

## **Community-Led Urban Regeneration: Early Lessons from the New Deal for Communities**

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## **Introduction**

The problems of disadvantaged communities have been a focus of central government policy in the UK for many years. Following the election of 1997, the New Labour government indicated that neighbourhood-based regeneration would be a prime element of its urban policy and it would take two major directions:

- Programmes targeting vulnerable groups
- Area-based initiatives focused on the places where deprivation is found.

This paper reflects on some early lessons from one of the key programmes supporting area-based renewal, the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme, which was launched in 1999.

Without doubt, the NDC programme represents a new approach to tackling deprivation by placing communities at the centre of proposals for change. Moreover, it is the most intensely resourced area-based initiative in 30 years of urban policy in the UK; allocating £ 3 ½ billion to 39 separate disadvantaged neighbourhood areas in England. Each New Deal neighbourhood is required to establish new structures to reduce the extent of crime, unemployment, poor health, low educational performance, and improve the physical environment. These structures must not only represent the interests of local people but also must be carried out in partnership with mainstream service delivery agencies in ways that improve their services to the community.

To obtain a better understanding of the New Deal for Communities programme, this paper looks in detail at one of the original pathfinder NDC neighbourhoods in Barton Hill, Bristol, and the organization, Community at Heart, a partnership created specifically to manage and deliver the NDC programme.

Each NDC initiative is scheduled to last ten years. Since the partnerships throughout England responsible for implementing the NDC programme, including Community at Heart have all been operational for less than four years, it is too early to judge the overall effectiveness of the New Deal or to generalize about the successes or failure of the New Deal for Communities Programme as a whole. Instead we attempt to reflect on the performance of Community at Heart during its first three years, and on the key stages of forming a neighbourhood-based partnerships in the Barton Hill neighbourhood. In doing so we will identify what successes there have been and where expectations have yet to be met.

After briefly reviewing recent trends in urban policy in Britain, this paper sets out the characteristics of the New Deal for Communities programme, and identifies the key elements in forming neighbourhood based programme. Comparison with similar initiatives in the U.S. is used as a way of identifying strengths and weaknesses inherent in the NDC approach. Then looking specifically at the Bristol NDC effort, the Community at Heart partnership is compared and contrasted with American community development corporations (CDCs). Finally, the paper seeks to identify the “lessons learned” from the NDC programme as it approaches its halfway point and how these lessons can be used in other regeneration programmes in the UK and elsewhere.

## **A Brief Review of Recent British Urban Policy**

In the years immediately following World War II British government policies did not directly address urban decay. Instead they were more broadly focused on regional programmes of grants and expenditures intended to correct inequalities and uneven development (Jonas and Ward 2002). This focus began to shift in the 1980s as the Conservative Thatcher government initiated policies calling for locally developed solutions to urban problems, while at the same time bypassing elected local governments. The 1980 Local Government, Planning and Land Act, for example, promoted the creation of Urban Development Corporations, a form of public private partnership that had a heavy emphasis on private sector development and enhanced central state control over local government policy making (Imrie and Thomas 1999). As a result concerns about regional inequality and uneven development were minimized. These new programmes, which became the primary focus of urban policy, promoted competition between regions and cities through the competitive bidding for regeneration funds (Jonas and Ward 2002).

The Major government's approach to urban regeneration in the early 1990s continued the shift toward area specific approaches and competitive bidding for projects, while devolving some authority from central government and giving some measure of power to local authorities. It extended competitive or "challenge" funding for local regeneration by creating the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), a programme that integrated twenty funding streams from five different government departments into coordinated efforts that were presumably tailored to local circumstances. SRB resources were allocated on a competitive basis based on proposals submitted by local partnerships. Although local governments participated in the bidding process, SRB programmes were administered by newly established Government Offices for the Region, thus continuing centralized control of urban programmes, albeit in a somewhat localized fashion (Hall and Hickman 2002).

Following its successful general election campaign of 1997, New Labour did not radically change the direction of urban regeneration policy, but it did introduce some new programmes with slightly changed emphases. Citing a need to make government more meaningful to citizens, the government developed new local political management arrangements and promoted "joined up" governance at the local level. These new programmes called for targeted communities "to participate in and take responsibility for their own regeneration in return for an injection of government funding" (Smith and Sullivan 2002, p. 3). Citizen involvement in local regeneration partnerships thus became a key element of New Labour's urban regeneration policy.

Under New Labour the field of urban regeneration has become crowded with a variety of programs, both old and new, competing for attention. The Regional Coordination Unit of the central government lists some 45 different programs that can be used in depressed communities. According to Stewart (2003), in the city of Bristol alone, there are eight different area based initiatives arising from a variety of programmes including Single Regeneration Budget, Education Action Zone, Sure Start, EU URBAN, EU Objective Two, and New Deal for Communities, and at least seventeen city-wide

partnerships, each having some responsibility for better service delivery through “joined-up service planning and delivery.

Two themes underlie recent British urban policy, the continued use of “partnerships” to develop and implement regeneration efforts (Taylor 2000) and the increasing focus on area based initiatives as the preferred mechanism for regeneration (Stewart 2001). Both themes are consistent with New Labour’s focus on Modernising Government in which past approaches are continued but are made more inclusive, more efficient, and more citizen-focused (Massey 2001). Area based programmes are thus intended to tackle the problems of particular areas through a joined up approach to planning and service delivery that involves consultation and participation by area residents.

As a key element of New Labour’s efforts to address deprivation in urban neighbourhoods, the New Deal for Communities programme (NDC) was launched in 1998 with the naming of seventeen pathfinder partnerships. Each partnership was first to prepare a “delivery plan” that would identify how joined up solutions to service delivery would address multiple deprivation in a closely targeted area in an intensive and coordinated way. Implementation of the delivery plans was then to occur over a period of ten years under the direction of a local partnership consisting of local people, community and voluntary organisations, public agencies, local authorities and business. The NDC reflects New Labour’s interest in “New Localism” and extends the role of citizenship to address urban policy and counter the breakdown of local communities. As such it provides a key vision towards building strong and sustainable communities.

### **The New Deal for Communities**

The New Deal for Communities programme (NDC) came about as part of extensive diagnostic work carried out at the start of the New Labour term. Dedicated Policy Action Teams that reported directly to a Prime Ministerial Team were established to review 18 key areas of urban policy. However, even before these reports had been completed, the government, in a blaze of publicity launched the NDC programme, borrowing the title from the successfully perceived Treasury-led New Deal for Unemployment programme. NDC programmes were to be neighbourhood based and in theory, at least, led by the local community. As announced, the goals of the NDC programme were to identify what strategies work and then by working in partnership with local agencies to challenge and change the overall delivery of public services, resulting in long term and sustainable solutions to seemingly intractable neighbourhood problems.

Each NDC neighbourhood was to comprise approximately 10,000 people, living in roughly 3-4,000 households. Each NDC partnership was to be seed funded, up to half a million pounds for one year, and tasked with forming a local community-led partnership, recruiting a ‘delivery team’ and establishing an ‘accountable body’, usually the local authority, to be responsible for ensuring proper financial management of each NDC partnership. Once formed, each partnership would be responsible for drawing up a delivery plan to address four key themes; tackling worklessness, improving health, tackling crime, and raising educational achievement. As planning for the NDC

programme proceeded, housing and the physical environment was identified as a fifth priority theme. At the outset, local partnerships were positively encouraged to establish new and innovative structures to deliver the programmes.

The government's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, which was produced in 2000 as an outgrowth of the original Policy Action Team reports, confirmed the NDC programme and advocated for a second round of NDC partnerships to complement the initial seventeen pathfinder NDC efforts. Since the NDC programme was to be a demonstration project that would explore new approaches to joined up service delivery and would identify 'best practices' that could then be mainstreamed, the government announced that there would be no subsequent rounds of NDC funding. The lessons learned, assuming success, would then be applied throughout urban areas in Britain.

Altogether there are thirty-nine NDC partnerships across the UK. Table One lists these partnerships by region and indicates the amount of ten-year funding for each.

**Table One**  
**New Deal for Community Partnerships**

Region	Location	NDC Neighbourhood(s)	Funds (£)
North West			
	Knowsley	Huyton	55.8
	Liverpool	Kensington	61.9
	Manchester	Beswick and Openshaw	51.7
	Oldham	Hathershaw and Fitton Hill	53.5
	Rochdale	Heywood	52.0
	Salford	Charlestown and Lower Kersal	53.0
Yorkshire and the Humber			
	Bradford	Little Horton, Marshfield, and West Bowling	50.0
	Doncaster	Central Doncaster	52.0
	Hull	Preston Road	55.0
	Sheffield	Burngreave	52.0
East Midlands			
	Derby	Derwent	42.0
	Leicester	Braunstone	49.5
	Nottingham	Radford and Hyson Green	55.1
West Midlands			
	Birmingham	Aston	54.0
	Birmingham	Kings Norton	50.0
	Coventry	Wood End, Henley Green, and Manor Farm	54.0
	Sandwell	Greets Green	56.0
	Walsall	Blakenall	52.0
	Wolverhampton	All Saints and Blakenhall	53.5
East of England			
	Luton	Marsh Farm	48.8
	Norwich	North Earlham, Larkham, and Marlpit	35.2

**Table One (Continued)**

South East	Brighton	East Brighton	47.2
	Southampton	Thornhill	48.7
South West	Bristol	Barton Hill	50.0
	Plymouth	Devonport	48.7
London	Brent	South Kilburn	50.1
	Hackney	Shoreditch	59.4
	Hammersmith & Fulham	North Fulham	44.3
	Haringey	Seven Sisters	50.1
	Islington	Finsbury	52.9
	Lambeth	Clapham Park	56.0
	Lewisham	New Cross Gate	45.0
	Newham	West Ham and Plaistow	54.6
	Southwark	Aylesbury Estate	56.2
	Tower Hamlets	Ocean Estate	56.6
	North East	Hartlepool	West Central Hartlepool
Middlesbrough		West Middlesbrough	52.1
Newcastle		West Gate	54.9
Sunderland		East End and Hendon	53.9

Although each NDC partnerships was given the responsibility for developing and implementing its own regeneration strategy, the central government maintains an oversight of each partnership and keeps in close contact with developments through the nine regional government offices located across England<sup>1</sup>. Overall, the NDC programme as a whole is overseen from a newly established Neighbourhood Renewal Unit based within Whitehall.

From the outset, NDC partnerships were afforded a significant degree of freedom in deciding how best to approach the problems of their areas and this has been a defining feature of the programme. Because of this there is a wide diversity in the strategies adopted by the individual partnerships and to date this has led to a range of activities on the ground across the five theme areas.

In its recent review of the NDC programme, the National Audit Office has identified four key elements or stages that partnerships need to successfully move through to be able to deliver an effective neighbourhood regeneration programme in later years:

1. **Community engagement** is first needed in order to understand the problems of local people, which will vary widely from place-to-place. It is important from the outset to involve local people in developing plans for the area and for building the local partnership.

<sup>1</sup> Community at Heart, Bristol's NDC initiative, which is detailed in this paper, is monitored through the Government of the Southwest (GOSW).

2. **Effective operating processes** must be developed once strategies for addressing local problems are in place. These processes include the shaping of an organisational structure, forming a partnership board and delivery team and implementing and adhering to sound financial management.
3. **Building and managing relations** with a broad range of local and national organizations to ensure a focus on delivering specific projects through working with partners and delivery agents is critical to successful regeneration efforts. Some of these organisations will help to steer progress, while others will be funded to deliver programmes.
4. **Delivery and sustainability** must become the focus of the NDC as partnerships move into the delivery phase. The partnerships must design projects with long-term benefits in mind and identify how progress can be monitored and evaluated.

Most of the original seventeen pathfinder NDCs had completed their delivery plans and had begun to implement them by the latter part of 2000. They are thus now approaching the end of the fourth year of implementation, whilst the second group of NDCs are not yet that far along. Given that the demonstration is scheduled to last ten years it is inappropriate to make pronouncements about whether it is or is not a success. Nonetheless as the NDCs partnerships approach the half way point it is instructive to look at what the experience has been so far. Rather than attempting to provide a broad-brush picture of the programme as a whole, we will look at one of the NDC partnerships, Community at Heart Barton Hill, Bristol. But before we do this we will attempt to place the NDC programme in context with other urban regeneration efforts, especially those in the U.S. This will allow us to more clearly understand the strengths and weaknesses of the NDC approach and better assess its possible outcomes.

### **Is there an American Equivalent of the NDC?**

In the last 30 years or so it seems that British and American governments have frequently borrowed urban programmes from each other, particularly those focusing on the regeneration of depressed areas. For example, the Urban Development Action Grant programme of the late 1970s in the U.S. and the Urban Development Corporations in Britain in the early 1980s share similar characteristics. Enterprise zones, while originating in Britain, rapidly crossed the Atlantic to be implemented as tools for revitalising depressed areas in the U.S.

Given the cross fertilisation of regeneration programmes, we might ask whether there is a similar U.S. counterpart to the New Deal for Communities? If there is and if there have been “lessons learned” from it, then we might have some idea as to what can be or should be expected as outcomes from the NDC. Furthermore, the U.S. experience might provide some thoughts on how to make appropriate corrections to the NDC, so as to avoid any problems that were encountered in the U.S.

A common response from urban academics and policy analysts in the U.S. to a brief description of the NDC is to suggest it is a similar programme to the Clinton administration’s Empowerment Zone (EZ) programme. The NDC and EZ share three major common characteristics, they are targeted area based initiatives, they involve

similar amounts of funding<sup>2</sup>, and they last for a period of ten years. Despite these commonalities, it can be shown on closer inspection that the NDC and EZ are not comparable approaches to urban regeneration.

There are two major differences between the two programmes. First, while both NDC and EZ have similar general policy goals of reducing poverty and stimulating economic development in targeted low-income urban areas, they differ in the mechanisms used to address these goals. The American EZ program is constructed around a package of economic incentives including tax credits and deductions, bonding authority, and capital gains reductions that are intended to stimulate economic activity in the zones. The government funding, \$100 million for each EZ, does not directly go to economic development, but is used for supportive services for residents, who need to be prepared to benefit from increased economic activity (Keating and Krumholz 1999).

The NDC programme is constructed around the notion that better services in a community can work to eliminate 'social exclusion', the 'inability of ... society to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what we expect as a society' (Power 1999). Therefore, NDC funds, approximately £50 million per partnership, are used for developing and implementing new and more efficient 'joined up' methods of service delivery and for physical improvements in the community. Better service delivery and physical improvements are intended to create an environment conducive to personal growth and economic development.

The second difference between the NDC and EZ relates to the targeting of the two programmes. Both programmes are area-based initiatives, but the NDC is a concentrated programme implemented in a tightly drawn target area, while the EZ is broadly targeted to cover major areas of deprivation in American cities. Each NDC neighbourhood comprises approximately 10,000 people or 3-4,000 households. American EZ communities vary in size but are much larger. Chicago's EZ, for example, includes three different sections of the city, covers 14.3 square miles<sup>3</sup> and has a resident population of just slightly less than 200,000 people<sup>4</sup> (McCarthy 2001). If we look at the funding impacts for the two programmes, there is approximately £5,000 of expenditures allocated per resident for the typical NDC area. Given current exchange rates (Spring 2004) the equivalent expenditures per resident for the Chicago EZ have been approximately £275. Given the smaller size of NDC areas and their much higher allocation per resident, it is much more likely that people living in NDC areas will be aware of the programmes existence and receive some form of direct benefit from it.

So it is unlikely that the American EZ experience will provide any 'lessons learned' for the NDC. But there is an American programme with which a comparison may be useful. This programme is Model Cities and it occurred nearly 40 years ago.

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<sup>2</sup> Empowerment Zones are funded at \$100 million over their ten year life, while the average NDC will receive £50 million. At current exchange rates (Spring 2004) EZ funds amount to approximately £55.6 million.

<sup>3</sup> Bristol's NDC is focused on the Barton Hill neighbourhood and covers an area of no greater than 1 square mile.

<sup>4</sup> Detroit's EZ, while containing fewer residents than Chicago, slightly over 101,000, is even larger than Chicago's, encompassing 18.4 square miles (Chandler 1999).

Model Cities<sup>5</sup> was the first major program implemented by the then newly formed Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under President Johnson's Great Society initiative (Weaver 1985). The purpose of Model Cities was to demonstrate that inner city renewal could be accomplished through targeted comprehensive physical, social and economic initiatives involving the coordination of multiple programs and several government departments and agencies. Substitute the 'coordination of multiple programs (by) several ... departments and agencies' with 'joined up' and the Model City approach to neighbourhood regeneration appears to be strikingly similar to that of the NDC.

Furthermore, like the NDC, Model Cities was a demonstration programme intended to produce 'lessons learned'. Only sixty-six sites were to receive Model City treatment. Also like the NDC, Model Cities was a programme initiated by the central (federal) government and it for the most part bypassed local governments on key decision points, although it required local government participation (Nathan et. al. 1977).

By nearly all measures, Model Cities did not succeed. In the process of enacting the Model Cities legislation the U.S. Congress increased the number of demonstration sites to 150 and at the same time substantially reduced the total amount of funding for the programme. Thus each local Model Cities neighbourhood was seriously under funded. The regulations governing how the programme was to be carried out were complex and confusing leading to delays and false starts. Few if any creative approaches to regeneration were actually tried. The newly formed HUD was ineffective in coordinating the work of other federal agencies and it was often in conflict with local government bodies that felt cut out of the programme (Weaver 1985).

Even though the 'lessons learned' from Model Cities are nearly all negative, it may be instructive to use them in the hope that some of the flaws in Model Cities have or can be avoided in the NDC.

It seems as though the British government has avoided the problem of proliferation of areas included in the programme that doomed Model Cities before it began. The NDC initiative has been capped at thirty-nine partnerships and the funding of each partnership has been more or less as promised. However other problems that sunk Model Cities are potential threats to NDC success. The NDC programme is complex and local partnerships are held to a ridged set of regulations. Managers of the programme seem reluctant to support creative initiatives. Local governments, who in most instances are designated as being the 'accountable body' and thus responsible for how the partnerships spend their monies, are nevertheless not in the direct line of administration and decision-making. Thus, in many instances they have not fully embraced the NDC and have been reluctant to facilitate the process of delivering 'joined up' services.

The similarities between the negative 'lessons learned' from Model Cities and the structure and operation of NDC partnerships suggests that there are barriers that NDC partnerships will have to overcome if they are to bring about successful regeneration in their neighbourhoods. But before carrying this discussion further, it may be helpful to look at the early experiences of one of the partnerships, Community at Heart, Barton Hill Bristol. Through a detailed telling of the story of the first few years of Community at

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<sup>5</sup> Title 1 of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966.

Heart (CAH), we may gain insight as to how opportunities and limits to bringing about meaningful regeneration arise and are dealt with in the NDC programme. After telling the CAH story, we will conclude by making some general observations about the NDC as it approaches its half way point.

### **Community at Heart, Barton Hill, Bristol**

The New Deal for Communities area of Barton Hill, Bristol, consists of four small neighbourhoods, Barton Hill itself, Lawrence Hill, The Dings, and a portion of Redfield and covers an area of about 1 square mile. The NDC area is centrally located in Bristol but is isolated from the city centre by railway lines, industrial estates, and major motorways (see figures one and two). As an identifiable place, Barton Hill has existed for at least 1,000 years<sup>6</sup> although the current residential community dates only to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it has been significantly modified since the 1950s.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Barton Hill had become a working class community where low wages, high unemployment, poor housing conditions, and poverty and poor health were prevalent. Developments throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century did little to change the social and economic character of the area, but slum clearance efforts in the 1950s resulted in displacing residents, eliminating homes, shops, and services, and replacing them with several massive council housing tower blocks.

According to government statistics for 1998, twenty three percent of the residents aged 16 or over in the Lawrence Hill Ward, which includes Barton Hill, were Income Support Claimants (welfare), only twenty percent of all residents reported that they can live comfortably on their incomes, and a full thirty-five percent of people of working age reported that they were economically inactive. Lawrence Hill ranks 133<sup>rd</sup> out of 8,414 wards nationally (1 = worst) in terms of deprivation according to an index of multiple deprivation derived by the government (Boddy 2003).

There are two types of housing in Barton Hill, tower blocks (high rises) of over six stories and Victorian garden style row homes. Forty four percent of the approximately 3,300 households in the community rent from the Bristol City Council. There is an annual turnover in housing of approximately twenty percent and the void (vacancy) rate in the core area is about six percent.

Barton Hill became Bristol's choice for a NDC site following an October 1998 conference attended by representatives from the eight most deprived areas in Bristol. Community leaders and stakeholders then spent a year preparing a delivery plan and forming the Community at Heart partnership<sup>7</sup>. Once the delivery plan was approved by the central government a Chief Executive Officer was chosen and CAH began operating.

The Community at Heart partnership has been structured so that twelve of its twenty board members are to be community residents. This gives at least numerical

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<sup>6</sup> Barton Hill is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1087.

<sup>7</sup> Initial partners in addition to the people of Barton Hill included the Bristol City Council, the Avon Health Authority, the Avon and Somerset Police, the Bristol Regeneration Partnership, local schools, local churches, local General Practitioners, the Barton Hill Settlement House, and the Local Youth Project.

control of the NDC to the community and sets out CAH as a community-based organization. Some of the non-resident partners, such as those representing the Bristol Council have chosen to only participate in board discussions, but not to vote to approve projects and on other matters and this gives further control to community representatives of the partnership.

The delivery plan identified eight outcome areas and ten year target goals organised around the five required NDC themes and additional themes selected locally. Table Two lists the CAH themes and outcome areas.

**Table Two**  
**Community at Heart Outcome Areas**

Employment and Business	Sustainable Health and Well-being
Tackling Crime	Raising Educational Achievement
Housing	Community Services
Arts, Sports, and Leisure	Tackling Racism

In addition to putting in place key operational processes, during the first three years the CAH partnership has delivered a range of activities and services across the Barton Hill neighbourhood targeted at addressing the key issues of multiple deprivation. These activities and services are listed in Table Three. It should be noted that many of these address more than one of the outcome themes.

There are a number of other major initiatives currently in preparation but still to be delivered. These are listed in Table Four.

## **Some Preliminary Findings about the NDC and Community at Heart**

### Evaluation of NDC progress

A recent central government evaluation of the NDC was guardedly positive, but it also identified areas where problems exist that need to be addressed. The report concludes that progress has been made and that the NDC programme holds the potential of being an important part of the Government's objective to 'narrow the gap' between communities within England. But it also notes that the Government's decision to adopt a highly community-orientated approach to regeneration has brought with it substantial challenges in the early years of the programme. But it has also brought with it the significant benefit of ensuring that responses to community problems are grounded in the needs of communities and as a result the changes that have and will occur may be more sustainable over the long term.

According to the report, spending of the NDC funds has been slower than expected in the early years of the programme, and tensions have arisen due to some weaker governance and oversight arrangements. The report suggests that perhaps these outcomes should have been expected and that they reflect the inevitable need for learning

inherent in the application of a new 'community-centred' model of regeneration. Providing that the Government and the various NDC partnerships grip these problems, the report concludes that prospects for the remaining phases of the programme are potentially good.

**Table Three**  
**CAH Delivered Activities and Services as of Spring 2004**

- Increased local policing and introduced local neighbourhood wardens
- Upgraded security on over 600 homes
- Increased security through a range of activities including alley gating and 350 new street lights
- Implemented a new street cleansing scheme to improve the upkeep of the local area
- Provided support for victims of crime particularly those suffering domestic abuse or race hate crime
- Instituted a new local newspaper and other communications
- Adopted a new CCTV system for the tower blocks (to be installed)
- Created a new Secondary school – the City Academy
- Provided direct support for literacy training and out of school learning
- Organized pre and after school clubs
- Increased educational support for those at risk
- Incentive scheme
- Initiated a new under 5s nursery
- Refurbished two neighbourhood parks
- Opened a New Advice Centre that includes extra support for job search
- Built a new health centre with some additional linking into social services support
- Provided additional youth services and activities
- Provided support for drug users and their families
- Established two new adult learning centres and new adult and family learning courses
- Demolished fifty-nine flats in non-functional blocks
- Begun the construction of eight new houses
- Undertaken a range of arts projects
- Developed and received community approval of a master plan 60 new homes and other Estate improvements
- Developed a one stop shop for support and information with targeted support for over 50s and minority groups
- Implemented a range of health improvement initiatives
- Purchased a new local minibus
- Created a volunteer and community support team

With respect to community involvement the report found that generally the NDC partnerships had been effective, but that more efficient means of consultation with residents need to be adopted. While noting that there has been strong community input, which has been important to the development of plans reflective of the priorities of local residents, the process of consulting with the community has taken longer to accomplish than expected. Thus the report concludes that NDC partnerships need to develop quicker and more efficient ways of engaging community members. Obviously the NDC architects underestimated the time and effort needed to organize community input.

**Table Four**  
**Major CAH initiatives Not Yet Implemented**

- Physical improvements to the main high rise estate (as outlined in the master plan)
- Improvements to two further schools
- Improvements to local shops
- The construction of a new all purpose youth centre
- Establishment of a long term endowment fund and independent income stream
- Implementation of local neighbourhood management
- Development and construction of very sheltered housing (for older residents)

The report also found that the operating processes established for many NDC partnerships are not, at this stage, sufficiently robust to bring about meaningful regeneration. Actions to strengthen basic processes related to governance, financial reporting and project appraisal criteria, the report concludes, are needed.

With respect to the goal of establishing 'joined up' approach to regeneration, the report concludes that it has been difficult to encourage delivery agencies (local and national government departments) to engage with NDC partnerships and that partnerships have a mixed record in working constructively with them. It contends that the success of the NDC programme depends on NDC partnerships avoiding the temptation to 'go it alone' and it encourages more NDC partnerships to take positive steps to work in collaboration with mainstream bodies. Similarly, it finds that those delivery agencies that are not engaging well with NDC partnerships should review their opportunities to work with them and the communities they represent.

Sustainability beyond the life of NDC is a major goal of the programme and was to have been designed into the efforts of each of the partnerships. The report indicates that there are some early indications of some high potential projects that may produce sustainability. Noting that individual NDC investments are often substantial and the report points out the need for partnerships to work at proving the likely contribution of each investment to both its funding partners and to members of the community. The report finds that in NDC partnerships where the accountable body has taken a risk management approach, programmes are progressing well.

Evaluation of Community at Heart Progress

The Cities Research Centre of the University of the West of England is responsible for directly evaluating Community at Heart. In its most recent evaluation the evaluators echo many of the national evaluation findings. The 2003 mid year review (for the period of April-October 2003) by the Cities Research Centre notes that Community at Heart has 'maintained steady progress in getting projects up and running and more importantly [the New Deal area is] beginning to show signs of change'.

Community at Heart achieved a middle ranking (score of 3 on a scale of five) from the evaluators. The meaning of this ranking is less than clear, however. It is not known whether this is based on some absolute scale of performance indicators or instead is a comparison in which CAH has been ranked against other New Deal partnerships.

One significant finding of the evaluation relates to a major theme underlying the New Deal for Communities concept. In terms of community cohesion, equalities and engagement, the evaluation finds that Community at Heart is at risk from being overwhelmed by resident burn-out amongst the elected resident members of the Board. Furthermore while there has been resident involvement in the various theme and other project related groups, the level of participation has not grown, but has remained reasonably constant across the programme. The evaluation did note that volunteering numbers remain buoyant indicating an on-going willingness from residents to get involved with the practical ‘hands on’ aspects of the New Deal.

But beyond those people who are in some way directly involved in governance of CAH or its projects, reaction from members of the community is somewhat less positive. The evaluators found that while residents are very appreciative of some of the projects funded by the New Deal, they remain perplexed about the long length of time between the time they first hear or are consulted about a project and the appearance of actual activity on the ground.

How well has CAH made progress towards meeting its outcome goals? In the next few paragraphs we will document some of the changes that have occurred in Barton Hill.

One measure of progress, though not one that could stand on its own, is how well is CAH doing with regard to spending the money allocated to it through the NDC. Measured in terms of expenditures, the delivery programme for the Bristol New Deal is more or less on track, with actual spending being slightly ahead of budget targets.

But spending is only a measure of whether or not programmes are being implemented. Whether these programmes are working requires looking at performance measures and whether deprivation and exclusion are being reduced in Barton Hill.

Significantly, there has been progress against Community at Heart’s outcome measures. For example, educational attainment (measured as success at GCSE level) is up 8% from the 1999 baseline figure (Community at Heart figures). This means that difference in educational attainment between the New Deal area and the whole of Bristol has narrowed during the time the NDC has been operational.

In relation to crime the New Deal area experienced a drop in total recorded crime for the period April-August 2003 in comparison with the same period in 2002 (although over the same time period violent crime was up). Taking three key types of volume crime, domestic burglary, vehicle crime and robbery, figures compiled by Community at Heart suggest that incidents of domestic burglary and robbery are down whilst rates of vehicle crime are about the same. The percentage change figures in all cases, other than robbery, were lower than for the city as a whole for the same period. Thus, according to figures supplied by CAH and contained in the Avon and Somerset Chief Constable’s report for 2003, in the first half of 2003 rates of crime per 1000 head of resident population in the New Deal area were:

- 10% higher than the city-wide average for domestic burglary,
- 10% lower than the city-wide average for robbery and
- about 25% higher than the city-wide average for vehicle crime.

Figures relating to worklessness need care in interpretation. Over the period 1999-2002 worklessness rates in the New Deal area (around 13.2% in 2002) have converged with the rate for the city as a whole (10.2% in 2002 – figures supplied by the University of Oxford). Within the New Deal area there has been a marked decline in the number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance. The 19% drop in the number of claimants may possibly be an indicator of success CAH efforts at getting residents into the labour market. A counter trend, however, is that there has been a rise in the number of residents claiming income benefit and severe disability allowance. But the 11.5% increase in the number of claimants may also be interpreted as a positive outcome of the CAH benefits advice project.

CAH is making some progress towards reaching out to the various population groups in Barton Hill. In the last year Community at Heart has tried to get a better understanding of what Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups are present in Barton Hill and it has improved its monitoring of service take-up in relation to black and minority ethnic communities. Some projects are now being delivered specifically aimed at the Somali community, the largest BME group in Barton Hill.

Progress in relation to involving young people in NDC activities has also been significant. There is now a young person sitting on the CAH Board and there is an increasingly confident Youth Forum. This has been underpinned by a stronger relationship with the local authority Youth Services.

Not all groups in the community are participating in NDC activities. Men of working age and local businesses remain two groups that are absent from much of the work of the New Deal.

There remains a problem and a contradiction in the work of Community at Heart between the hope of developing a community led programme and the need to foster more ‘joined up’ work between all of the partners. To address this CAH has implemented a management improvement effort focused on:

- Making the CAH Board a more strategic body. This has been identified as a key priority;
- The encouragement of more cross theme working within the New Deal; and,
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities for many of the constituent parts of Community at Heart.

The above information notwithstanding, the Cities Research Centre’s evaluation of CAH, suggested that the organisation has not paid enough attention to internally evaluating its own work. While evidence was found relating to evaluations of individual Community at Heart projects the Cities Research Centre report concluded that the quality of the evaluations was very mixed. Beyond individual projects, progress on theme-based or scheme-wide evaluation has been slower. Finding evaluation reports within the New Deal organisation was found to be problematic since CAH does not seem to have a central archive and there has been little dissemination of findings.

## **Partnership Working and Implementing the NDC**

While partnerships seem to have become the preferred way of working in the UK, the New Deal for Community partnerships are more broadly constituted than many others. Bringing together community, agency, and government stakeholders can prove to be a difficult task.

Community at Heart has consciously chosen to work more with partners for programme delivery, attempting to move further away from the “go it alone” approach and closer to the principles of true partnership working. The means however, inviting and encouraging more community involvement, while at the same time working to develop closer ties with service providers, government agencies, and the business communities. In theory this should create a cohesive working group for community change. However, the various stakeholders do not always bring the same goals and intentions to the partnership table and thus partnership working is a difficult goal to achieve.

It was mentioned above that residents not directly participating in CAH efforts tend to be sceptical about the NDC since they observe long delays between a project's launch and its ‘on the ground’ reality. To address this problem the CAH Board has approved a new ‘quick wins fund’ that allows residents to apply for small pots of money to carry out short-lived projects. This will not solve the delay problem with the bigger CAH efforts, but may help jump start smaller projects and make CAH work more visible in the community.

The role of mainstream and partner agencies is a key factor in either achieving or failing to achieve delivery objectives. Not all mainstream agencies operating in Barton Hill have chosen to become engaged in the NDC effort and this strongly constrains the outcomes that Community at Heart can deliver on. The pattern of participating stakeholder agencies does not fit well with the list of prospective mainstream agencies that have remits relating to CAH outcomes. This implies a structural problem for Community at Heart in that the agencies engaged as partners are not always the agencies able to unlock delivery problems particularly in relation to mainstream budgets. There are specific problems with regard to engagement in relation to education and economic development.

Factors in limiting the delivery of CAH projects, other than the relationships with mainstream agencies, include developing and maintaining a supporting resident-led group that has a clear agenda for change, bureaucratic New Deal processes and the human and budgetary resources of any individual programme.

The relationship between Community at Heart and the local authority, the Bristol Council, is also crucial to the ultimate success and eventual mainstreaming of projects initiated by CAH. This relationship between CAH and the authority is complex. In relation to strategic engagement, there has been no clear position from the political leadership of the Council for much of the period May-October 2003 due in part to political changes within the Council. In relation to strategic engagement from the various local authority services and units, the lack of effective corporate organisation between the various local authority units has led to difficulties in ‘joining up’ the local authority response to the New Deal.

The New Deal has been able to develop good relationships with delivery agencies that are not stakeholders. However the agencies see their relationship with CAH as a client-supplier relationship rather than a partnership relationship based on equality.

### **Mainstreaming, CAH, and the Future**

The NDC is a demonstration programme. Its ultimate purpose is to identify new approaches to the delivery of community services and to identify best practices that will lead to the regeneration of deprived areas of Britain's cities. To succeed the best practices will need to be mainstreamed into the work of local agencies. Thus, as the NDC moves closer to its end, the concern about mainstreaming will become increasingly important.

The current evidence for mainstreaming of CAH generated initiatives is mixed. Some mainstreaming seems to be occurring. However, none of the agencies in Bristol have completed a mapping exercise of where they currently spend their resources. Thus, it is difficult to assess whether the New Deal has had a significant impact on where key mainstream agencies are spending their budgets. There is some evidence that agencies are using the New Deal to lower the amount of money they are spending in the NDC target area. It appears that some money is being withdrawn in relation sports development.

But for the most part any progress towards mainstreaming remains limited by lack of participation in the New by key mainstream agencies. There is still a sizeable list of key mainstream agencies who are either only discussing possible work with the New Deal (the Learning and Skills Council, the local education authority and Connexions for those under 16 years) or who do not appear to want to engage with the New Deal at all (the Regional Development Agency).

Succession planning, determining whether CAH will exist beyond the NDC demonstration programme, what shape it might take if it does, how it may need to internally reconstitute itself in anticipating of the approaching programme conclusion, and the future of 'joined up' working beyond the NDC, is in its relatively early stages. Community at Heart has recognised the need for succession planning and will make it a prominent feature of the CAH delivery plan for 2005-10 (Years 6-10).

### **A Few Concluding Remarks About the NDC as an Area Based Initiative**

Area based initiatives – people vs. place

Model cities (failure was not an issue with regard to ABI)

Disturbing trend at CAH – greater focus on physical change rather than social / differentiate between construction that helps people and construction that helps the neighbourhood

Smaller projects may be more helpful (locks and bolts)

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