be anonymised but direct quotes and descriptions should be used wherever possible. One or two paragraphs from a resident describing their own challenges and difficulties will convey more than a long report that doesn't use real voices.

“ They have a good community and seem to have elder people they can turn to for help and advice... we could learn a lot from them

Interview, South Shields resident talking about the Arab community

For public services, using this evidence to make decisions about allocating resources can be difficult to justify without robust evidence to back up findings. Some services will be happy to try new approaches based on conversations with local people and workers; others will be reluctant. This is understandable and we recommend that in these cases, local stories and conversations should help to guide more systematic investigation into emerging issues.

**Real voices, local stories:**

- using real stories to explain what life is really like for local people is a powerful way to communicate with public officials, especially those in senior positions who often do not spend much time in deprived estates
- local stories can help to stimulate thinking and generate new and innovative ideas.

**Practical lessons:**

We found in all three areas that the police felt less comfortable than other services about the strategic allocation of resources based on this kind of evidence, without further investigation. Other services and agencies like children’s services, social services, housing and health, were more convinced by the value of real stories; in particular, senior officers and service heads, who said they lack opportunities to hear detailed personal accounts of local life.

## Phase 2 Establishing an Estate Taskforce

### Step 1: Establishing the Taskforce

This step is about convening a temporary local Taskforce. Over its lifespan, the Taskforce will be responsible for:

- translating the fieldwork into an action plan
- continuing the process of gaining support from agencies and residents
- ensuring that local people are consulted on plans

- ensuring the action plan is adopted by local agencies or partnership to oversee its delivery.

To keep the Taskforce focused on these responsibilities it is recommended that it meet no more than four times, with lots of work happening behind the scenes in between meetings. This will help to develop momentum and focus the group on its immediate goals.

First Meeting	Establishing group and agreeing themes
Second Meeting	Generating Ideas
Third Meeting	Drafting an action plan and organising community consultation
Final Meeting	Finalising the action plan

## Step 2: Who should be part of the Taskforce?

Getting the right people onto the Taskforce is vital. It should involve a mixture of people who know the area, know the issues and can make decisions. It is also helpful to invite someone who is independent from the process, but has some experience of working with neighbourhoods and local agencies, to chair or facilitate the meetings.

The Taskforce needs to involve:

### **People who know the area**

The Taskforce should include people who are working within the estate, such as neighbourhood managers, housing officers, community development workers, housing officers, teachers, doctors, community health workers, anti-social behaviour officers, the Police and ward or parish councillors. The experience, insights and networks these individuals bring are invaluable and often the most innovative and practical ideas are generated by people who are working at the frontline.

Ideally, the Taskforce will include local residents – such as those interviewed as part of the local investigation – as well as local workers. However, this may not be possible on some estates because residents lack confidence or trust in local agencies. If residents do not become members of the Taskforce, they should be engaged through other means; through group discussions, door-knocking, events or street consultation.

### **People who know the issues**

Taskforce membership needs to reflect the issues being discussed. Identifying potential members of the Estate Taskforce should begin as soon as possible. However, membership should not be finalised until the fieldwork has been completed – so membership reflects the issues identified in local conversations.

It is likely that the local investigations will unearth some issues that are not routinely dealt with through localised partnership working. It may be necessary to involve agencies and services that do not commonly work together. These services may be highly professionalised, such as social or family services, or they may be services that traditionally operate at a wider geographical level. The knowledge and experience of staff in these services will be important.

### **Practical lessons: Involving residents in the Taskforces**

In South Shields and Kent areas residents were interested in the Estate Taskforces but unwilling to take part in formal meetings with agencies. In Coventry, residents were not interested in engaging with the Estate Taskforce process.

To make sure residents had opportunities to contribute to the process and give feedback on the ideas being generated by the Taskforces, the practical involvement of residents in action planning was separated from Taskforce meetings.

In South Shields and Kent resident involvement took two forms; first, workshops with local residents to ask for feedback on the findings from local conversations and to discuss and prioritise issues. These workshops were held before the Taskforce's ideas generation sessions so that the views of residents were able to influence the views of agencies.

The second form of resident involvement was outreach on the estates. This was done when each Taskforce had drafted an action plan. Local teams went out on the estates to involve a wider group of local residents in conversations. This was done by knocking on doors, going to community venues and sending out copies of the action plan. Feedback from the outreach work was given to the Taskforces and influenced the final action plans.

### **Practical lessons: Involving new partners in estate working**

The issues identified in South Shields – such as the need for parenting support and early years development – meant that the Neighbourhood Management team had to change focus from their traditional remit of crime and grime.

The team had to spend a considerable amount of time making contact with frontline staff and managers they did not usually work with, such as social services and family services. These services were very responsive to the project; in particular, frontline workers welcomed the opportunity to contribute towards preventative action on the estate.

## **People who can make decisions**

The Taskforce model involves local services and agencies committing to do things differently.

The Taskforce will need to include some officers that are senior enough to make decisions about how resources are allocated. Depending on the priorities in the Estate Action Plan this might involve moving resources from another estate or neighbourhood.

Keeping very senior officers involved throughout the lifetime of the Taskforce might be difficult because of other demands on their time. If the responsibility is delegated to another officer make sure it comes with the power to make decisions on behalf of senior officers – and ensure that senior officers and decision makers are kept updated about the activities of the Taskforce.

### **Practical lessons: Delegating involvement and delegating responsibility**

Occasionally, requests for involvement from senior officers within some services were delegated downward to more junior staff.

In several cases the delegated officers had sufficient confidence and responsibility to make decisions on behalf of their managers. In others, officers – no matter how enthusiastic and dedicated – were not sufficiently empowered by their managers to make decisions. For Taskforce members, this lack of empowerment usually reflected a disinterest in proper engagement from senior or middle ranking officers. As such, there was no confidence that delegated officers would be able to successfully convince their management that potential ideas were worth pursuing.

### **Practical lessons: What makes a Taskforce work?**

#### **Early commitment from agencies**

Agencies are going to have to buy into the process, as it will likely involve them having to attend meetings, do work in between and ultimately deliver their services differently. Gaining agency buy-in is an ongoing process, but the sooner people are on board the better. If you approach some staff for involvement and face reluctance, consider approaching someone else within the same service. Do not be afraid to target more senior officers and think about what levers you can pull.

### **Appoint a Core Development Group**

From beginning to end there needs to be a core group of people who organise and oversee the local work and the development of the Taskforce. The core group will need to:

- organise the investigation into the underlying causes of deprivation
- negotiate buy-in from the right local agencies and organisations
- convene the Taskforce
- provide administrative support

### **Fitting into existing structures**

Because it is temporary, a Taskforce should link into existing localised governance structures like neighbourhood management or area partnerships. This helps to deal with two key issues: politics and sustainability. If there are already local governance structures in place, setting up something new could cause controversy. By ensuring that the Taskforce links or reports to existing structures, the process of gaining the buy-in from active local residents, politicians and agencies will be easier. It will also ensure that the action plan will have a natural monitoring body once it is developed. In South Shields and Kent, the Taskforces reported to existing local partnerships of residents, councillors, agencies and the voluntary sector.

### **Who will monitor the action plan?**

Once developed, the delivery of the action plan will need to be monitored. Being clear on who has responsibility for this before the Taskforce starts work is vital. If there are no existing local governance structures within which this process naturally sits, the sustainability of the action plan should be considered before the process begins.

### **Who will provide the resources to support the Taskforce?**

Action plans require resources for them to be delivered. Although at the beginning no one will categorically know what the action plan will be focusing on, it will be useful to start thinking about the resources that could be available.

### **Recruit an independent Chair and facilitator**

The Young Foundation facilitated the Taskforces in each of the three estates involved in this project. This was invaluable to the process as we were an independent party and as such, not affected by local politics or power dynamics. If possible, an independent person should be heavily involved as chair of the Taskforce; getting them on board before things get started will help.

## Phase 3 Developing an Estate Action Plan

### Step 1: The First Taskforce Meeting

There are two aims for the first meeting:

#### **Members of the Taskforce getting to know each other:**

- It may be the case that some individuals and agencies do not know each other even though they work in the same neighbourhood. It is also likely that different services will not be fully aware of each other's work (even if they know each other personally).
- In the first meeting it is important to establish everyone's competencies, what they can offer to the process, and what their responsibilities are as members of the Taskforce. This will include ensuring that others within their service are aware of what is happening and are kept up to date of the potential impact on their service.

#### **Agreeing on the priorities or themes for the action plan:**

- The first job of the Taskforce is to discuss the findings from the local investigations and agree on the priorities that will be taken forward through the action plan. This is important, as there are likely to be multiple factors contributing to local deprivation. Some of these will be beyond the control of local agencies or too significant to influence through a rapid, highly localised process; for example, the decline of the regional economy.
- However, the Small Estates Taskforce can explore rapid and practical ways to deal with elements of larger problems, such as exploring localised support services to help people access training for employment, or signposting to apprenticeship opportunities for young people.

#### **Practical Lessons: Stark Messages**

In Kent, the findings from the local investigations told a stark message about life on the estate that a number of agencies had either not heard before, or not had the courage to articulate in isolation. The findings from the investigation gave agencies the courage to agree on the root cause of local issues, perhaps for the first time.

### Step 2: The Second Meeting – Generating Ideas

The second Taskforce meeting is about generating innovative, practical and potentially radical ideas.

The approach is to encourage the Taskforce members to think creatively and imagine new possibilities. This is achieved by first, generating ideas that are not

bounded by the everyday constraints of service delivery, and second, injecting realism about how some of these new approaches could be developed into practical local responses.

Workshops are a good format for rapidly developing and capturing ideas. There are lots of facilitation techniques that can be used to help participants think differently and draw out good ideas (see page 27).

**Practical Lessons: Using Reverse Brainstorming**

In Coventry, we explicitly wanted agencies to talk honestly about the problems on the estate, especially those related to service delivery. We found that reverse brainstorming helped; instead of discussing the problems we had discovered directly, it helped participants to apply their knowledge and experience to a hypothetical scenario.

The scenario:

2009: “the estate is a clean, pleasant neighbourhood to live where people get on with their neighbours”

2029: “the estate suffers from neglect from residents and services. Few people want to live there and neighbours keep themselves to themselves”

Group Question 1: What has happened in the 20 years to so drastically change the quality of life for local residents?

Group Question 2: How can we stop this happening?

Even if there are residents on the Taskforce, it is advisable to hold a separate ideas session to draw in a wider selection of local opinions. This could be scheduled as part of a Residents’ Association meeting that people will already be attending, or run as an informal drop-in session at a community centre or doctors surgery. If holding an event is not practical then other more innovative approaches might be required, like briefing frontline staff (neighbourhoods police officers, youth workers, family supporter workers or estate caretakers) to talk to residents about the plans as part of everyday conversations. In this situation, ideas from residents should be gathered before the Taskforce meets to hold its ideas session, so residents’ ideas and suggestions can influence local agencies.

**Creative ideas generation** – adapted from <http://www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/local-innovation/strands/local-government-innovation/innovation-methods-local-government/9->

### **What is it?**

Creative ideas generation involves generating an environment at meetings that is conducive to stimulating innovative ideas.

### **How could I use it?**

1. Open Space is founded on the principle that the most valuable part of conferences is the networking and discussion that happens during coffee breaks. Therefore Open Space events have no keynote speakers and no pre-announced agendas or workshops. At the beginning of a conference (or event), participants raise ideas about what they would like to discuss. These ideas are written on a large sheet of paper, posted to the wall and announced to the group. Attendees then congregate in groups and meetings follow.
2. Fishbowls aim to increase involvement and understanding of the topic at hand. A fishbowl session begins with an inner group of participants sitting around a table having a discussion. This group is surrounded by a larger group that listens to the discussion and contributes. After a pre-arranged time, the groups swap over, and the new group leads the discussion. Participants tend to leave the meetings with a better understanding of the different opinions that were discussed and opinions considered.
3. Related worlds. The related worlds exercise aims to encourage interest groups to think about other organisations that are confronted with issues similar to their own. By distancing themselves from their immediate problems and looking at problems hypothetically, new ideas and approaches can often be generated.
4. Six thinking hats and Lateral Thinking. The six thinking hats activity is aimed at generating new ideas. During the exercise participants put on a different hat – each with its own point of view. The six hats include: a white hat for data-based thinking, a red hat for intuitive thinking, a black hat for critical thinking, a yellow hat for positive thinking, a green hat for generative ideas and a blue hat for the big picture. This approach can be coupled with De Bono's other method of 'Lateral Thinking', where people are encouraged to find a solution to a challenging problem through unorthodox methods rather than simply accepting what appears to be the most logical solution and moving on. Using De Bono's theories, local authorities can facilitate

**Facilitation tips: Ideas generation sessions**

- before the sessions find out what other estates or neighbourhoods have done to tackle similar issues. This is to provide ideas and inspiration, not to parachute ideas into the estate. (See section 3 for ideas used in this project).
- make a list of the estate's assets and use these as a starting point for the action planning. In this project all three estates used local assets to help come up with ideas. These included tangible assets like underused parks or local schools, and intangible assets like local social networks. Using this approach builds on the estate's strengths and helps to weave responses into existing patterns of behaviour.

### **Step 3: The Third Meeting – Drafting an Action Plan**

The Taskforce will need to prioritise the ideas into a list of realistic actions so the process of identifying a lead agency, partners, resources and timescales can be agreed. This can be a time-consuming task, but the negotiation and brokering between agencies should not be allowed to slow down the process. If one action cannot be agreed on it should be 'parked' for later so other ideas can be developed.

**Practical Lessons: Keeping focused on underlying issues**

In all three of our areas there was a tendency, especially among residents, to revert back to talking about symptomatic issues like anti-social behaviour. The strength of feeling regarding some of these issues meant that we had to touch upon them in the action plan. This helped ensure the process did not get bogged down and that everyone involved could concentrate most of their effort on the root causes of deprivation.

### **Making the transitions from ideas to actions**

Turning ideas into actions will require agencies to agree to work differently; consequently, this is one of the most challenging jobs for the Taskforce. Our experience suggests that the radical ideas will be driven by the Core Development Group – those who have instigated the process – and the Taskforce Chair. Those who will be impacted by the action plan – whether members of the Taskforce or not – will need to be negotiated with to derive the best outcomes for local people.

We found the following tips helpful when negotiating ideas into actions:

- discussions with senior and executive officers are invaluable. Find out what their priorities are and what they are interested in and try to frame the action plan accordingly
- ideas should be pragmatic but ambitious. Expect to be negotiated downwards, so ask for more than would be expected
- acknowledge the work agencies are already doing in the action plan as a way of gaining good will
- think about what levers there are to pull. If senior officers have lent their support to the project, it should be called upon to overcome blockages
- if an idea has been tried elsewhere, gather as much evidence as possible about its impact and make a case for it to be tried on the estate
- spend time discussing ideas with ward councillors. We found that public endorsements from Ward Councillors can be a powerful tool to direct agencies.
- spend time discussing ideas with ward councillors. We found that public endorsements from Ward Councillors can be a powerful tool to direct agencies.

## Step 4: Taking ideas to the community

Once a draft action plan has been developed, it should be shared with a wide group of residents to seek their views before the plan is finalised.

A list of potential actions forms a great basis for talking to local people. It will also allow more people to be involved in the Taskforce process. Involvement can take many forms but the simplest are generally the most effective – knocking on doors, visiting local shops and pubs, talking to groups of school children, rather than hosting formal meetings, means a wide range of people can quickly share their views, including people who are rarely involved in formal consultation exercises.

### **Practical lessons: Knocking on doors in South Shields and Kent**

In South Shields and Kent, we spent two days walking around the estates, knocking on doors and asking people their thoughts on some of the ideas in the draft action plan. In general, we received support from local people and used the exercise to collect contact details of people who wanted to be kept informed or involved in future action.

In South Shields the Neighbourhood Management team also organised a drop in session for local residents to come and talk about the action plan. The session and ideas within the draft action plan were marketed through a glossy leaflet that was put through every door.

## Step 5: Final Taskforce Meeting – Agreeing the Action Plan

The last meeting is where the Action Plan is finalised. Taking into account the most recent views of residents, the Taskforce will need to agree on:

- the ideas going into the action plan
- who will lead on them
- who will provide support for them
- how they will be resourced
- when they will be done by
- how progress will be monitored and communicated to residents.

The Core Development Group can play a crucial role in making sure that partners are ready to finalise approaches and commit to the Action Plan through regular communication between meetings. Keeping Taskforce members updated as to the progress of discussions with residents and the reaction to any draft Action Plans will help reduce the time needed to finalise things in the last meeting.

### **Practical lessons: Finalising the Action Plans\***

Our experience suggests that after the third Taskforce meeting the potential actions become much clearer. By agreeing to a broad draft, the Taskforce members were giving an early indication of the kinds of actions they would be prepared to take on.

Once we had spoken to residents and taken their feedback into consideration, we sent out a final draft to the Taskforce prior to the last meeting. This made it much easier to agree on the final action plan. Essentially, the final taskforce meeting concentrated on the details of actions – wording, timescales and finalising leads and partners, not negotiating commitments.

\*Please see Appendix for an example of a final action plan

## **What Next?**

Once the action plan has been finalised it will need to be signed off by relevant agencies. Getting sign-off may take time and be bureaucratic, but high-level endorsement for the action plan is crucial. If senior officers have supported the process throughout, sign-off will be much smoother. Once the action plan is agreed and put into delivery, the Taskforce can disband and the monitoring of the action plan can be handed over to the agreed body.

### **Practical lessons: Linking the Taskforces to existing local partnerships**

In South Shields and Kent, the Taskforces reported to local multi-agency partnerships that covered the estates.

By establishing a clear governance structure for the project during the early stages, we ensured that the resulting action plan would have a suitable monitoring body, and demonstrated to local agencies and local people that the project would result in something that was sustainable.



# 3 Local stories: the experience of the pilot work

In this section we present the findings from our local investigation on each of the three small housing estates. We discuss the common themes across all three estates; issues which residents and agencies identified as key contributors to the cycle of disadvantage, as well as presenting case studies specific to each estate.

On the surface the three estates involved in this project are quite different. The largest estate is in rural Kent, neighbouring an attractive and affluent village within commuting distance to London. Another estate is within walking distance from the centre of South Shields. It is one of a number of deprived estates in a town where industrial decline has seen unemployment rise over decades and the gradual disappearance of local shops and social centres. The third estate in Coventry is part of a much larger suburban neighbourhood, where students live alongside long-term residents of social housing and recent refugees and asylum seekers.

“ **I was told you're only entitled to a two bedroom if it's on the estate**

— Interview, Kent resident on her lack of choice when moving onto the estate

Conversations with people living and working on the estates identified five underlying problems that are common to all three areas. The issues are closely connected, both contributing to and intensifying experiences of deprivation, and creating a cycle of disadvantage that is difficult to break. They also raise specific practical problems for agencies working to tackle disadvantage. For example, families who have lived with economic hardship and unemployment for more than a generation may have very low self-esteem and low confidence, making it less likely that they will take up local support services.

The issues residents and agencies identified are:

### **Long-term economic decline and worklessness**

In all three areas, the decline in local industry has had long-lasting effects on communities and individuals. Arguably worklessness is the most significant factor contributing to deprivation in the three areas. The effects appear to be greatest in Coventry and South Shields, where once dominant local industries – car manufacturing in Coventry and the mining and maritime industries in South Shields – have disappeared, with long-term social and economic consequences.

Most of the older residents involved in the project talked about a history of secure employment, either in the main local industries or in neighbourhood businesses that served those industries. In contrast, younger people were often unemployed and looking for work. Older generations acknowledged that employment was scarcer and expected their children and grandchildren to struggle finding jobs. On the Coventry estate there is a sense that the decline of the car industries has undermined the purpose of the estates, which were originally built for workers at the main manufacturing plants.

**“ My eldest son is doing a course because he gets more benefits though he is not interested in the subject. I can't remember what course it is. He worked as a car valet but was made redundant. He also got a licence to be a forklift driver but only lasted about three weeks**

— Interview, South Shields Resident

Aside from the obvious economic hardship of having a very low income, long-term unemployment affects individuals, families and communities in other ways. Unemployment is linked to loss of individual social networks and self-esteem, but when these effects are amplified across a community, the impact on neighbourhood businesses and social life can be devastating. Many older residents talked nostalgically about local shopping streets or community buildings that had once been hubs of local activity and today are boarded up and empty, awaiting demolition.

### **Low self-esteem**

Local identity plays an important role in people's sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods, in particular for younger people. Many residents described the estates as places with strong social networks, supporting extended families, friends and neighbours. Generally, the older residents who took part in the project felt satisfied with where they live, although they also felt that the sense of community had declined over time. At the same time, the estates are known locally as problem areas. Their stories are of long-term neglect, disappearing services, failed or stalled attempts at regeneration and residents who are frustrated with agencies, afraid of crime and who see limited opportunities for young people.

**“ They want you to praise them as parents. They don't feel they are good parents... they don't see themselves as being worthy or allowed anything**

— Interview, Kent worker

Agencies working on all three estates described how problems with low self-esteem and low levels of confidence create difficulties for residents, in particular around having the confidence to use local services. For example, in all three areas Sure Start was described as a service for ‘more aspirational’ families.

“ **Some people have no respect for themselves and no respect for anybody**

— Interview, South Shields Resident

On two of the estates residents are stigmatised, and on one in particular they are looked down upon by some local agencies and service providers. Several interviewees, both residents and agencies, used the word ‘neglect’ when describing this estate – a word aimed at agencies as well as at residents. One resident described his ability to speak confidently on the phone – knowing the “right things to say” as the reason why he is able to get his housing association to “get things done”. He felt that this was something other residents lacked. Other interviews revealed a sense that some staff from local agencies felt residents were ‘lucky’ to receive the services they did, given where they were from.

### Vulnerable tenants and chaotic households

“ **Our new area is like a different world**

— Interview, Ex-resident describing their new home, just 500 metres from the Coventry estate

Local conversations identified the problems that a small number of chaotic and disruptive families have on the wider population of the estates. This was a problem for all three areas, although the specific circumstances varied from place to place. On one estate, a block of single persons flats, home primarily to young people, was the cause of much distress for residents. Many of these young people lack the skills needed to clean and manage their homes, look after themselves or resist pressure from friends to use their flats for parties. The concentration of chaotic tenants in one place creates problems for their more settled neighbours and reinforces the estate’s reputation as housing of last resort. On the other two estates a small number of families involved in drugs or crime were the cause of widespread anxiety and fear.

In all three areas, the estates’ undesirability means that in most cases only people who are most in need, or are unfamiliar with their reputation, will choose to live there. Even on small estates, residents distinguish between the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ bits. Generally, the tenants with the most pressing problems are concentrated in the worst areas of housing: the single people’s flats or the bit of the estate with the

worst problems. These tenants often find it difficult to move on to better housing once they have a home, even if it is unsuitable for their circumstances, because they are no longer a priority in terms of housing need.

“

**Most of the good people have left**

Interview, South Shields Resident

**New partners often move into the house quickly... how would these single mums meet nice men? They don't leave the area**

Interview, South Shields Worker on some of the more chaotic households

In Coventry there is a perception that the estate is used disproportionately to house homeless families or those in temporary accommodation. Whether or not this perception is an accurate reflection of fact, it causes concern for some residents, fuelling tensions and creating difficulties for newcomers. This problem is not unique to the Coventry estate but it does illustrate the importance of agencies understanding localised social dynamics and the myths and rumours that underpin these relationships.

“

**Young families are helped a lot by the grandparents, which is ultimately where the control lies... old fashioned parenting get passed through the generations and new methods are usually dismissed**

Interview, Worker describing the role of extended families in Kent

A variety of approaches exist to manage, or at least minimise, the problems associated with vulnerable tenants. However, in many cases the resources required to tackle very localised problems are simply unavailable.

## Family life, childhood and aspirations

“

**One boy got a place at grammar school but he wasn't allowed to go. The parents didn't think it was for people like them**

Interview, Kent Worker

Many agencies felt that family instability and parenting problems play a part in perpetuating deprivation on these estates. Specifically, agencies identified the following issues:

- parents have low aspirations for their children and low levels of involvement in formal and informal education, which translates into poor educational outcomes for young people
- children often start school lacking communication skills or the ability to play, which agencies suggest is linked to limited parenting skills
- parents from these estates are reluctant to engage with services like Sure Start, because they are not seen as relevant to them, being described instead as “places for middle class families”
- play areas and youth services are either very limited or non-existent for children on these estates
- children are reported to have very low self-esteem and low aspirations.

“

**Young Person: Some people round here try and bring you down.**

**Facilitator: Who does?**

**Young Person: Those that drink and take drugs... the ones that are alcoholics aged 17.**

Focus group, young people in South Shields

Parental involvement in formal and informal education is reported to be low in all three areas. Agencies frequently spoke of their frustration at trying to get parents to return consent forms for visits and activities, with workers described how they often had to assist parents with filling out the forms.

**“ They have a determination to succeed, a realisation that they could become part of the negative culture. They have a degree of confidence to breach the unwritten rules that exist**

Interview, Kent worker on the few residents he feels he has seen succeed

Residents and agencies on each estate painted a picture of children who are self-reliant from an early age. Examples frequently cited, include very young children feeding and dressing themselves for school and caring for younger siblings. For example, a 15-year-old going to the library or the park with a “two-year-old brother in tow” was described as “not uncommon” by agencies and residents from the Coventry estate.

In a sense, this resilience helps young people deal with the daily difficulties they face, but it does not provide them with the life experience, confidence or self-esteem to challenge the estate culture or local norms of behaviour in a way that would enable them to improve their quality of life.

### **Isolation, estate culture and reputation**

Each estate was described by residents as a small community with a distinct local identity, closely tied to local geography. Physical landmarks like busy roads, playing fields or local shops create clear physical and social boundaries between the estates and neighbouring areas of housing. In Kent, a playing field divides the estate from the rest of the village. In Coventry, the estate is clearly separated from other areas of housing by two playing fields, a busy road and a derelict community centre.

**“ My husband saw a mugshot in the paper and made a phone call to the police. They found out he did it and he was attacked with a baseball bat**

Interview, Coventry Resident

**It’s a very strong community, divided by the posh-side and the non-posh side**

Interview, Kent Worker

Many of the residents who took part in this project described having strong social networks on the estate providing practical and emotional support. However, these relationships create a sense of exclusivity that makes life difficult for newcomers to the neighbourhood. Harassment targeted towards any kind of newcomer to the estates was a common thread through interviews with residents and agencies in Kent and Coventry.

“

**... they'll get their own back**

Interview, Police officer in South Shields on residents' attitudes to sorting out their own problems

One woman who moved to the estate in Coventry from a nearby neighbourhood had young people knocking on her door and throwing stones at her window when she first moved in. She felt that there were a couple of longstanding extended families on the estate that felt they “owned the place and no one could say anything to them”.

Newcomers are not the only ones affected. A dominant culture in all three estates appears to limit aspirations and the hostility towards newcomers minimises the influence their different values and lifestyles may bring.

“

**They can be oppressive; where they go, you don't want to be.**

**... they can help control the trouble, but only if it impacts on them**

Interviews, Coventry residents on the impact of some disruptive local families

In Coventry, the estate's local reputation is used by young people to project bravado and toughness. Within the wider neighbourhood, the estate ranks at the bottom in terms of reputation and desirability. It has a sense of belonging that is 'owned' by longstanding extended families; newcomers are not welcomed on the estate. This exclusive sense of belonging has created a strong sense of hostility, which is directed at newcomers and perceived outsiders. The result is high levels of racism and harassment of vulnerable residents.

“

**Reputation creates people who conform to the reputation**

Interview, Coventry Resident

Strong social networks that span ethnic, class and cultural divides are seen as a vital component for the development of successful mixed communities. Evidence suggests that communities that have strong social networks are more likely to have lower crime rates, less grime, better educational achievement and better health. Strong social networks also influence how attached people feel to their community. People that have family and friends living close by are more likely to feel as though that place is where they belong.

Research by the Young Foundation reinforces the view that having friends and family locally contributes to belonging to a place, and to consequent feelings of wellbeing. However, social networks and a sense of belonging can also have a negative effect on people's wellbeing and the wellbeing of communities, as proponents of the 'neighbourhood effect' claim.

This project supports these assertions; the existence or absence of local social and family networks has profound effects – both negative and positive – on the wellbeing of residents in all three of the estates.

These stories suggest there is an estate culture or neighbourhood effect that reinforces social and economic problems for people living on the three estates. Local social networks are exerting strong pressure on people to stay local, limiting their horizons and opportunities for development.

This project has shown that another type of social network is also important, one that links residents to local organisations or powerful individuals. This kind of network, described by academics as "linking social capital", enables people to access ideas, information and resources by developing relationships with people who have different social status, power and wealth. In the case of deprived communities this can mean becoming involving with local professionals or voluntary organisations that can bring support and investment that would otherwise be inaccessible.

Work by the Carnegie Trust UK has identified a number of ways to assess the extent of linking social capital in a neighbourhood, including community resources, local voice and influence, and the number of residents involved in decision-making, governance or partnership structures. It is clear from this project that all three estates lack these connections, as do many other of the most deprived and disadvantaged areas around the country.

The work of the Small Estates Taskforces has been to help make some of these connections; however, there will often be a dilemma for service providers. When asked, residents will frequently request more services to be delivered from within an estate – an approach that some officials and residents deem to be the best way to improve take up of services. By doing this instead of requiring residents to travel further afield, isolation can be reinforced, and vital opportunities to develop linking and bridging social capital will be forgone.

### **What can be learnt about working with small estates?**

Behind these familiar descriptions there are a set of dynamics at work that appear to be linked to, or at least exaggerated by the fact these are small and self-contained areas of housing:

**Reputation is a self-reinforcing problem:** Reputation is a problem for each of the estates. They contain some of the least desirable pockets of housing locally, and although each estate has its problems, whether they live up to their reputation is debatable. In at least two of the estates, maybe all three, young people are using the estate's reputation to boost their own identity as tough and troublesome locals. Areas with a reputation for being difficult become stigmatised and it can be argued this influences how local agencies think about delivering services to these households.

**Strong social capital doesn't always mean positive outcomes:** Strong social networks are often seen as an essential element of a resilient and flourishing community. However, strong social networks can also have negative effects. The estates included in this study have different but distinct estate cultures. The common factor is their roots in long-established, homogenous extended family networks that prioritise the 'local way of doing things'. While this means unlimited practical and emotional support for those families and friends who are in the network, newcomers are not always welcome and change is not encouraged. Stories of exclusion – and sometimes hostility and harassment – towards outsiders emerged frequently in conversations with residents and agencies. It is important for agencies to appreciate the difference between 'bridging' and 'bonding' capital, even if making value judgements about local social networks is a difficult task.

**Estate culture impacts most on young peoples' aspirations:** Young people are particularly affected by a restrictive estate culture. The focus on maintaining family ties and the local way of doing things was described by many people as limiting their experience of life beyond the estate and with it, exposure to different ideas and lifestyles. Local culture creates an active resistance to aspiration; many residents and agencies described how often the only way to “get on” or “achieve” is to leave the estate – and with it the security of friends and family. Problems with self-esteem were reported in all three areas, linked to lack of confidence and skills to deal with life beyond the estate.

**‘Not for people like me ...** ‘Agencies described how they struggle to get residents who are most in need to use local services, while residents talked about how they feel that services are not relevant or not accessible to people like them. These point toward a broader issue: how confidence and self-esteem affect access to universal services such as Sure Start or education and skills training.

# Case Study: Kent

## Introduction

The estate is made up of two small, adjoining estates neighbouring a picturesque and affluent village. The two estates, known locally as ‘Upper’ and ‘Lower’, have 300 and 229 properties respectively. Overall the two estates make up the highest concentration of social housing in the borough. Most housing dates from the 1950s and 60s. It is generally well maintained, many houses have gardens and there are open green spaces on the estates. The estate has a stable, mainly white population, made up of many families who relocated from London after the Second World War. The estate has a poor reputation locally and is not seen by prospective tenants as a desirable place to live, except for people who want to remain close to their extended family networks. Residents report problems with anti-social behaviour and fear of crime is high. Agencies described difficulties with young people living in chaotic families and the negative effects this has for very young children. Professionals working on the estate describe young people with low aspirations and talked about difficulties engaging with parents. Because the estates are surrounded by an affluent area, ward-level data hides the true picture of deprivation.

Day-to-day problems for residents on the estates appear to revolve around anxieties about crime and anti-social behaviour, although agencies suggested this is rooted more in perception than fact. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that much crime goes unreported because residents prefer not to involve the police. Only one or two families were known to be involved with drugs, weapons and stolen goods, but this caused a disproportionate amount of concern in the community.

The estate has very close-knit and well-established family and friendship networks, which are hugely important to local people as a source of practical and emotional support. For example, mothers with young children support each other by arranging visits to the local superstore together or collecting each other’s children from school. At the same time, relationships between adults on the estate are described as fickle and residents talked about how people find it hard to deal with conflict. Several people reported how arguments become long-term feuds, which can spill over and result in children being bullied by other children because their parents have fallen out.

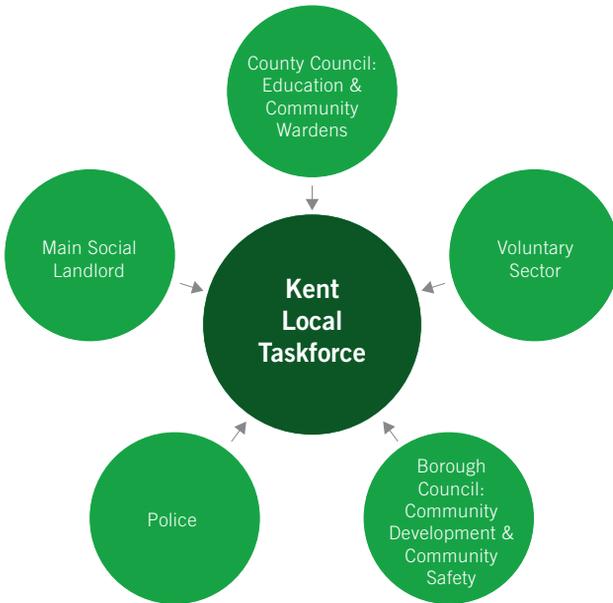
Agencies identified an estate culture that dominates people’s experience of life. The importance of family relationships appears to be emphasised over individual choice and development, which seems to have a strong, negative influence on the aspirations and expectations of young people who grow up on the estates. Agencies describe how teenagers act tough but are essentially insecure and lacking the self-confidence to negotiate life outside the estate. Few young

people want to leave the area, travel or go to university. The estates feel relatively isolated from the rest of the village, ‘cut off’ from local shops and pubs and other areas of housing by the playing fields. This boundary appears to have an important psychological effect on residents of the estate, reinforcing their sense of difference.

The perceptions of both agencies and residents were that many households lacked the basic life skills they needed to create better conditions for themselves. In this context, many people talked about issues with poor parenting as one of the factors making it difficult to tackle entrenched deprivation on the estates. Grandparents are often actively involved in childcare and can be very dominant in shaping attitudes to family life by “passing lessons through the generations”.

Overall, there is a sense among agencies and residents that the estates are troubled. Agencies describe how residents present themselves as happy with their lives, but under the surface there is a sense of discontent that they do not know how to articulate.

**Figure 4: The Kent Taskforce**



## Priorities for the Kent Estate Taskforce

The Estate Taskforce identified how low self esteem, low aspirations and problems for young people created by chaotic family life as issues contributing to deprivation and disadvantage on the estate.

Estate culture and tight knit social networks were identified as a major source of support for residents. However, the dominant estate culture was also identified as limiting experience and aspirations, especially for young people. This is contributing to low levels of confidence and self-esteem.

The Taskforce decided to concentrate actions on:

- improving individual and collective perceptions of the estate by recognising the positive things residents do for each other
- improving the estate's reputation locally
- providing children and young people with the skills and opportunities they need to be able to explore life outside of the estate
- improving parental engagement with schools and their children's education

At the end of the process, specific actions included:

- using different types of media (such as newspapers, websites and online videos) to document the positive aspects of community life on the estate
- identifying appropriate channels for disseminating local stories, including TV screens in public places and online
- exploring the potential for support agencies and the local Primary and Secondary schools to provide targeted, intensive emotional resilience training to children and families from the estate who are most in need.

# Case Study: Coventry

## Introduction

The Coventry estate consists of a small group of streets, less than 500 households, within a wider defined area of Coventry. The quality of the housing is very good, even in comparison with other social housing within Coventry; however, the wider area's reputation and the estates reputation in particular make them undesirable homes. Ironically, the estate is situated within one of the wealthiest wards in Coventry and Warwickshire.

The predominantly White population is one of the last in Coventry to experience the effects of migration; recent years have seen more BME residents – including refugees – move onto the estate. Residents and agencies reported racism and harassment of anyone seen as vulnerable is commonplace; perpetrators are usually long standing White residents who feel they 'run' the area. Fear and intimidation are successfully used against all but the most resilient of residents.

Residents and agencies describe “no sense of community” on the estate; disputes between neighbours can arise from the most minor of incidents. Some neighbours get on and look out for each other and residents associations have tried and failed to stimulate local action – despite the efforts of a handful of committed residents. This, coupled with the gradual withdrawal of local services, evidence of disregard from local agencies and much talked about but not delivered regeneration, create an overwhelming sensation of neglect and mistrust.

Local conversations identified two sets of problems. First, there was a strong perception that the delivery of routine services was poor and lacked proper coordination, resulting in an estate that looks dilapidated. There were numerous complaints about the service provided by the main social landlord and an impression that in some cases the reputation of the estate results in an 'it isn't worth bothering about' effect from some parts of local agencies.

Second, are the deeper issues affecting the lives of residents: community cohesion, education, family life and parenting. Residents are seen by each other and local professionals as insular, rarely venturing out of the wider area due to low self-esteem and an absence of aspiration. There is a view that some people 'act tough' – but only locally. A small number of long-established households dominate tight-knit social networks and strongly influence behaviour patterns. Neighbours do help each other out but relationships sour over minor disputes, causing tension.

There are considerable allegations – some reported – of racism towards the handful of Black and minority ethnic residents, from name calling to more serious harassment resulting in families moving out. Agencies report widespread distrust

of public agencies, reluctance to get involved and cynicism about community activities. Residents who do engage can be stigmatised and intimidated by accusations of ‘grassing’.

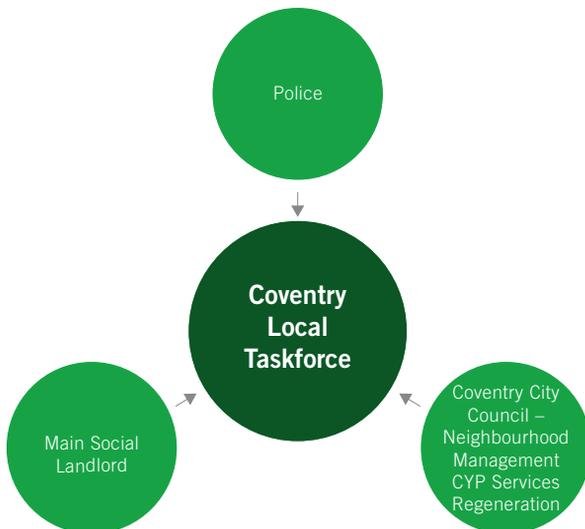
Agencies report that for some families parenting is “casual” and there is disinterest in education and setting boundaries for children’s behaviour.

Residents were critical about a lack of youth activities in the immediate area. 15 minutes walk away is a new Sports Centre but most young people thought it was too far away or just “not for them”. The same ‘not for them’ comment was made about Sure Start and we believe this is linked to the lack of confidence we noted above.

Lack of confidence when dealing with services also means that most residents struggle to demand better services or responses from public agencies. This manifests itself as apathy or anger amongst residents, but reflects the fact that many do not know how to interact with complex organisations. It also means that some staff from local agencies can rebuff residents without fear of redress.

Agencies and residents identified the estate has problems. Some are due to administration and management, and others stem from deep-rooted family and community-based issues but they are inextricably linked. A sense of pride and ownership by residents is needed to maintain environmental improvements, and that in turn depends on tackling the more complex problems facing residents. Attitudes to education and lack of aspiration, particularly in young people, reinforce the estate’s reputation. But there is potential; levels of social capital are relatively high and although social networks exert both positive and negative influences, the opportunities exist to build on these.

**Figure 5: The Coventry Taskforce**



## Priorities for the Coventry Taskforce

Local conversations revealed an estate with an endemic lack of trust, between residents and agencies, and between neighbours. The local Taskforce agreed that before some of the deeper issues – such as family life, parenting or education – could be tackled, trust needed to be built. Therefore, the action plan focused on:

- building confidence in local services
- building mutual respect between neighbours, as well as between residents and services.

At the end of the process, specific actions included:

- establishing a protocol for the area which requires local agencies to:
  - carry out face-to-face engagement and outreach work as part of their service delivery
  - carry out joint planning activity
  - develop a cross-service programme of community engagement events and activities.
- identifying resources and implementing a package of public realm improvements, including improvements to the community centre and row of shops

# Case Study: South Shields

## Introduction

The South Shields estate is small, with less than 200 households ranging from one bedroom flats to four bedroom maisonettes. To people outside the area, it is not always identified as a place in its own right and instead seen as part of a wider area together with adjacent neighbourhoods. The adjacent neighbourhoods share similar issues with the small estate and together they share a poor external reputation. The decline of traditional regional industries means that there are several other similar neighbourhoods within South Shields and the wider borough.

The estate is contrasting. On the one hand there are settled residents, people who have lived there for decades either in socially rented or privately owned property. They have raised their children on the estate and are happy to spend the rest of their lives there. Sometimes, their children will move back with their own families. On the other hand, an abundance of one bedroom flats means the estate is home to a high number of single people – many young and living alone for the first time. Often they will be unequipped, lacking the ability to maintain a household, consider their impact on others around them or to prevent friends from treating their homes as party flats.

The contrasting population means the estate and the surrounding areas are described by some as friendly and others as scary. Those that have local family and social networks find it a pleasant place to live; however, those that had little choice but to move to the estate often feel trapped.

The wider estate is encompassed by a neighbourhood partnership. Early on it was decided that the Taskforce would report to the neighbourhood partnership, which would be the body that monitored the delivery of the action plan.

Local conversations identified the problems for residents, which generally fall into two categories. First, more symptomatic issues include poor design, anti-social behaviour, drinking and drugs associated with a high concentration of single people's accommodation. There are low levels of engagement with local services and only a handful of residents that are active within the community. Second are the more deep-rooted issues; concerns which relate to basic life skills, low self-esteem, stunted aspirations and families that are struggling to cope.

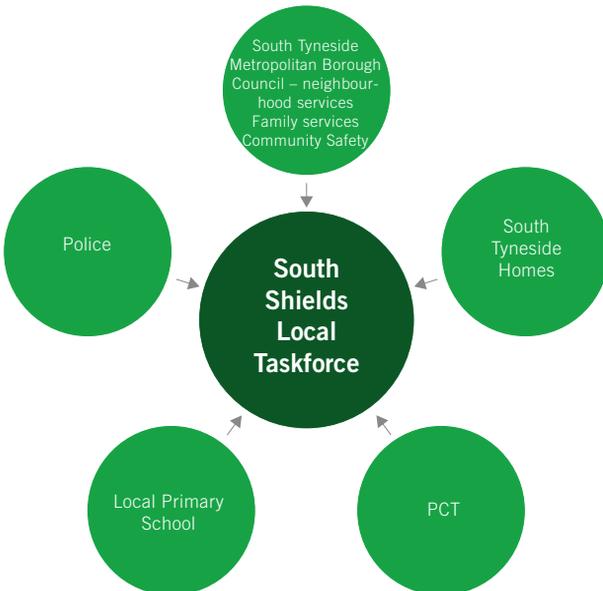
The issue of chaotic parenting came up frequently throughout conversations. Young single mothers are particularly vulnerable. The stress and strain of poor quality living arrangements, with the long waiting times for re-allocation, compounds the problems for mothers on an estate with already high levels of post-natal depression. In addition, local services such as Sure Start are struggling to attract those young families most in need.

Similarly, teachers at local schools describe a struggle to engage parents with both the school and their children’s education; and report that books and the internet are not used for educational purposes at home. The impact of childhood problems emerges during adolescence; many young people on the estate and the wider area develop low self-esteem, low expectations and consequently low aspirations.

Despite all of these issues many local residents state that they are happy with their lives. They do not like to be described as poor and the older residents in particular exhibit a sense of pride and belonging to the area. There is a lot of casual neighbourliness; people saying hello on their way to and from the main streets, or sitting in their front gardens and chatting over a cup of tea or can of beer. This does not regularly translate into more meaningful relationships, but is an indication of the values and levels of civility which some local people fear is being lost in younger generations.

The settled nature of many of the inhabitants of the estate and local family and social networks are an asset for the area and helps to contribute to this warm sense of community. Whilst community involvement in the wider area is improving, there is little community activity within the estate, aside from a small emerging group of residents. Given the right support, resources and opportunities, there are residents who would put themselves forward to be involved in tangible activities for change.

**Figure 6: The South Shields Taskforce**



## Priorities for South Shields Taskforce

The issues for the estate in South Shields are mirrored across dozens of neighbourhoods within the borough. The council and its partners are working to address some of these – such as resilience, self-esteem and aspirations – on a borough wide level. For the Taskforce, it was deemed as important to complement this with highly localised, targeted activity to support both individual families and the community as a whole. Therefore, the Taskforce concentrated on:

- catalysing community action through a programme of environmental improvements
- supporting new tenants through existing services
- improving the wellbeing of families through local interventions and better use of local facilities such as the school

At the end of the process, specific actions included:

- developing an assessment framework which considers the broad spectrum of new tenants' needs, and designing a package of interventions around them
- assessing whether there is a business case for using a property on the estate from which to deliver services
- ensuring that the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities programme is run for families on the estate.

# 4 Ideas and inspiration for other estates

This section contains case studies about innovative and effective projects from around the world that are working with deprived families and young people to provide a range of practical and emotional support. These examples were used to provide inspiration and ideas for the local Taskforces involved in this project.

## Raising young peoples' aspirations

Young peoples' low self-esteem and aspirations featured prominently in this project. On all three estates, residents and agencies talked about young people who are disconnected from life beyond the estates and often lacking in confidence to expand their world. In all three areas agencies are working to try to change this; but local and sometimes regional circumstances pose huge challenges. We tried to explore alternative ideas with local agencies, as well as ways they could expand existing good practice.

Some of these ideas are very practical, such as proposing families with children are taken on fun educational trips once or twice a year – this has made it into the action plan for Kent. Other ideas focus on more systematic and sustained interventions, such as the building resilience, and are detailed below. Some of these are very low cost while others require substantial funding, but all provide ideas about different approaches.

### Peer to Peer Motivators

From April 2008 – March 2009, Artsworld ran Peer to Peer Motivators, a pilot project that trained young volunteers to mentor NEETs (young people Not in Employment, Education, or Training). Volunteers were aged 19–25 and worked with the NEETs to help them overcome the barriers that were preventing them from pursuing education, training or employment. The project was run in Southampton and Newcastle.

What sets the project apart is its use of peer mentors. Peers are often better able to understand each other's point of view and life experiences because they will just have been through similar experiences themselves. Indeed, the pilots found that mentees responded well to mentoring from their peers. They also appreciated the in-depth personal support that their mentors could offer. Young people often lack the confidence to access support services and the fact that many services can seem impersonal puts them off. Peer mentoring overcomes this barrier and gives young people the encouragement as well as the practical support to explore new opportunities.

### Positive Futures – Leyton Orient Community Sports Programme

The Leyton Orient Community Sports Programme has been running on the Gascoigne Estate in London Borough of Barking and Dagenham since 2000. Run as part of the Home Office's Positive Futures programme, the project set up a local football team that involved teenagers living on the estate who had been identified as at risk of offending. The programme aims to give young people

access to opportunities in a culturally familiar environment, using sport as a catalyst.

The project in Gascoigne began with the coach identifying a suitable place for training and then approaching teenagers to see if they would be interested in attending. The coaching sessions were initially informal to build rapport and trust between the teenagers and coach. Over time the sessions became more organised and a team was formed. After six months, trust between the parties was sufficient for the teenagers to feel comfortable moving to a site three miles away from the estate. The coach saw this as critical to breaking the teenagers 'estate mentality' or weariness of travelling outside the estate. This also emerged from our research; young people feel very comfortable and confident on the estate, but do not know how to negotiate the outside world.

The project led to a football team being formed and many of the teenagers who took part went on to become coaches themselves. Police reported that crime on the estate had fallen by as much as 70 per cent.

## **Catch 22 East Sussex Mentoring Project**

The Catch 22 East Sussex Mentoring Project trains volunteers to mentor young people aged 10–17 who are considered 'vulnerable, at risk, or disadvantaged'. The project aims to reduce offending and anti-social behaviour among the young people, and to encourage them to continue with education. It works with approximately 30 young people at any one time and reports improvements in the confidence shown by young people and their trust towards adults.

## **UK Resilience Programme**

The UK Resilience Programme is a Young Foundation-led initiative that works in three local authority areas in England (South Tyneside Council, Manchester City Council and Hertfordshire County Council) to build emotional resilience among 11–13 year olds. It aims to build resilience, prevent depression and anxiety, promote adaptive coping skills, and teach effective social problem-solving.

An evaluation of the programme has found that participation has reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression in children and their enjoyment of the workshops means they are more likely to be receptive to learning. Most importantly, it provides young people with the soft skills they will need as they grow up and begin to explore the outside world.

In its current form, this is a large and expensive programme. However, there is no reason why this approach could not be adapted and implemented in other areas with local authority support.

# Supporting families in need

## The Place2Be

The Place2be is a British charity that offers counselling for children within schools to improve their emotional wellbeing. It also aims to improve the wellbeing of their families and the community. It works on the belief that dealing with problems occurring in children's home lives helps to remove some of the barriers to learning. The programme offers one-to-one counselling sessions as well as group sessions. Parents are invited to attend sessions if the counsellors think it is would help.

The children that are referred to Place2be counselling have difficult home lives, such as parents with a drug or alcohol addiction, or they may be experiencing difficult transitions, such as parents who are separating. Children give good feedback on the counselling sessions. They respond well to having the undivided attention of an adult, who is not there to judge them, but to listen to them. It is a type of attention they rarely receive at home. Teachers report that they see increased self-esteem in the children who take part. They develop better interpersonal relationships and pay more attention in class because their young minds are not preoccupied by worry.

The programme is ambitious in scale; however, the principle that children should have a trusted adult to support them is one that local agencies can learn from. Lessons from this programme could be adopted at low cost.

## Harlem Children's Zone

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) works in the Harlem neighbourhood of New York to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty experienced by many of the families living in the area. The project's ethos is "whatever it takes". HCZ takes a holistic approach to addressing issues experienced by children and family. It runs community centres, parenting classes and three Promise Academies (schools) which they hope to expand to run all the way from kindergarten until the children's final year of secondary school. There is a strong emphasis on children learning numeracy and literacy skills, with part of the parenting classes focusing on the importance of reading to children and a Saturday Academy run for children needing extra help. Students also have access to medical, mental, dental health services and are provided with healthy meals and have daily exercise. The students in its academies have achieved outstanding academic results.

HCZ is unashamedly ambitious in its scale. In 2008 it was working with more than 10,000 young people and more than 4,100 adults who lived across 100 blocks in Harlem. The project aims to reach 65 per cent of the children living in Harlem.

It considers this to be the tipping point where it can affect the neighbourhood's cultural norms.

Much can be learnt from the HCZ approach. It concentrates on a clear geographical area and provides comprehensive support for families – from parenting classes for the early years, to education when children reach school age. Around this core they provide other services needed by families.

## **Think Family: national good practice**

At the other end of the spectrum is Think Family, an approach to coordinating support from children's, young people's, adults' and family services for the families who are most in need. Think Family not only encourages services to look at the family as a whole, but also to look at the interconnections between the family, the school and the community.

Central government funding has been available for all local authorities from April 2009 until March 2011 to implement Think Family reforms to local authority and health service systems. In addition, fifteen pathfinder authorities are receiving additional funding to implement the Think Family approach.

These include Westminster City Council, which has piloted a Family Recovery Programme, involving the voluntary sector, NHS Westminster and the Police Service. The Family Recovery Programme consists of a multi-agency 'Team Around the Family' with expertise in a wide range of services, from adult mental health and housing, to domestic violence and substance misuse. The whole team is based in one office in order to share resources, intelligence and expertise, and they report to a single Operational Head.

The team formulates a single care plan for a family. The plan outlines the role of each member of the team and appoints two lead contacts for the family – one for the adults and one for the children – and forms the basis of the 'contract with consequences', a key component of the Family Recovery Programme. The 'contract with consequences' outlines possible consequences if families fail to cooperate with the team, such as the possibility of eviction as a result of anti-social behaviour or court action if children do not attend school. The family plays an active role in designing the care plan and the terms of the contract. So far, 95% of families who have been assessed for the programme have signed contracts and not one has been broken.

Islington has introduced a Think Family Programme Board chaired by an Assistant Director from Adult Mental Health. A Head of Children's Social Care is deputy chair. The Board coordinates the borough's approach and feeds into the Family Support Strategy Group (FSSG), which leads on the council's prevention work.

The pathfinder's whole family approach is based upon a multi-agency Think Family team, which consists of a special health visitor, young carers' support workers, family therapist, adult psychologist, community mental health worker, family support worker and family volunteers. The team works with all members of the family to meet their individual needs as well as those of the family as a whole.

Once it is established that a family meets the service criteria, a joint visit is arranged, and a whole family assessment is organised. This works around identifying the family's strengths. The Family Pathfinder team provides support and guidance for coping with family stress and practical help, for example with managing meal times and bed times, children's behaviour, claiming benefits or accessing training and education.

## Supporting vulnerable tenants

The two organisations profiled below have taken very different approaches to helping citizens overcome personal problems. The Framework Housing Association works proactively to prevent homelessness by recognising the problems their tenants have very honestly and providing intensive, tailored support. Meanwhile, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has recently begun a personal mentoring programme, which is deliberately non-prescriptive. Instead it trusts that residents know best what they need help with and gives them the freedom to set their own goals. They are two very different approaches, but both are having good results.

## Floating support services

Framework Housing Association specializes in providing housing for vulnerable and homeless people. It provides its tenants with support services to help them sustain their tenancy. These range from help with basic life skills, such as setting up a new home, budgeting and accessing local services, to help with personal problems such as drug or alcohol addiction. The housing association also signposts tenants to training and learning opportunities and runs courses such as Flatpack, where a team renovates a council flat. This type of practical project helps to build the confidence of residents and gives them the courage to try new things.

Tenancy sustainment emerged very strongly as an issue on the estate we were working on in South Shields, where residents in the single person flats had often moved straight out of the family home and were looking to have a good time. This caused problems for them as well as their neighbours, who quickly became fed up with the partying and constant coming and going of their friends. Local practitioners thought these residents could benefit from personalized support and this is something they will be exploring in their action plan.

## Launchpad

Launchpad is a programme run by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for residents living in a council or a housing association property in the Dalgarno and World's End neighbourhoods. The project offers participants aged 18-60 up to 10 life-coaching sessions, to help them achieve a personal goal. The goal is for the participant to decide, and could be anything from finding a job to managing a health issue, breaking negative behaviour patterns or improving interpersonal relationships. The project has been running since July 2009 and the council is on track for meeting its targets in terms of placements. The first cohort of participants is due to finish their sessions in spring 2010. Initial feedback suggests that the programme is being positively received by participants, with many going on to get jobs, change behaviour patterns, and one deciding to start her own business. The council is planning to follow-up with participants six months after they complete the programme to see if they have continued to pursue their goals.

## Local wellbeing and community cohesion

One of the questions put to residents during this project was whether they took part in community activities. More often than not the answer was no. "I keep myself to myself" was repeated time and again.

Research indicates that people who know their neighbours are less likely to be victims of crime. Relationships with neighbours, even if it just a passing hello, can enhance peoples' sense of belonging and attachment to a place. At the moment only four out of ten people know the names of any of their neighbours. What would happen to fear of crime if we all got to know five of our neighbours?

The ideas below are small scale, low-cost and build on existing assets, such as residents with a sense of humour who are willing to help each other out.

## The Silver Hoodies, Bromsville

The Silver Hoodies is a group of retired residents that perform contemporary rap songs at local schools. The group was set up by the Bromsgrove District Housing Trust to help break down intergenerational barriers on the estate in an entertaining way. They seem to have succeeded. The sight of a group of elderly neighbours dressed in hoodies rapping to popular music such as the Pussycat Dolls and 50 Cent has left children in the audience stunned and bemused. The hoodies capitalise on this to talk to the kids afterwards and break down some of the barriers that exist between young and old on the estate.

The Head of Community Services at Bromsgrove District Housing Trust came up with the idea of forming the group after watching a documentary about a group of mature singers travelling around prisons in America. She adapted the idea to her local patch, making it a fun and low-cost way for the Trust to help build rapport between young and old. We think it is ripe for adaptation to other estates where there is little communication between young and old.

The project has been a success. Not only have the hoodies' grandchildren discovered a new found respect for their grandparents, but the hoodies have been recognised by young people locally who have stopped for a chat and on one occasion even helped with taking the rubbish out.

## **Embedded time banking – Spice**

Timebanking is a system where individuals can earn credits for time they spend helping out in the community. For every hour they spend helping an elderly neighbour with their shopping or pitching in at the community gardens they earn a credit. This credit can either be redeemed when they need someone else's assistance or from a menu of incentives such as retail vouchers, cinema tickets or passes to the local leisure.

At Gadlys Girls School in Wales, pupils tidied the grounds in exchange for time on the internet, attendance on trips and discounts at the canteen. For every hour they helped out in the school grounds they earned one credit. Teachers noticed that the students who participated had more pride in their school and were more receptive during lessons.

Timebanking is a relatively simple initiative that can be adapted to most contexts. It works well because it recognises and rewards people for the good deeds they do, while at the same time helping to build social networks and trust within the community.

## **Growing Roots, Strengthening Neighbourhoods**

Growing Roots, Strengthening Neighbourhoods was a five-year (2002–2007) initiative by the Hamilton Community Foundation to support neighbourhood activities in four neighbourhoods in Hamilton, Canada. Grants were given to resident led groups that undertook projects such as improving community gardens, beginning after-school and parenting classes, and developing neighbourhood associations.

What was different about the initiative was that it invested in leadership development for residents so they would have the skills to continue with initiatives once the funding dried up. One complaint that comes up time and again in communities here in England is that projects are unsustainable because they rely too heavily on funding for paid posts. With the initiative in Hamilton, a community

worker was involved early on in the project to mobilise residents and organise leadership development, but then was able to withdraw without the projects dying. Arguably the most important outcome from the project was not the increased neighbourliness or cleaner neighbourhoods, but the new cohort of residents willing to be engaged in community life.



# Appendix: The South Shields Action Plan

## The Environment

Objectives:

- 1 To create more open space within the estate
- 2 To practically involve residents in the design and delivery of changes to the estate

Targets and Indicators:

- To improve resident satisfaction with the environment on the Estate
- To have established a network of residents that are actively involved in environmental improvements

Local Priority	Responsibility	Outcome – Measure of Success	Resources	Target Date
<b>Objective 1:</b> To create more usable open space within the estate				
<b>Remove appropriate planters within the estate</b>	<b>Lead:</b> South Tyneside Homes, Neighbourhood Services <b>Partners:</b> Area Partnership, Police	Planters removed	Environmental Improvement Funds	March 2010
<b>In consultation with local people, remove trees that cause obstruction or blockages of light to local people</b>	<b>Lead:</b> South Tyneside Homes, Neighbourhood Services	Trees Removed	Environmental Improvement Funds	March 2010
<b>To conduct feasibility work on the large green space</b>	<b>Lead:</b> Neighbourhood Services <b>Partners:</b> Area Partnership, South Tyneside Homes, Sure Start	Options established and preferences agreed  Resources identified	Within existing resources	October 2010

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**Objective 2:** To practically involve residents in the design and delivery of changes to the estate

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<p><b>To develop practical opportunities to involve residents in any environmental change.</b></p> <p><b>Involvement to be both consultative and hands on, e.g. planting days.</b></p>	<p><b>Lead:</b> Neighbourhood Services, South Tyneside Homes, Primary School</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Area Partnership</p>	<p>An environmental project group established, involving residents and agencies and feeding into the Area Partnership</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>February 2010</p>
<p><b>To involve the Environmental Projects Group in allocating resources</b></p>	<p><b>Lead:</b> Neighbourhood Services, South Tyneside Homes</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Area Partnership</p>	<p>Decisions on environmental improvements influenced by Environmental Improvement Group</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>May 2010</p>
<p><b>To involve the Environmental Projects Group in the feasibility work on the large green space</b></p>	<p><b>Lead:</b> Neighbourhood Services, South Tyneside Homes</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Area Partnership</p>	<p>A resident-led consultation held on the preferences for the green space.</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Summer 2010</p>

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# Housing Support

Objectives:

- 1 To ensure that new tenants are fully supported by existing services
- 2 To assess the feasibility of having a property on the estate from which services can be delivered

Targets and Indicators:

- Reduced number of tenancies that are broken
- Increased access and satisfaction with services

Local Priority	Responsibility	Outcome – Measure of Success	Resources	Target Date
<b>Objective 1:</b> To ensure that new tenants are fully supported by existing services				
To develop an assessment framework which considers the broad spectrum of new tenants' needs, and to design a package of interventions around them	<b>Lead:</b> South Tyneside Homes <b>Partners:</b> Neighbourhood Services, Family Services, ASB, Social Services, College, PCT	A comprehensive needs assessment developed and applied to new tenants  Interventions identified and offered to tenant	Within existing resources	April 2011
<b>Objective 2:</b> To assess the feasibility of having a property on the estate from which services can be delivered				
To assess whether there is a business case for using a property on the estate to deliver services from	<b>Lead:</b> Neighbourhood Services <b>Partners:</b> South Tyneside Homes, Area Partnership	Business plan for property developed	Within existing resources	April 2011
In the eventuality of a flat being used to deliver services from, maintain an ongoing system of evaluation in order to maintain the business case, and potentially attract more localised service delivery	<b>Lead:</b> Neighbourhood Services <b>Partners:</b> South Tyneside Homes, Area Partnership	All activity in the property monitored and evaluated	Within existing resources	No target date

# Family Wellbeing

Objectives:

- 1 To improve the wellbeing of families through local interventions
- 1 More community use of Primary School, Community Centre and the Children's Centre

Targets and Indicators:

- Establishment of sustainable local support groups
- Take up of local interventions

Local Priority	Responsibility	Outcome – Measure of Success	Resources	Target Date
<b>Objective 1:</b> To improve the wellbeing of families through local interventions				
<b>Ensure that the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities programme is run for families on the estate</b>	<b>Lead:</b> Family Services <b>Partners:</b> Neighbourhood Services, Area Partnership, South Tyneside Homes, PCT	Project run and evaluated	Family Services & within existing resources	TBC
<b>Ensure that the community entrepreneurs programme benefits residents from the estate</b>	<b>Lead:</b> TBC <b>Partners:</b> TBC	TBC	TBC	
<b>Objective 2:</b> More community use of Primary School, Community Centre and the Children's Centre				
<b>To work with the primary school to develop a programme of activities to engage parents and grandparents from the estate</b>	<b>Lead:</b> Neighbourhood Services, Primary School <b>Partners:</b> Area Partnership, PCT, Community Centre, Children's Centre	Programme developed and implemented	Within existing resources	July 2010

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<p><b>To develop an innovative communications action plan to ensure that residents are aware and encouraged to use Primary school, Community Centre and Children's Centre. It should use a range of communications platforms, including: TV, word of mouth, internet and different forms of art</b></p>	<p><b>Lead:</b> Primary School, Neighbourhood Services</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Area Partnership, PCT</p>	<p>Communications action plan developed and implemented</p>	<p>Within existing resources and external fundraising</p>	<p>July 2010</p>
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9. See *Harlem Children's Zone* [<http://www.hcz.org/>]
10. See *Framework Housing Association* [<http://www.frameworkha.org/index.php>] *Framework Housing Association: 2006 Gold Award winner* [<http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.7606>]
11. See *Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea* [<http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/az/az.asp?searchletter=&orgid=6887>] or *Nova* (service provider) [[http://www.novanew.org.uk/jc/jc\\_launchpad.php](http://www.novanew.org.uk/jc/jc_launchpad.php)]
12. Bartlett, Liz and Savage, Vicki, 'Cutting through the tension' in *New Start*, 4 July 2008.
13. See *Bromsgrove District Housing Trust* [<http://www.bdht.co.uk/>] 'The Silver Hoodies – we're down with OAP' [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2009/sep/23/housing-the-silver-hoodies>]
14. See *Spice* [<http://www.justaddspice.org/index.html>]
15. See *Growing Roots, Strengthening Neighbourhoods* [[http://www.hcf.on.ca/initiatives\\_neighbourhood\\_grsn.shtml](http://www.hcf.on.ca/initiatives_neighbourhood_grsn.shtml)]







This toolkit aims to encourage local authorities, housing associations and other public agencies to think differently about how to break the cycle of entrenched poverty and disadvantage on small housing estates. Drawing upon learning from this project and over four years' work with deprived neighbourhoods across the country, we argue that regeneration should focus more on supporting the social and emotional needs of people living in deprived areas, as well as physical development and improvements to local services.



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