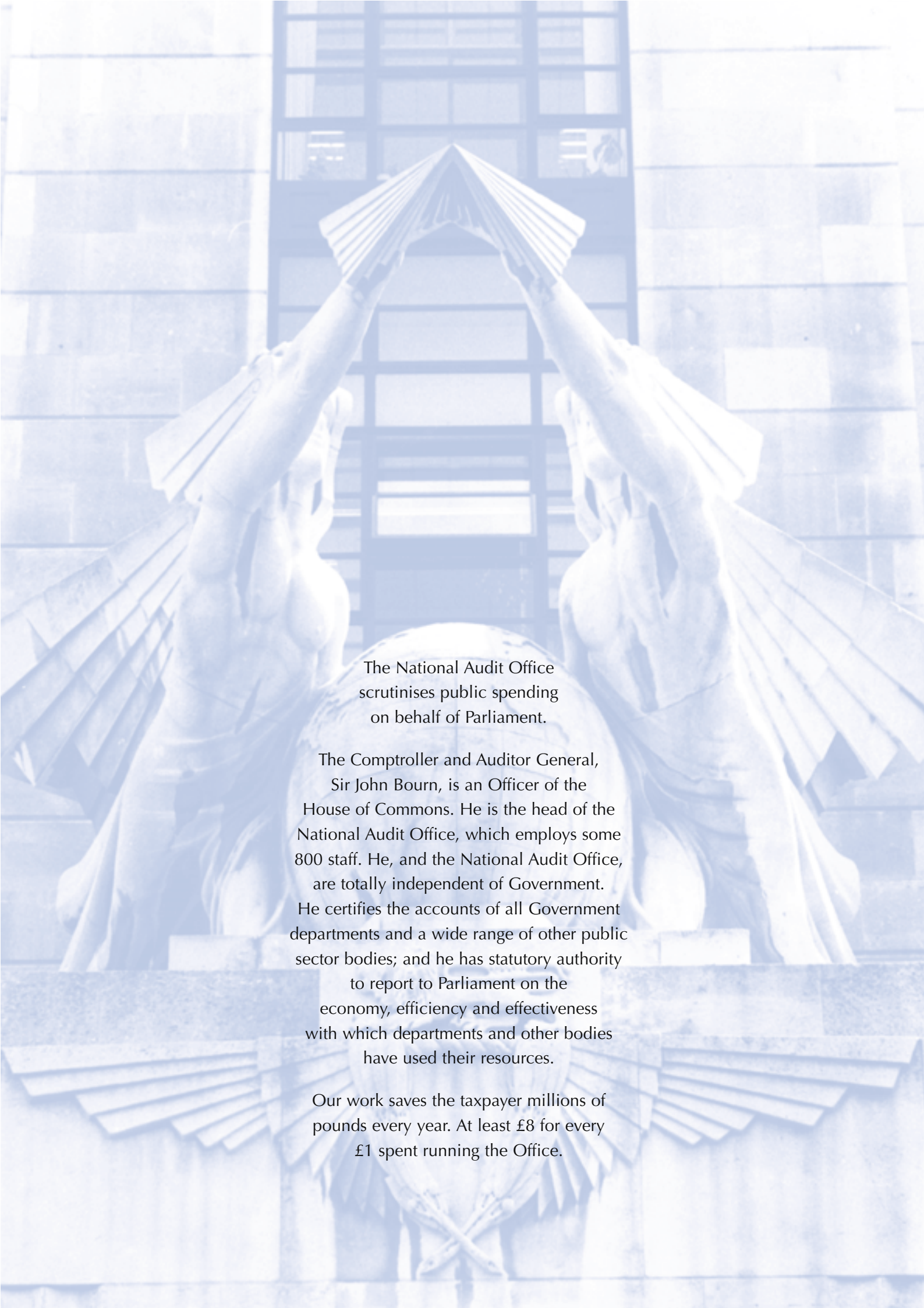


Getting Citizens Involved: Community Participation in Neighbourhood Renewal

REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL
HC 1070 Session 2003-2004: 25 October 2004





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English Regions

Getting Citizens Involved: Community Participation in Neighbourhood Renewal



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This report has been prepared under Section 6 of the National Audit Act 1983 for presentation to the House of Commons in accordance with Section 9 of the Act.

John Bourn National Audit Office
Comptroller and Auditor General 18 October 2004

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NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE

**WORKING
TOGETHER**

ENGLISH REGIONS



Our work in the English regions

Government is changing. Decision-making is being decentralised to take account more effectively of the particular needs and opportunities in each English region. A range of regional institutions provides a framework for development.

- The role of the Government Offices in the regions has expanded so they now carry out functions on behalf of ten departments.
- Eight Regional Development Agencies and the London Development Agency provide strategic direction to economic development.
- Regional Chambers outside London scrutinise the work of the Regional Development Agencies and contribute to Regional Economic Strategies.
- The North East region will shortly hold a referendum to decide whether or not to have a directly elected Assembly.

The National Audit Office is well positioned to help government meet the challenges of this new regional focus. We have audited the eight Regional Development Agencies since their establishment, along with the Government Offices and all the departments represented in them. We have embarked on a regional work programme that is tailored specifically to developments in the regions. This report is part of that programme.



Success in the regions
HC 1268 2002-03



An early progress report on the New Deal for Communities programme
HC 309 2003-04

Preface

An increased focus is being placed on the involvement of community leaders, voluntary groups and neighbourhood residents in the policy decisions that affect their lives and in the design and implementation of services, especially at the local level. The "new localism", as it is often termed, is aimed at enhancing civic life, deepening democratic involvement and contributing to more effective neighbourhood renewal and sustainable communities. A move to greater community participation poses challenges to public sector organisations' existing work practices, often demanding institutional and behavioural change.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal places community involvement at the heart of the strategy and integral to the process of improving the most deprived neighbourhoods in 88 local authority areas. The single Community Programme provides central government resources to local community and voluntary sector organisations to support self-help activity and networks of community groups with representation on Local Strategic Partnerships, the bodies designed to link service providers, councillors and the community and voluntary sector.

We studied the single Community Programme because of its important role in supporting local people's influence over public sector expenditure and service delivery in deprived neighbourhoods. It is the third of a series of reports in which the NAO examines new approaches to regional and local regeneration and follows on from our recent report on *The New Deal for Communities*.

Our current examination focuses on the extent to which the single Community Programme is helping to get deprived communities involved in neighbourhood renewal, influencing local decisions and shaping local policy-making. As part of our work we have derived seven key principles which should underlie effective engagement of local communities (Annex 1 to the Executive Summary on page 16).

In summary our findings show that:

- Thanks to simple and straightforward grant application procedures, the programme has been successful in providing funds to support some 25,000 self-help and community group projects in England's most deprived neighbourhoods. This funding has helped to build confidence locally. More needs to be done to ensure the programme reaches out to all sectors and groups within local communities.
- After a slow start, Community Empowerment Networks have begun to establish themselves. The extent of their representation on Local Strategic Partnerships and their consequent ability to influence the decisions of local service providers varies considerably. Tensions between the role of elected councillors and community members of Local Strategic Partnerships need to be managed.
- Community Empowerment Networks are exerting influence by establishing links with service providers at a neighbourhood level, complementing their wider work with Local Strategic Partnerships.

executive summary

- 1 Those most in need of support from public services can be alienated if they regard services as having been designed by remote officials with limited understanding or no direct experience of users' needs and circumstances. This can have serious consequences. Programmes intended to alleviate social deprivation or tackle long term unemployment can have reduced impact resulting in taxpayers' money being wasted. In recognition of this, the Government is giving priority to involving intended users in the design of public services. One such initiative is the single Community Programme, expected to cost £182 million between 2001 and 2006.
- 2 The single Community Programme is about providing the means for communities to participate in local policy-making, influencing changes to where they live and to the services they receive. This is done by providing grants to community groups so they can become more involved in improving their neighbourhoods and by supporting networks that influence local decision-making. The single Community Programme aims to represent diverse needs by taking account of communities characterised by particular identities and interests as well as those identified by geography.



- 3 This report draws lessons that have wide relevance for community participation initiatives across the whole of government. The Home Office aims to promote active citizenship so people can tackle themselves the underlying causes of the problems they face. Police reform is driven by a commitment to citizen-focused policing. The NHS Improvement Plan involves local communities taking greater control of budgets and services. The Department for Culture Media and Sport sees culture as having the potential to increase social cohesion provided projects are done with a community, not to a community. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister lists improving citizen engagement and participation as one of three key challenges facing local government. Other examples of community participation across government include initiatives in rural areas and in learning and skills.
- 4 The need for community engagement has been identified in successive National Audit Office reports (**Figure 1 overleaf**).

1 Users should be involved in developing public services

"Improving Service Delivery - how auditors can help"

National Audit Office and HM Treasury; *November 2003*
The National Audit Office and HM Treasury developed this guide to share lessons and highlight examples of good practice.

"Services are more likely to deliver intended outcomes if they are developed on a sound knowledge and understanding of what people want, believe or need. An important way of determining expectations and satisfaction with services being delivered is through consultation with key stakeholders".

"The Royal Parks - an executive agency"

HC 485 2003-2004
The report examines management of a backlog of works maintenance in 8 Royal Parks.

"The Agency should consult under-represented groups, using methods such as consultation groups, to identify the main obstacles to more frequent use of the Parks".

"Compensating Victims of Violent Crime"

HC 398 1999- 2000
The report examines the quality of service at the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.

"The Authority should survey applicants on a regular basis, liaising with the Appeals Panel regarding its surveys, so that they are jointly aware of any concerns and take action to address them".

"Modern Policy Making - ensuring policies deliver value for money"

HC 289 2001-2002
The report draws lessons on policy-making based on past reports from the Committee of Public Accounts and National Audit Office.

"Consulting stakeholders is also important in testing whether a policy is likely to work in practice".

"Better public services through e-Government"

HC 704 2001-2002
The report examined how well departments were implementing e-services for the public.

"People have different needs. Departments, therefore, need to have a good understanding of the needs and preferences of the users of their services. There is, however, considerable variation in the quality of information which departments have on their key users".

"Improving Service Delivery: the Veterans' Agency"

HC 525 2002-2003
The report examined performance in meeting targets and improving service delivery.

"More developed approaches to quality assessment now ask customers about their expectation of what the service should provide and then how far this expectation is being met. This information provides a much better yardstick because the results ... can help target action on introducing improvements that are likely to be of most benefit to customers ... The Agency does not compile information on how claimants initially find out about the Veterans' Agency ... This information is useful because it would allow the Agency to target potential users of its services better ... would also help assess the cost effectiveness of campaigns run by the Agency".

"Making a Difference: Performance of Maintained Secondary Schools in England"

HC 1332 2002-2003
The report notes the need to take account of prior academic achievement and economic, social and cultural issues in measuring schools' performance.

"A range of information collected during the visits suggested that an effective school ethos is derived from a shared understanding between management, staff, pupils, parents and governors, and incorporates recognition of, and links with, the wider community".

"Inpatient and outpatient waiting in the NHS"

HC 221 2001-2002
The report identifies a number of areas where the Department of Health and NHS trusts have taken positive steps to reduce waiting lists and waiting times, but argues that further changes could be made.

"Initiatives to reduce waiting lists and times ... a revised Patients' Charter in December 1998 which recognised the importance of identifying and responding to patients' needs".

"The 2001 Outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease"

HC 939 2001-2002
The report examined contingency planning for foot and mouth disease, how quickly and effectively the disease was eradicated and the cost-effectiveness of the action taken.

"Any strategy for dealing with the disease and its wider impacts also depends for its success on the active co-operation of those closely affected. However, in preparing the national contingency plan and the veterinary instructions for foot and mouth disease, the Department had not formally consulted other key stakeholders, such as ... representatives of farmers and the veterinary profession".

"Access to the Victoria and Albert Museum"

HC 238 2000-2001
The report looks at work to increase access, understanding and knowledge in relation to collections and to share expertise.

"For the Victoria and Albert Museum to attract new visitors, it needs a clear appreciation of what potential visitors might want - it has yet to carry out research amongst non-visitors to find out why they do not visit the Museum".

Source: National Audit Office reports

- 5 This report assesses the impact that the single Community Programme has made in helping communities to get involved in improving where they live. It also draws out general principles of good practice relevant to community organisations and public sector bodies seeking to engage effectively with local communities (Annex 1 on page 16).

The single Community Programme

- 6 The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) is responsible for the single Community Programme across England. Government Offices oversee the single Community Programme in England's nine regions and voluntary sector organisations administer it locally (**Figure 2**).
- 7 The single Community Programme is part of ODPM's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, which targets the 88 most deprived local authority districts in England. Over 40 per cent of England's population, and around 70 per cent of the ethnic minority population, live in areas covered by the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and the single Community Programme. These communities have unemployment levels more than three times the national average, twice as many people on means-tested benefits, three times as many children living in poverty, one million homes derelict or hard to fill and significantly higher crime rates. The problems are linked and can become entrenched, with great social and economic costs to the country.

2 Different organisations administer the single Community Programme nationally, regionally and locally

Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (ODPM)

- Sets policy
- Secures programme funding
- Manages Public Service Agreement targets
- Conducts overall financial management

Government Office (in each region)

- Selects the Responsible Body from the voluntary sector
- Conducts quarterly monitoring
- Provides advice and support
- Releases finances

Responsible Body (in each local area)

- Employs the Community Empowerment Team
- Is responsible for financial management
- Comes from the voluntary sector - most often a Council for Voluntary Service

Community Empowerment Team (in each local area)

- Provides policy and secretariat support to the Community Empowerment Network
- Markets the programme
- Co-ordinates the panel for awarding grants
- Has on average 4 paid staff
- Brokers partnerships between communities and service providers

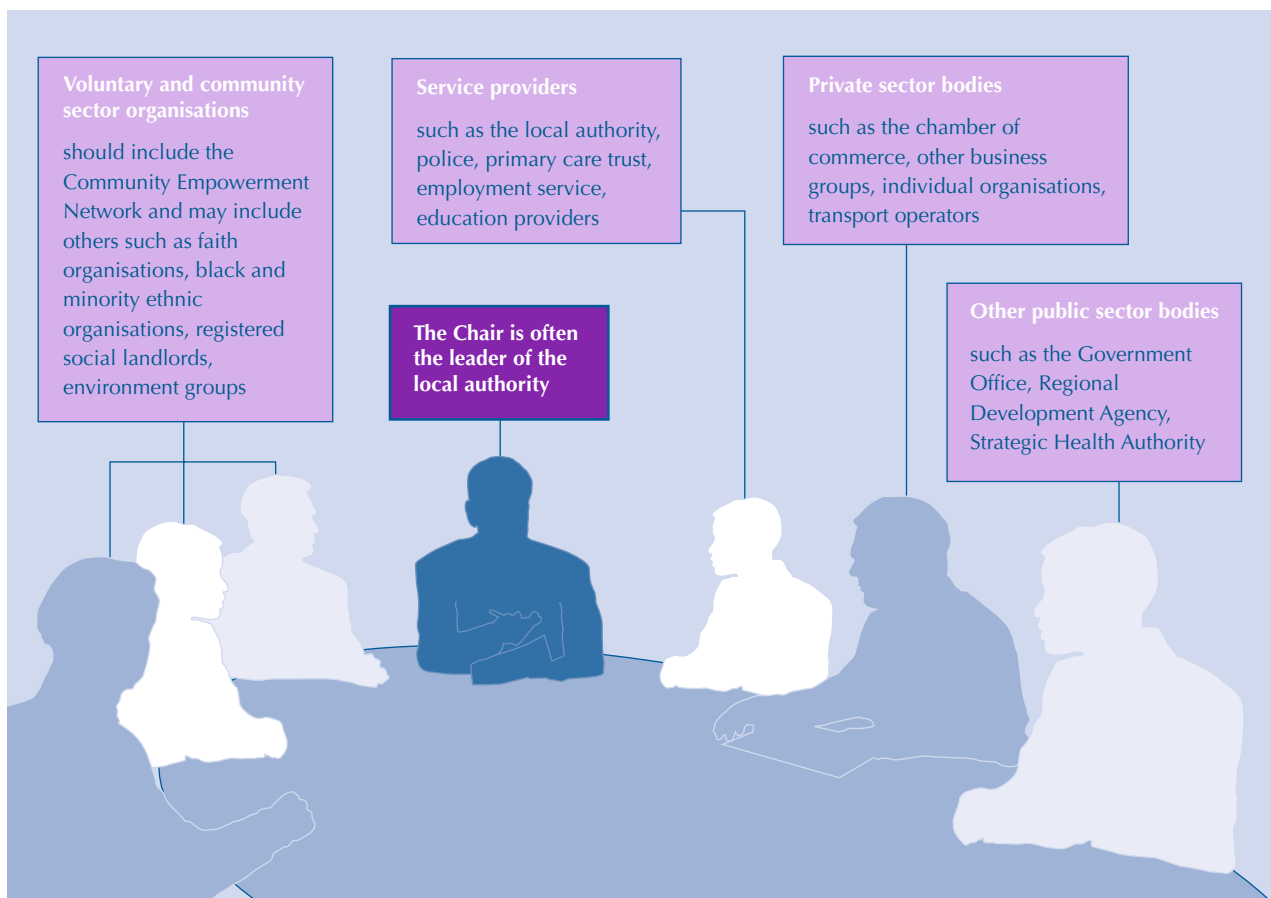
Community Empowerment Network (in each local area)

- A network of local community and voluntary groups
- Elects representatives to the Local Strategic Partnership
- Influences local decision-making
- Provides a context for shared learning
- Provides opportunities for capacity building
- Enables direct contact with local service providers
- Encourages more active communities

Source: National Audit Office analysis

- 8 Community participation is important in regeneration and neighbourhood renewal. Local people understand the problems of an area, can generate ideas about how to tackle them and help decide what is important to do. Community involvement can help to ensure the benefits of regeneration are sustained by ensuring communities have ownership of the improvements made.
- 9 The single Community Programme brings together streams of money previously labelled as the Community Chest, the Community Learning Chest and the Community Empowerment Fund. The single Community Programme is designed:
 - to fund and support community activity with grants of up to £5,000 so people may become more involved in the regeneration of their communities and neighbourhoods (for example, the Company Fierce dance group in Manchester received £5,000 to start "The Boyz Project" to give direction and confidence to young black men through positive role models); and
 - to establish and support Community Empowerment Networks to enable community and voluntary sector involvement as equal partners with public service providers in Local Strategic Partnerships (**Figure 3**) and more widely (for example, the Barnsley Community and Voluntary Network held a convention for community groups to influence the Barnsley Community Plan and to consider the implications of the government's citizenship agenda).

3 Local Strategic Partnerships bring local organisations together to co-ordinate public services



NOTE

A Local Strategic Partnership typically has between 21 and 30 core members

Source: National Audit Office analysis

- 10** ODPM is allocating £182 million to the single Community Programme between 2001 and 2006. This money aims to give communities influence over the spending decisions of public bodies such as local authorities, the police, primary care trusts and the Learning and Skills Council. These bodies and others represented on Local Strategic Partnerships control total public spending of over £60 billion¹ a year, including ODPM's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund of £3 billion between 2001 and 2008, which the single Community Programme potentially opens up to community influence.
- 11** ODPM has defined four strategic goals for its approach to community participation:
- **governance** - to develop a community voice that enables communities to participate in decision-making and increase the accountability of service providers;
 - **social capital** - to increase the confidence and capacity of individuals and small groups to get involved in activities and build mutually supportive networks that hold communities together;
 - **service delivery** - to ensure that local communities are in a position to influence service delivery and, where appropriate, participate in service delivery; and
 - **social inclusion and cohesion** - to develop empowered communities capable of building a common vision, a sense of belonging and a positive identity where diversity is valued.
- 12** The single Community Programme is one among several models used by ODPM to promote neighbourhood renewal (**Figure 4 overleaf**), with a particularly strong focus on community involvement. We examined another approach in our report on the New Deal for Communities.² ODPM has recognised the potential for confusion from multiple programmes addressing similar issues and plans to merge three neighbourhood renewal programmes (the single Community Programme, Neighbourhood Management and Neighbourhood Wardens) with its Liveability Fund and the Home Office's Building Safer Communities funding stream.³ The new Safer and Stronger Communities Fund will be administered under Local Area Agreements between Government Offices and local partners. ODPM intends to use Local Area Agreements to safeguard the benefits of the single Community Programme. Annex 1 (page 16) sets out principles that will help with this aim.

How the programme aims to support the community to play a greater role in local decision-making

- 13** The single Community Programme is intended to support community self-help activity in deprived neighbourhoods and to draw community groups into wider decision-making about local public services. The following example illustrates how the single Community Programme is designed to work.
- A residents association may identify a lack of recreational facilities for young people as one of the factors behind local incidents of anti-social behaviour. Single Community Programme funds may be available to enable the association, with the support of a local faith group, to establish a youth club in the evening and provide facilities in a local hall.

¹ National Audit Office estimate based on spending across England by local authorities, primary care trusts and the Learning and Skills Council, on "Sure Start" and social exclusion by the Department for Education and Skills and on grants to bus operators by the Department for Transport, adjusted for the proportion of England's population in single Community Programme areas.

² An early progress report on the New Deal for Communities; National Audit Office; February 2004; HC 309 2003-2004.

³ 2004 Spending Review.

- Once established, the youth club may identify better facilities at a local school or sports centre that are not currently available in the evenings. Through the local Community Empowerment Network it may establish contact with other community youth groups with similar concerns. The Community Empowerment Network can raise this wider issue with the local authority and local education authority at the Local Strategic Partnership. The Community Empowerment Network can work with these organisations, and with other agencies such as the police and social services, to influence neighbourhood community plans to address needs identified by community groups who work with young people.

4 ODPM oversees a range of neighbourhood renewal programmes

National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal
Public Service Agreement target: Tackle social exclusion and deliver neighbourhood renewal, working with departments to help them meet their Public Service Agreement floor targets, in particular narrowing the gap in health, education, crime, worklessness, housing and liveability outcomes between the most deprived areas and the rest of England, with measurable improvement by 2010

	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	Single Community Programme	Neighbourhood Management	Neighbourhood Wardens	New Deal for Communities
	To help local authorities in England's most deprived districts, in collaboration with Local Strategic Partnerships, to improve local services	To build social cohesion through community activity and to help the community and voluntary sector to participate in Local Strategic Partnership decision making	To join up service providers in deprived communities to respond to local needs	To tackle anti-social behaviour in small neighbourhoods, foster social inclusion and to reduce crime and the fear of crime	To tackle deprivation in small neighbourhoods through boards of local service providers and community representatives
Amount	£3 billion	£182 million	£120 million	£91 million	£2 billion
Period	2001-2008	2001-2006	2001-2011	2000-2006	1999-2009
Coverage	88 local authorities, average population 250,000	88 local authorities, average population 250,000	35 pathfinder schemes, average population 10,000	245 neighbourhoods initially, reducing by transfer to mainstream funding, average population 6,000	39 neighbourhoods, average population 10,000
Administration and staffing	Local authority advised by Local Strategic Partnership	Responsible Bodies appointed by Government Offices	Teams appointed by neighbourhood management pathfinder board	Local authority, registered social landlords or voluntary sector organisation	Executive staff appointed by NDC board
Body accountable for funds	Local authority	Responsible Body from the voluntary and community sector	Local authority, registered social landlords and development trusts	Local authority, registered social landlords or voluntary sector organisation	Local authority
Spend authorisation	Local authority	Responsible Body	Neighbourhood management pathfinder board	Local authority	NDC board

these programmes involve Local Strategic Partnerships

these programmes involve communities, local authorities and service delivery agencies

The potential benefits and risks of the single Community Programme

14 There are risks as well as potential benefits to the single Community Programme (**Figure 5**). The research for this report considered how ODPM has managed these risks. We focused much of our work on six case study areas (Annex 2 on page 17).

5 The single Community Programme brings risks as well as benefits

Benefits	Risks
Public sector organisations are more likely to give value for money because they design and deliver services that people want and use.	Unclear relationships between Community Empowerment Networks and local authorities may create tensions and difficult working conditions.
Communities contribute their energy, enthusiasm and knowledge to find solutions to problems, rather than feel powerless in the face of bureaucracy.	Community Empowerment Networks may struggle to bring all community and voluntary sector organisations together to be represented on Local Strategic Partnerships.
The benefits of neighbourhood renewal initiatives are sustained because communities own and are committed to the solutions developed.	Funding uncertainties may make it difficult to sustain community involvement.
	Professional voluntary sector organisations may dominate smaller groups, limiting the influence of the community sector.

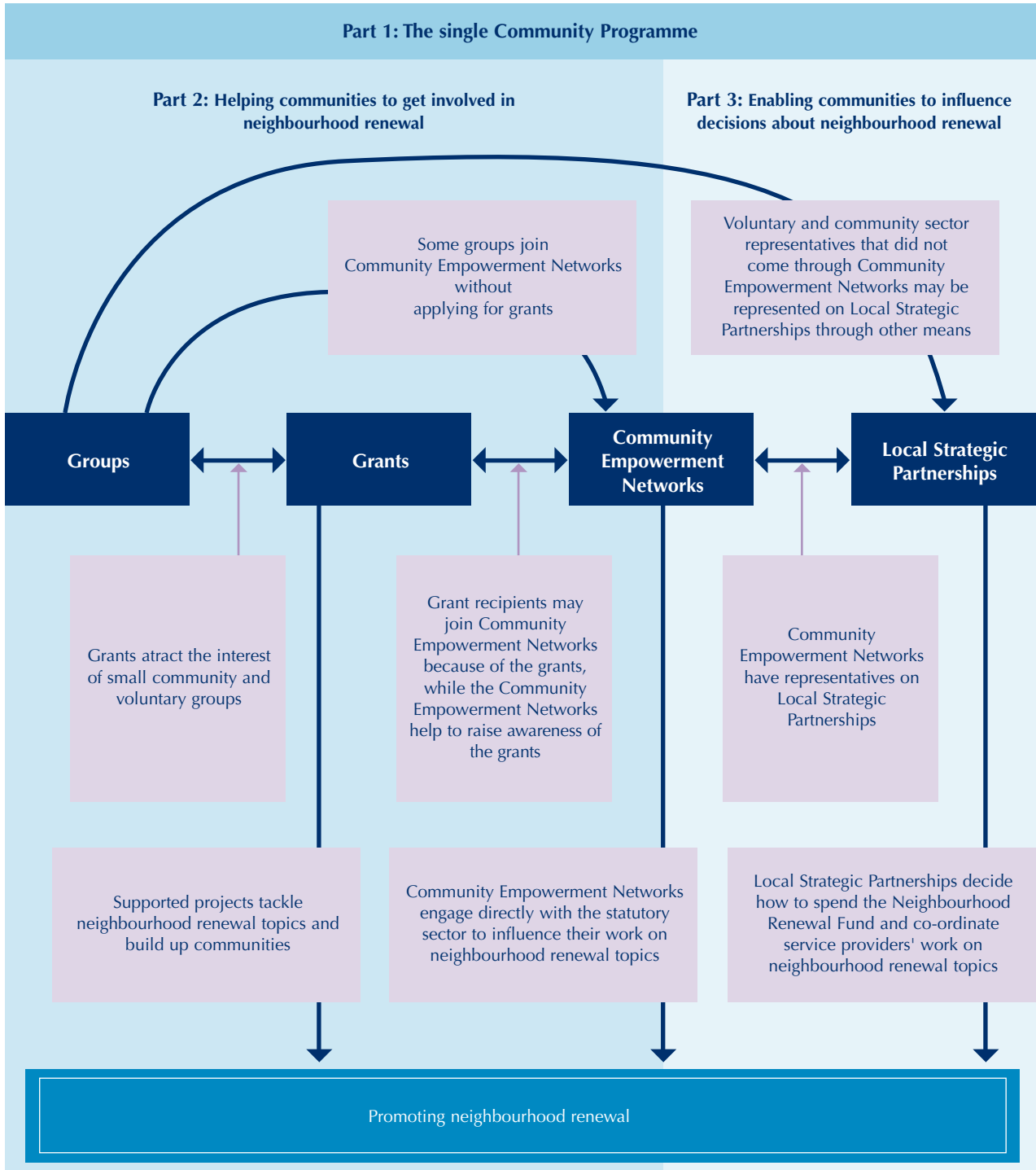
Source: National Audit Office analysis

15 This report assesses (**Figure 6 overleaf**):

- how the single Community Programme is helping to get communities involved in neighbourhood renewal (Part 2); and
- how the single Community Programme is helping communities to influence local decisions about neighbourhood renewal (Part 3).



6 Our report covers the different elements of the single Community Programme



Source: National Audit Office analysis

FINDINGS

Part 1 findings: Helping communities to get involved in neighbourhood renewal

What is working well

16 The single Community Programme has so far supported around 25,000 separate self-help and community projects in the country's most deprived neighbourhoods. Most of these projects (88%)⁴ contribute directly in some way to neighbourhood renewal targets (reducing worklessness and crime and improving local skills, health, housing and the physical environment) or to the broader neighbourhood renewal goal of promoting community involvement and social cohesion. The remainder contribute indirectly by funding activities such as transport and organisations' running costs. **Figure 7** provides some examples of the types of funded projects.

7 The single Community Programme funds projects that contribute to neighbourhood renewal

Employment	Sparkbrook Women's Group in Birmingham received £5,000 to contribute to an IT and business support centre. The centre runs courses for local women to help them return to work.
Crime	QDOS Dance Theatre in Barnsley received £5,000 towards a project called "Kick Off" - a touring production visiting local schools. The production used a workshop to explore the dynamics of gangs. It raised awareness of issues surrounding racism, homophobia and anti-social behaviour. QDOS worked in partnership with the police, victim support and the primary care trust.
Health	Seaham Stroke Club in East Durham received a grant to pay for audio equipment and a microwave. The club helps stroke victims to develop their speech and mobility in an informal setting.
Education and skills	Birmingham Somali Community Family Support received £5,000 to set up homework support sessions and language classes for Somali children.
Housing and physical environment	Hayle Allotment and Produce Association in West Cornwall received £2,000 to rebuild paths and improve access. The association worked with the primary care trust to arrange for people undergoing drug rehabilitation programmes to lay the new paths.
Social cohesion	The All Community Group received £1,500 for a community festival in Ardwick (Manchester). The festival, which was partly funded by the European Social Fund, brought together different communities who do not normally mix, promoting good race relations.

Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

17 Providing funds directly to the voluntary sector is building the confidence of community groups. Single Community Programme funds go to local voluntary sector organisations to administer for the benefit of the wider community. Community groups value the independence they gain by having access to money that does not come through local public sector organisations because they can express views robustly in the knowledge that doing so will not

⁴ National Audit Office survey.

FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

compromise their funding. ODPM intends to use Local Area Agreements to protect this independence when the single Community Programme joins other programmes in the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund.

- 18 Participants consider the application process to be straightforward and grants are helping small community groups that have not previously received public funding.** Most grant applicants (78%) find the application process very or fairly easy.⁵ The straightforward grant application process is a particular success of the single Community Programme and a direct consequence of ODPM's decision to reduce bureaucracy by delegating administration to the voluntary sector.
- 19 Holding public events in deprived neighbourhoods raises community involvement.** Linking the grants to Community Empowerment Networks has been successful where Community Empowerment Networks have used public events to develop neighbourhood priorities and encourage grants applications related to them. Doing so has meant that community groups are more aware of the contribution that their activities will make towards neighbourhood renewal.

What needs more development

- 20 Publicity about the grants could be better targeted.** Most groups (69%) hear about the grants through word of mouth and existing contacts, favouring groups that are already well connected. Many areas have made progress in supporting local groups that are hard to reach but further progress can be made by publicising grants more effectively at neighbourhood level.
- 21 The link between the grants and wider involvement in Community Empowerment Networks is weak.** Most groups (59%) do not go on to join Community Empowerment Networks after receiving grants. Newer and younger groups are even less inclined than others to join. ODPM has strengthened the link between grants and Community Empowerment Networks but further work is needed, including clearer promotion to distinguish single Community Programme grants from over 40 other area-based initiatives.
- 22 There is scope to improve advice to Responsible Bodies on monitoring.** ODPM has issued guidance but different local arrangements have led to information being collected inconsistently. Some Community Empowerment Networks need more support from Government Offices.
- 23 Some aspects of the single Community Programme are not transparent enough to sustain the confidence of communities.** In particular, there is limited understanding about how Community Empowerment Networks select members to sit on Local Strategic Partnerships. The details of how Community Empowerment Networks operate will be of little interest to some community groups, but Community Empowerment Networks could do more to make this information easily available to demonstrate openness and fairness. Community Empowerment Networks are likely to gain greater recognition and influence if they practice such good governance.

Part 2 findings: Enabling communities to influence decisions about neighbourhood renewal

What is working well

- 24 Communities and public sector service providers are increasingly working together outside Local Strategic Partnerships.** Community Empowerment Networks are having practical influence by working directly with individual public sector service providers outside the main boards of Local Strategic Partnerships. These interactions help community groups to gain confidence and to influence neighbourhood renewal.
- 25 The recent focus on developing neighbourhood-based sub-networks is proving successful in bringing communities and service providers together to develop local solutions to local problems.** Focusing on neighbourhoods helps to bridge the gap between debate in authority-wide Local Strategic Partnerships, which can seem remote, and the action that community groups want to see in return for their involvement. The commitment of public sector organisations is vital to the success of neighbourhood-based sub-networks. In some areas, public sector bodies send representatives to meet Community Empowerment Networks in their neighbourhood-based sub-networks. Community Empowerment Network members in smaller semi-rural areas are much more involved and more confident of their influence on Local Strategic Partnerships than those in major cities, confirming the benefits of an approach based on smaller areas.

What needs more development

- 26 Community Empowerment Networks have so far had a limited influence over local decision-making.** Despite examples of success, community participation will take time to become established because it "can pose challenges to existing and accepted work cultures and practices".⁶ Different members of Local Strategic Partnerships need to share responsibility for successful community participation, which "requires multiple strategies of institutional change, capacity building and behavioural change".⁷ Community members need adequate support to help them participate effectively in Local Strategic Partnerships.
- 27 Timing problems compromised Community Empowerment Networks' credibility and damaged their trust in Local Strategic Partnerships.** Many Community Empowerment Networks were not running by the time ODPM required the first local neighbourhood strategies to be designed and local decisions made about how to spend the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. ODPM found some public sector members of Local Strategic Partnerships felt similarly excluded from early decisions. These problems are beginning to be redressed in subsequent revisions of strategies and funding decisions. ODPM has recently required Local Strategic Partnerships to design protocols and to operate a performance management framework, which may further improve working relationships between different members.

⁶ *Neighbourhood renewal policy focus; Audit Commission; 2002.*

⁷ *Representation, Community Leadership and Participation: Citizen Involvement in Neighbourhood Renewal and Local Governance; J Gaventa; prepared for ODPM; 2004.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

We support the approach ODPM has taken to encourage local flexibility and decision-making. Clearer objectives and improved communication across the programme will strengthen this approach and help to increase the involvement and influence of communities. ODPM's definition of four strategic goals has given some further clarity but more remains to be done. ODPM, Government Offices, Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Empowerment Networks now need to work closely together to implement the following recommendations.



- 1 **Community Empowerment Networks should try new and innovative methods of communication to get more smaller and less established community groups involved in neighbourhood renewal.** This means explaining the benefits of the Community Empowerment Network to groups that are not currently attracted. It means listening to such groups, particularly those that have received grants but not taken their involvement any further, to understand why they do not join. Community Empowerment Networks need to act on the lessons learnt from such listening to change how they work.
- 2 **Community Empowerment Networks should further encourage community groups applying for grants to demonstrate how their projects contribute to wider neighbourhood renewal priorities of Local Strategic Partnerships.** The different elements of the single Community Programme work together best where Community Empowerment Networks use public events to develop neighbourhood priorities and to encourage grant applications linked to them. Such linkages draw groups into greater involvement in neighbourhood renewal, including active membership of Community Empowerment Networks.
- 3 **Community Empowerment Networks and Local Strategic Partnerships should together use neighbourhood-based groups to bring their work closer to communities.** Smaller community groups commonly find such approaches more relevant and less intimidating. Community Empowerment Networks should use sub-groups to promote understanding of how different neighbourhoods face similar issues and can gain strength by working together. Community Empowerment Networks should encourage public service providers to meet their sub-groups, including through sub-groups of Local Strategic Partnerships. This approach might involve working with existing groups or setting up new arrangements, depending on what is in place already.
- 4 **Community Empowerment Networks should promote their role more clearly to local partners and communities.** Decisions on promotion will be taken locally and do not imply spending large sums of money but they must result in each Community Empowerment Network having a clear identity. It requires a clear and succinct message about the purpose of the Community Empowerment Network and its relationship with other voluntary and community sector organisations. Community Empowerment Networks suffer from serious weaknesses in these areas, with the result that they have low profiles in communities and there is little understanding about their purpose.
- 5 **Community Empowerment Networks should make their processes more transparent.** Community groups feel poorly informed about decisions to reject grant applications and about how representatives are chosen to serve on Local Strategic Partnerships. Any lack of clear explanation of working procedures risks isolating Community Empowerment Networks from the communities they

serve. Community Empowerment Networks should make information about their processes easily available to community groups by putting it in places such as libraries, schools and community centres.

- 6 **Local Strategic Partnerships should give practical support to Community Empowerment Networks.** Community members of Local Strategic Partnerships often serve in their own time and lack the support that other members take for granted. The balance of power on Local Strategic Partnerships is tipped in favour of public sector members who often set the agenda and determine meeting times and places. Public sector members should help community members by sending meeting papers in good time, organising meetings at times and places that suit community members and avoiding late changes to arrangements. Public sector organisations involved in Local Strategic Partnerships can help community members to develop relevant skills and experience by offering induction training, work-shadowing and mentoring arrangements.
- 7 **Community Empowerment Teams should give practical help to community members of Local Strategic Partnerships, agreeing detailed arrangements locally.** Community members need briefings on meeting papers to operate effectively, particularly since public sector members usually receive equivalent support. Similarly, community members need reimbursement of costs such as travel and childcare.
- 8 **Community Empowerment Networks should maximise their influence by working alongside existing local democratic structures.** Public sector members, including elected councillors, express strong support of community involvement on Local Strategic Partnerships but some tensions remain. Community Empowerment Networks can reduce tensions by working with democratic initiatives and existing structures set up by public sector organisations to provide interfaces with communities.
- 9 **ODPM and Government Offices should set clear objectives to ensure Community Empowerment Networks and Local Strategic Partnerships act on the recommendations in our report.** Government Offices should use Local Area Agreements to ensure that Local Strategic Partnerships provide positive support for Community Empowerment Networks and that they reach local agreement on how to involve local communities in decision-making. The protocols and performance management framework introduced by ODPM provide mechanisms for building this approach into normal working practice. Government Offices should use their own networks and contacts to confirm that Community Empowerment Networks are reaching sufficiently deeply into communities for members. ODPM, through its work with local government, should make sure that the objectives of the programme are properly understood so that the community sector and local authorities can work together to strengthen local service delivery.
- 10 **ODPM and Government Offices should use Local Area Agreements to secure the funding of Community Empowerment Networks and their ability to express views robustly in Local Strategic Partnerships.** Partners will reach local agreements on the best way to achieve this.



Annex 1

Principles underpinning the role of communities in service delivery

These principles can be used by community organisations and public sector bodies in developing community participation.

Know and understand the communities using the service

Organisations need up to date and complete information on the communities they serve, including their needs and preferences.

Help to build the confidence of communities

Deprivation may limit the development of community resources and capacity. Less experienced people and groups need to be supported in making their voice heard.

Take active steps to involve communities as widely as possible

Reliance on a few well-established channels of communication may restrict engagement to those already active in communities. Innovative ways of reaching out to the widest range of groups should be used to involve the diversity of the community.

Ensure no sector or group dominates

Groups and individuals helping to give voice to communities need to be as representative as possible of those communities. Manage tensions between representatives to promote a common purpose.

Make sure procedures for ensuring representation are transparent

The procedures organisations use to engage communities need to be transparent and open in order to sustain people's confidence.

Provide practical assistance

Organisations' procedures and practices may inhibit community participation. Practical steps need to be taken to tilt the balance of power towards communities, such as arranging meeting times outside of normal working hours and making sure that documents are free from jargon.

Demonstrate positive support for community engagement

Help community groups to see the impact of their input by celebrating success. This will help to sustain their engagement.

Annex 2

The case study areas

Our case studies span six of England's nine regions and cover highly varying areas from small semi-rural districts to England's second largest city.

BARNSELEY

Community Empowerment Network: Barnsley Community and Voluntary Network
Local Strategic Partnership: ONE Barnsley

Population	Wards in England's 10% most deprived	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund 2003-04	Single Community Programme 2003-04
218,063	9 of 22	£5,440,000	£597,182



Barnsley is a market town with surrounding villages in a predominantly rural area. The area has suffered from the loss of the coal mining industry. Derelict land, high unemployment and poor health are of particular concern.

Helping communities to get involved in neighbourhood renewal

The grants officer works in partnership with other providers of small grants to map the total distribution of public funds against levels of deprivation across the district. This has enhanced the reach of the funds as unsuitable applicants to other funds are often referred to the single Community Programme. Community Empowerment Network staff focus on developing neighbourhood networks to bring communities and public service providers together to identify priorities. Early signs are that this approach is very effective. The distribution of grants is becoming increasingly linked to this approach.

Enabling communities to influence local decisions about neighbourhood renewal

Barnsley Community and Voluntary Network is well represented on ONE Barnsley (the Local Strategic Partnership) both at the board level and within thematic sub-groups. Barnsley Community and Voluntary Network staff brief representatives before ONE Barnsley meetings. Despite this, representatives feel they struggle to have an influence over some key strategic decisions, particularly on large physical regeneration initiatives. The current focus on neighbourhood level networks is beginning to influence frontline service delivery. Barnsley Community and Voluntary Network and West Cornwall Community Network have begun an exchange programme, with the support of the Quest community development agency, to compare approaches to building networks.

BIRMINGHAM**Community Empowerment Network:
Birmingham Community Empowerment Network (b:cen)
Local Strategic Partnership: Birmingham City Strategic Partnership**

Population	Wards in England's 10% most deprived	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund 2003-04	Single Community Programme 2003-04
977,087	13 of 39	£22,043,000	£1,756,000

Birmingham is England's second largest city. It includes several industrial areas and has an ethnically diverse population. Deprived areas of Birmingham have high levels of unemployment, and problems with crime and housing.

Helping communities to get involved in neighbourhood renewal

The small grants have been recently branded "Flourishing Neighbourhoods" in an effort to widen their appeal and are awarded on the basis of how projects will contribute towards deprived neighbourhoods. Applicants have to join b:cen (the Birmingham Community Empowerment Network). The grants are advertised through neighbourhood level newsletters that also inform people of the work of b:cen.

Enabling communities to influence local decisions about neighbourhood renewal

Birmingham City Council has been pioneering devolved local government since the early 1990s. As a result, there was a programme for community engagement in place prior to the single Community Programme. Opportunities to develop the programme in partnership with these existing structures were missed at the start, causing some duplication and damage to relationships. b:cen is working more effectively now with Birmingham City Council and sends three representatives to Birmingham City Strategic Partnership. b:cen neighbourhood-based sub-groups send representatives to Birmingham's newly devolved Local Strategic Partnerships.

EAST DURHAM**Community Empowerment Network: East Durham Community Network
Local Strategic Partnership: East Durham Local Strategic Partnership**

Population	Wards in England's 10% most deprived	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund 2003-04	Single Community Programme 2003-04
93,993	21 of 26	£4,433,000	£516,219

East Durham is a coastal area once heavily dependent upon the mining industry. It is largely rural with two main towns. East Durham has some of the highest levels of long-term illness in England. Educational attainment and employment levels are also poor. The local authority is Easington District Council.

Helping communities to get involved in neighbourhood renewal

Members of East Durham Community Network agree priorities for grants and assess applications. County Durham Foundation (the responsible body for the grants) has introduced a single application form to reduce complexity. This increases the grants' reach but risks obscuring their identity unless there is greater emphasis after grants are awarded to branding and follow-up to pull in more people into the network and the wider work of neighbourhood renewal.

Enabling communities to influence local decisions about neighbourhood renewal

County Durham Foundation, the body responsible for East Durham Community Network, has encouraged members to be as independent as possible. Representatives' influence on the main East Durham Local Strategic Partnership board is developing but more support for them at the start of the programme would have led to greater progress. Representatives are contributing well to East Durham Local Strategic Partnership sub-groups, particularly the Health Improvement Group. Since May, East Durham Community Network has six seats on the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership, making it the largest group on the board, and has been heavily involved in the commissioning process for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

ISLINGTON**Community Empowerment Network: Islington Community Network
Local Strategic Partnership: Islington Strategic Partnership (ISP)**

Population	Wards in England's 10% most deprived	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund 2003-04	Single Community Programme 2003-04
175,797	12 of 20	£6,270,000	£587,480



Poorer and richer areas contrast sharply in Islington. Significant long-term redevelopment is underway with the construction of the Channel Tunnel terminus at Kings Cross station. Particular problem areas are youth, crime, drug abuse and the lack of affordable housing.

Helping communities to get involved in neighbourhood renewal

Cripplegate (the responsible body for grants) works with Islington Community Network to identify local priorities. One current focus for grants is working in partnership with other funders such as Islington Primary Care Trust and Islington Borough Council.

Enabling communities to influence local decisions about neighbourhood renewal

Islington Community Network has expanded quickly. There is scope for more promotion of the work of Islington Community Network and the value it can offer Islington's very diverse community sector. The process for selecting representatives to ISP could be more transparent. ISP is committed to an on-going process of organisational development and the need for a strategic and inclusive Partnership, where members are aware of their roles and responsibilities and feel valued. Development of ISP's first Performance Management Framework was led by a representative sub-group involving a cross-section of the Partnership Board, including members of the Community Empowerment Network. It is recognised that more work needs to be done to build trust between all partners and this has been an important action in ISP's recently adopted Performance Management Framework Improvement Plan. A Learning and Skills Development Project for the whole Partnership is underway to contribute towards building ISP's effectiveness.

MANCHESTER**Community Empowerment Network:
Community Network for Manchester (CN4M)
Local Strategic Partnership: Manchester Strategic Partnership (MSP)**

Population	Wards in England's 10% most deprived	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund 2003-04	Single Community Programme 2003-04
418,600	27 of 33	£20,595,000	£1,618,500



Economic success in Manchester's city centre contrasts sharply with surrounding communities, which suffer some of the highest concentrations of crime, poor health, poor housing and unemployment in England. Manchester contains England's most deprived ward, Benchill.

Helping communities to get involved in neighbourhood renewal

CN4M describes itself as a "network of networks". Funding has been devolved to 29 "sub-networks": 7 cover geographic areas and 22 concern themes such as community safety, disabled people, environment and transport. CN4M has achieved very high levels of participation by voluntary and community groups.

Enabling communities to influence local decisions about neighbourhood renewal

There is a risk that the wider influence of CN4M over service delivery may be compromised without greater clarity about its identity. CN4M representatives on MSP sub-groups are becoming increasingly influential. CN4M is moving towards partnership working in all areas and believes further buy-in from other stakeholders would help to maximise benefits for Manchester.

WEST CORNWALL**Community Empowerment Network:
West Cornwall Community Network (WCCN)
Local Strategic Partnership: West Cornwall Together (WCT)**

Population	Wards in England's 10% most deprived	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund 2003-04	Single Community Programme 2003-04
155,529	7 of 38	£2,439,000	£764,909

Traditional industries of fishing, agriculture and mining have declined rapidly in West Cornwall with tourism now the main driver for the local economy. A seasonal, low wage economy and a shortage of affordable housing for local people are particular problems. Deprivation is very dispersed. The area covers two local authorities: Penwith District Council and Kerrier District Council.

Helping communities to get involved in neighbourhood renewal

WCCN staff have worked very closely with existing voluntary and community structures to maximise the impact of grants and the effectiveness of networks. The grants and WCCN are well publicised with regular features in local newspapers and on local radio but there is scope to reach smaller community groups that are not already connected to the existing voluntary and community sector.

Enabling communities to influence local decisions about neighbourhood renewal

WCCN co-ordinates a growing number of local area networks called "Inter-links" in the most deprived areas that bring community groups and service providers together at a neighbourhood level. WCT combines the Penwith and Kerrier districts and is chaired by the Chief Executive of West Cornwall's largest housing association (Penwith Housing Association). WCCN representatives receive effective briefing support from WCCN staff. The representatives have had a very positive influence over the production of the local neighbourhood renewal strategy, working collaboratively with statutory service providers and the two local councils. WCCN and Barnsley Community and Voluntary Network have begun an exchange programme, with the support of the Quest community development agency, to compare approaches to building networks.

Part 1

The single Community Programme

"Unless renewal efforts are led and owned by local people, they will fail".⁸

1.1 This part of our report describes the single Community Programme, for which the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) is responsible, and the context within which it operates. It explains:

- the aims of ODPM's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, to which the single Community Programme contributes;
- the purpose and main elements of the single Community Programme; and
- why we prepared this report.

The aim of neighbourhood renewal is that no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live

1.2 The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy aims to reverse a spiral of decline in England's most deprived areas. Its vision is that within 10 to 20 years no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live. The vision has two long-term goals:

- to have common goals in all poor neighbourhoods of lower worklessness and crime, and better health, skills, housing and physical environment; and
- to narrow the gap on these measures between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country.⁹

1.3 The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy builds on recommendations from the Social Exclusion Unit, now part of ODPM, about "how to develop integrated and sustainable approaches to the problems of the worst housing estates, including crime, drugs, unemployment, community breakdown and bad schools".¹⁰

1.4 The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit within ODPM is responsible nationally for the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy while Government Offices, which ODPM manages, oversee it in England's nine regions. The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy covers England's 88 most deprived local authority districts (**Figure 8 overleaf**), determined by an Index of Multiple Deprivation.¹¹

1.5 ODPM is responsible for a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund worth £1.9 billion between 2001 and 2006, which local authorities administer on behalf of local people and organisations. Other government departments contribute to the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and agree floor targets with ODPM to bring standards in all areas up to minimum acceptable levels (**Figure 9 on page 23**).



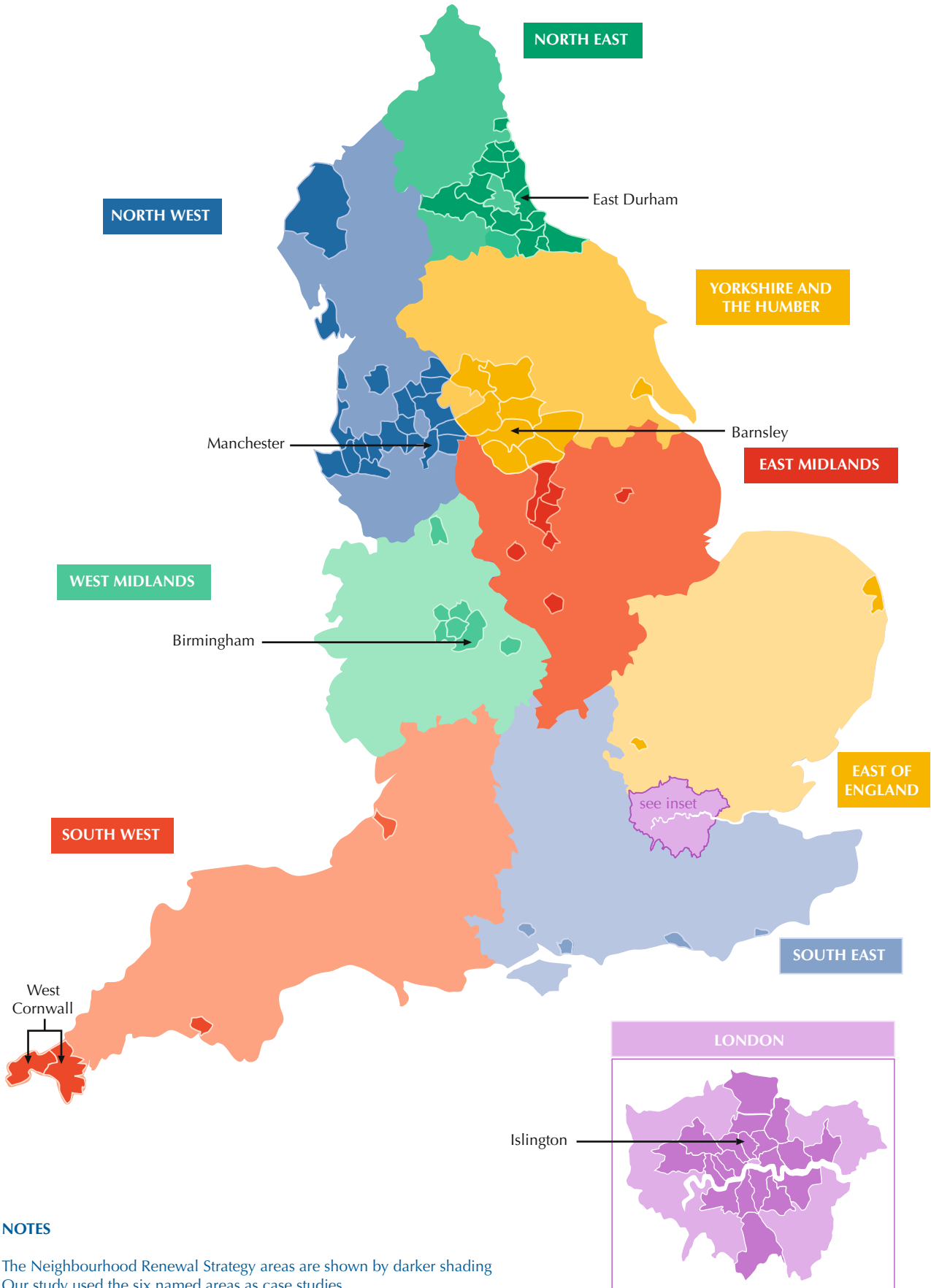
⁸ *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal - Policy Action Team report summaries: a compendium; PAT 4 - Neighbourhood Management; Social Exclusion Unit; April 2000.*

⁹ *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal - National Strategy Action Plan; Social Exclusion Unit; January 2001.*

¹⁰ *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal - Policy Action Team report summaries: a compendium; Social Exclusion Unit; April 2000.*

¹¹ *Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000; Department for the Environment Transport and the Regions - now updated as English Indices of Deprivation 2004; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.*

8 The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy covers 88 local authority districts in England's 9 regions



NOTES

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy areas are shown by darker shading
Our study used the six named areas as case studies

Source: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, ODPM

9 Other government departments contribute to neighbourhood renewal

Neighbourhood renewal themes	Lead government departments	Floor target examples
Employment	Department for Work and Pensions Department of Trade and Industry	By Spring 2006, increase the employment rates of disadvantaged areas ... the 30 local authority districts with the poorest initial labour market position ...
Crime	Home Office	Reduce crime and the fear of crime ... reducing the gap between the highest Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership areas and the best comparable areas ...
Health	Department of Health	Reduce health inequalities by 10% by 2010 as measured by infant mortality and life expectancy at birth
Education and skills	Department for Education and Skills	Increase the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs at A*-C, with at least 25 per cent in every school by 2006
Housing and physical environment	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	By 2010, bring all social housing into decent condition with most of this improvement taking place in deprived areas ...

Source: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, ODPM

1.6 Local organisations play an essential role in implementing the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. ODPM requires district local authorities to establish Local Strategic Partnerships of organisations from the public, business, voluntary and community sectors. Local Strategic Partnerships aim to co-ordinate public services to meet local needs better. They must also develop local neighbourhood renewal strategies and advise on the local allocation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.



Community participation aims to develop social capital in promoting neighbourhood renewal

1.7 Community participation is vital in ensuring value for money in public services. Services designed and delivered without community input risk wasting public money because they will be unused or underused if they are not what people need. Local people must have the opportunities to identify their needs and contribute to finding solutions, rather than feel powerless in the face of public authorities that deliver services on their behalf. Community participation initiatives are widespread across the whole of government (**Figure 10 overleaf**). Central to the single Community Programme are Community Empowerment Networks that aim to give local people a voice on Local Strategic Partnerships.

10 Community participation initiatives are widespread across government

- The Home Office aims to promote active citizenship. "The voluntary and community sector plays a crucial role in delivering public services and in building strong, cohesive and self-determining communities ... give citizens and users a voice, but also the means to tackle themselves the underlying causes of their problems."¹²
- The Police Reform agenda is driven by a commitment to citizen focused policing. "Community groups play a vitally important role in improving community safety. Many local voluntary and community groups grow out of people's concerns about their neighbourhood and attempts to improve community safety."¹³
- The NHS Improvement Plan makes a commitment to ensure that local communities will take greater control of budgets and services. "As the NHS moves from a centralised service to one that is more community based, the voices of patients and the public, together with greater choice, will play an important role in shaping the health service in the future."¹⁴
- The Department for Culture Media and Sport sees culture as having the potential to increase social cohesion. "Culture and regeneration need to be done with a community, not to a community. Successful regeneration programmes rely on the participation, enthusiasm and voice of local people."¹⁵
- Developing the capacity of rural communities to deliver local improvements is a priority for the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs. "Many rural needs and problems must be solved locally ... we will therefore help by providing additional support to improve the ability of the voluntary sector to support individuals and communities that most need help."¹⁶
- To promote the capability of communities to develop their collective base of skills and learning, the Department for Education and Skills is leading the development of Learning Communities in partnership with Regional Development Agencies, local Learning and Skills Councils and Local Strategic Partnerships.¹⁷
- ODPM's consultation document on the future of local government lists "improving citizen engagement and participation" as one of three key challenges.¹⁸

Source: Published documents indicated by footnotes

1.8 The level of community and voluntary activity in an area is often a gauge of the health and spirit of that area and is a vital complementary strand to decent public services and a quality environment in changing people's lives.¹⁹ The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy seeks community involvement in areas where disadvantage may be associated with past low levels of community involvement and where deprivation may have limited the development of community resources and capacity. The aim of increasing community involvement is related to the concept of building social capital (**Figure 11**). The single Community Programme goes further than previous initiatives to involve the community in regeneration by recognising that an active involved community should be one of the specific outcomes of neighbourhood renewal.

1.9 ODPM has defined four strategic goals for its approach to community participation:

- **governance** - to develop a community voice that enables communities to participate in decision-making and increase the accountability of service providers;

11 Social capital refers to the quality of a community's social interactions

The definition of social capital used by the Office for National Statistics, taken from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), is "networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups".²⁰

Similarly the World Bank defines social capital as "the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions".²¹

The Performance and Innovation Unit defines social capital as "the networks, norms, relationships, values and informal sanctions that shape the quantity and co-operative quality of a society's social interactions. ... Levels of social capital are determined by a range of factors. The key ones appear to be: history and culture; whether social structures are flat or hierarchical; the family; education; the built environment; residential mobility; economic inequalities and social class; the strength and characteristics of civil society; and patterns of individual consumption and personal values. ... Social capital may contribute to a range of beneficial economic and social outcomes including: high levels of growth in GDP; more efficiently functioning labour markets; higher educational attainment; lower levels of crime; better health; and more effective institutions of government."²²

Source: References indicated by footnotes

12 ChangeUp; Home Office; June 2004.

13 Policing: Building Safer Communities Together; Home Office; April 2003.

14 The NHS Improvement Plan; Department of Health; June 2004.

15 Culture at the Heart of Regeneration; Department for Culture Media and Sport; June 2004.

16 Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs - Our Strategy 2003-2006.

17 The Skills Strategy White Paper: 21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential; Department For Education and Skills; 2004.

18 The future of local government; ODPM; June 2004.

19 Local Strategic Partnerships - Government Guidance; Department for Environment Transport and the Regions; 2001.

20 The well-being of nations: the role of human and social capital; OECD; 2001.

21 www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/

22 Social Capital - a discussion paper; Performance and Innovation Unit; April 2002.

- **social capital** - to increase the confidence and capacity of individuals and small groups to get involved in activities and build mutually supportive networks that hold communities together;
- **service delivery** - to ensure that local communities are in a position to influence service delivery and, where appropriate, participate in service delivery; and
- **social inclusion and cohesion** - to develop empowered communities capable of building a common vision, a sense of belonging and a positive identity where diversity is valued.

1.10 The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal recognised that community involvement is a complex process that includes at least the following steps:

- outreach, especially to excluded communities, to make them aware they have the chance to express their views and influence service providers;
- facilitation to pull together communities' views and to provide procedures for choosing community members of Local Strategic Partnerships; and
- participation of community members in sufficient numbers on Local Strategic Partnerships, for which they might need training and other forms of support, to enable communities to shape and deliver policy.

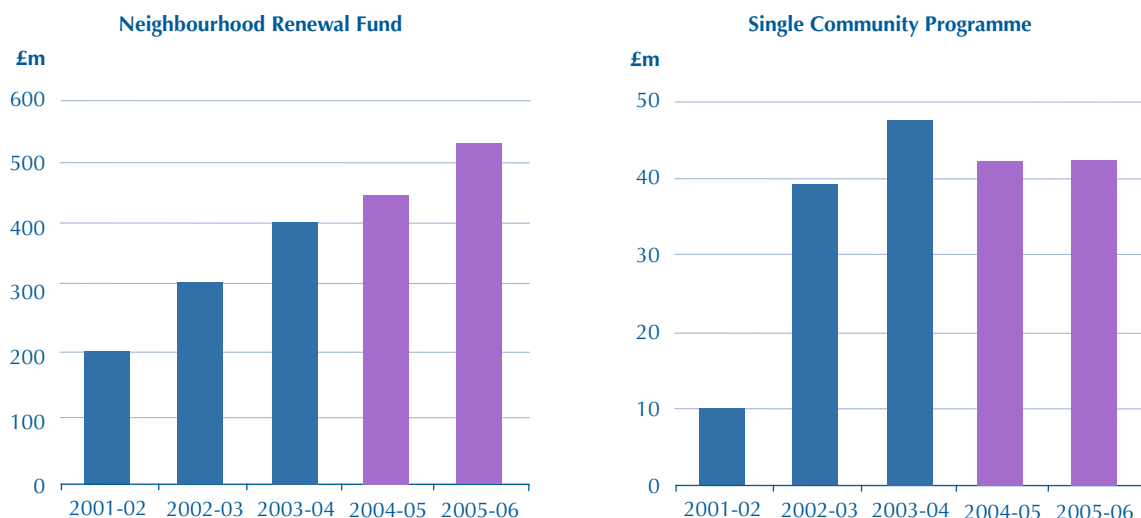
The single Community Programme aims to help communities shape and deliver policy

1.11 The single Community Programme is designed to:

- provide funding and support for community activity in deprived areas, so that people may become more involved in the regeneration of their communities and neighbourhoods;
- help residents in these areas gain the skills and knowledge they need to play a more active role; and
- support community and voluntary sector involvement as equal partners with public service providers in Local Strategic Partnerships.

1.12 The single Community Programme has a budget of £182 million between 2001 and 2006 (**Figure 12**). Community Chest and Community Learning Chest grants support local self-help and community activity and develop skills, knowledge and community learning. A Community Empowerment Fund provides funding to support Community Empowerment Networks as a route to engaging communities effectively in Local Strategic Partnerships, including developing local neighbourhood renewal strategies. Community Empowerment Networks and single Community Programme grants are supporting a wide range of activities (**Figure 13 overleaf**).

12 The single Community Programme budget helps community groups to influence how the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is spent



NOTE

Figures to 2003-04 are actual expenditure while those from 2004-05 are budgets.

Source: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, ODPM

We examined whether communities are becoming more able to influence neighbourhood renewal

1.13 We studied the single Community Programme because of its importance in influencing public sector expenditure in deprived neighbourhoods and role in supporting communities' influence over expenditure of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. We examined whether the single Community Programme is reaching all relevant groups and whether it is helping them to influence neighbourhood renewal. The Appendix describes our work in more detail.



13 The single Community Programme supports Community Empowerment Networks and pays small grants to community groups

Community Empowerment Networks

The Community Empowerment Network in Barnsley held a convention for community groups to influence the Barnsley Community Plan and to consider the implications of the government's citizenship agenda. The Government Office gave a presentation on policy developments. Members of the Community Empowerment Network provided feedback from the day to the Local Strategic Partnership.

The Community Empowerment Network in West Cornwall arranged training for community groups in project cycle management, a technique to provide a structure for community groups to manage and appraise projects, as well as in other areas such as facilitation skills, event management and committee skills.

During the run up to the local elections in spring 2004, the Community Empowerment Network in Birmingham (b:cen) and Birmingham City Council's Neighbourhood Forum organised an election hustings in the Tiverton area of the city. The hustings were much better attended than in previous years.



Small grants

The Friends of Edward Square is a small group that maintains an area of green space in Islington. The group received £2,450 to organise and pay for a fete in a programme of summer events for local communities.

Company Fierce is a small dance company in Manchester that works with young people. The Company received £5,000 to start "The Boyz Project" to give direction and confidence to young black men through positive role models.

The Mirpuri Community Development Trust received £4,800 from the Community Chest to contribute to a week celebrating the community from Mirpur, a region in Kashmir. The community is the largest ethnic minority group in Birmingham.

Peterlee and District Hard of Hearing Club is a small group that meets once a week to learn and practice lip reading. The group received £3,148 to pay towards professional lip reading classes.

Harbour Lights Community Project aims to use arts, particularly music and dance, to engage young people with issues facing the community in Hayle (West Cornwall). The Project received £2,500 to hire equipment for a series of workshops.

Cudworth Reading Group (Barnsley) is a small group that encourages local people to read and make more use of local library facilities. The group received £500 to buy extra copies of books and for visits linked to the books.

Source: National Audit Office analysis

Part 2

Helping communities to get involved in neighbourhood renewal

2.1 The single Community Programme consists of a small grant element (the Community Chest and the Community Learning Chest) and a fund to support Community Empowerment Networks (the Community Empowerment Fund). The single Community Programme is designed to

- provide funding to stimulate and support community activity in deprived areas so that more people become involved in regenerating their communities and neighbourhoods, developing skills in the process; and
- help residents in deprived areas play a more active role in neighbourhood renewal by discussing concerns with public sector organisations as equal partners through Community Empowerment Networks.

2.2 We found that

- the voluntary sector's role in the single Community Programme gives communities an independent voice;
- the small grants are enabling community groups to get involved in neighbourhood renewal;
- the small grants are particularly successful at attracting small groups;
- publicity about the grants could be more effective;
- the grants lead a minority of community groups to join Community Empowerment Networks;
- most Community Empowerment Networks are large enough to reflect the views of communities; and
- aspects of the single Community Programme are not transparent enough to sustain the confidence of communities.

The voluntary sector's role in the single Community Programme gives communities an independent voice

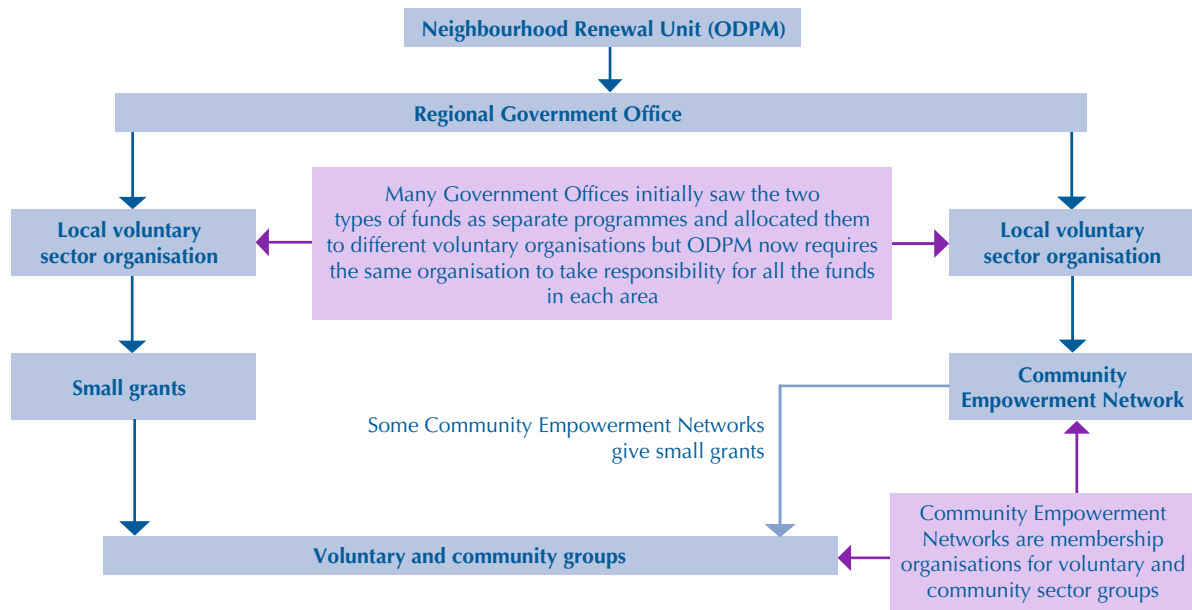
2.3 The single Community Programme funds go to local voluntary sector organisations to administer for the benefit of the wider community (**Figure 14 overleaf**). Community groups value the independence they gain by having access to money that does not come through local public sector organisations: it enables them to express views more robustly in the knowledge that doing so will not compromise their funding. ODPM's evaluation concluded that access to funding that was "not dependent on the patronage of the Local Strategic Partnership or indeed the local authority" was significant in giving Community Empowerment Networks an independent voice.²³

2.4 Government Offices are responsible for the initial selection and continuing oversight of organisations administering the funds. They also oversee Local Strategic Partnerships. In many Government Offices, different teams cover Community Empowerment Networks and Local Strategic Partnerships.

2.5 The voluntary and community sector includes a wide range of types of organisation (**Figure 15 overleaf**). Voluntary sector organisations tend to be larger and are more likely to employ staff, bringing the strength of their infrastructure to the single Community Programme. Community groups can be more in touch with local opinion.

23 *The Community Participation Programmes: draft Second Interim Evaluation Report; University of the West of England, COGS, Liverpool John Moores University; July 2004.*

14 Single Community Programme funds go to local voluntary and community sector organisations



Source: National Audit Office analysis

15 Voluntary and community groups differ in the scale and focus of their activities

Voluntary and community groups form a spectrum of organisations. At either end of the spectrum, voluntary organisations act on behalf of other people while community groups act on their own behalf: "it is the fact that [community groups] are engaged in meeting their own needs, under their own control, that distinguishes them from other voluntary organisations".²⁴ In practice, many organisations fall somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. Voluntary organisations tend to be larger and more formally constituted than community groups and are more likely to employ people.

The definition of a community in the regeneration context is "the whole local population of the specified locality".²⁵ It may include people who work or visit regularly but are not residents. The important features of a community are people, their interactions with each other and their interactions with place.

Source: National Audit Office summary of the quoted text

The grants are enabling community groups to get involved in neighbourhood renewal

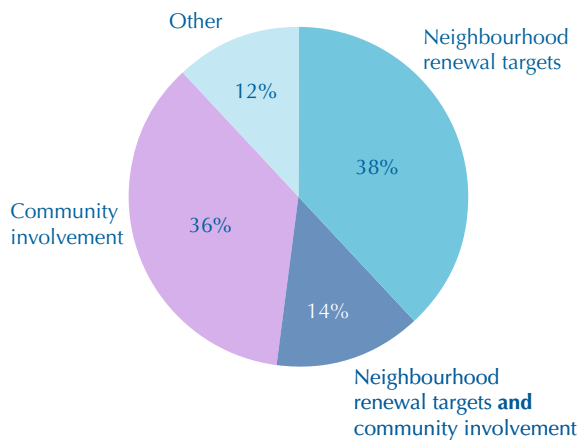
2.6 The single Community Programme has paid out around 25,000 grants²⁶ supporting projects relevant to neighbourhood renewal (Figure 16). Most recipients covered by our survey used their grants for projects contributing to one or more neighbourhood renewal targets (reducing worklessness and crime and improving local skills, health, housing and the physical environment) or to the broader neighbourhood renewal goal of promoting community involvement and social cohesion. Examples of supported projects include a business support centre for women, a dance theatre addressing community issues, a club to help stroke victims, homework support sessions and an allotment providing work for people undergoing drug rehabilitation.

²⁴ *Regeneration and sustainable communities*; G Channan, A West, C Garratt, J Humm; Community Development Foundation; 1999.

²⁵ *Regeneration and sustainable communities*; G Channan, A West, C Garratt, J Humm; Community Development Foundation; 1999.

²⁶ National Audit Office estimate based on total payments across England from 2001 to 2004 and average grant values across six case study areas.

16 Grant recipients describe their projects in terms relevant to neighbourhood renewal priorities



NOTE

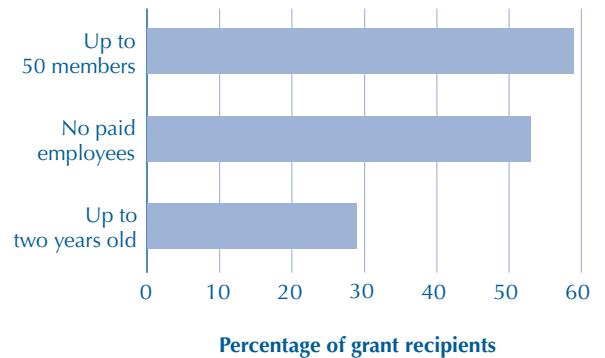
Results may understate the relevance of projects because recipients do not always appreciate how their work contributes to wider issues

Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

The grants are particularly attractive to small groups

- 2.7 The grants are attracting small and new groups (Figure 17), which tend to be close to the community. Over a half of successful applicants are groups with no more than 50 members and no paid employees. Many have existed for two years or less.
- 2.8 The straightforward grant application process is a particular success of the single Community Programme (Figure 18). This is a consequence of ODPM's decision to reduce bureaucracy by delegating administration to the voluntary sector with minimum conditions. Some application forms run to just two pages. The single Community Programme does not require grant applicants to have constitutions or bank accounts, so it is especially suited to small and informal groups.
- 2.9 Most recipients think the grant-administering organisations have straightforward application processes, understand local needs and are helpful (Figure 19 overleaf). This is a further benefit of ODPM's decision to delegate administration to local voluntary organisations that are closer than government organisations to the communities they serve. Some grant-administering organisations have used the single Community Programme's flexibility to develop special processes for the smallest grants. East Durham's simplified form for grants up to £250 and Manchester's fast-track approval for grants up to £1,000 are examples that have proved popular.

17 Single Community Programme grants are attracting many small and new community groups



Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

18 Community groups like the straightforward application process for single Community Programme grants

"The [single Community Programme grants] get more money to more community groups than any other method". (ODPM evaluation)

"The group doesn't actually have to be constituted... it doesn't have to have its own bank account, it's a quick turnaround - with some of the other grants it's 6 to 12 months ... if we got an application in now, certain grants would have a decision by 5:00". (Barnsley)

"Well the general impression is that [the grants] have been remarkably successful: they've been simple to process, decision-making is timely ... different kinds of organisations have succeeded in getting a small amount and very often £500 or less has achieved a lot". (West Cornwall)

"Small grants can remove worry and small irritations and enable groups to get on with things". (ODPM evaluation)

"It's a very simple process, easy to access the money, and they've set it up in a way that the community can manage". (West Cornwall)

"It gives people with a lot of energy and a good idea a way of getting into action quickly". (ODPM evaluation)

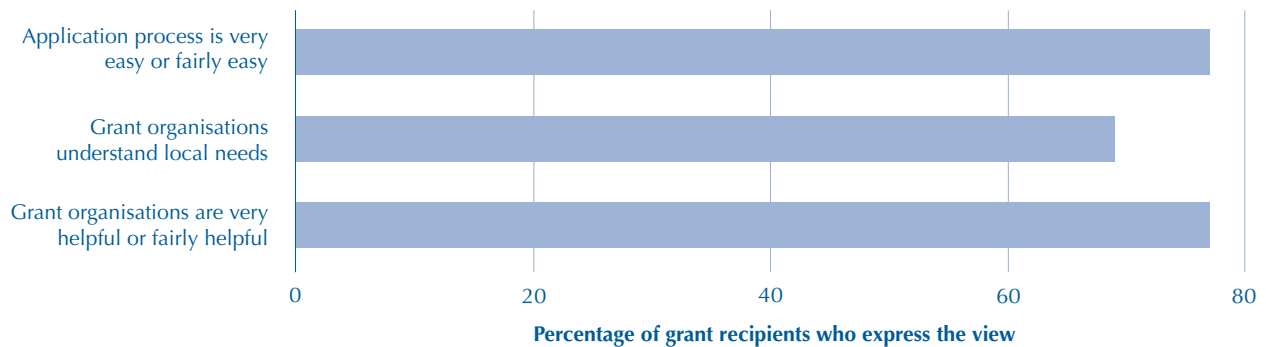
"They're all valuable sources of money because they are the first step for many organisations to getting themselves organised, to build the capacity. It's locally available, it's an easy application and it provides that initial rung on the ladder". (West Cornwall)

"Groups know that grant decisions are made by their peers from other groups and that they will find friendly faces at the office". (ODPM evaluation)

"It has enabled us to reach many new groups and individuals in a way that has rarely been seen by the voluntary and community sector before". (ODPM evaluation)

Source: ODPM evaluation and National Audit Office interviews and focus groups

19 Community groups find it easy to apply for single Community Programme grants



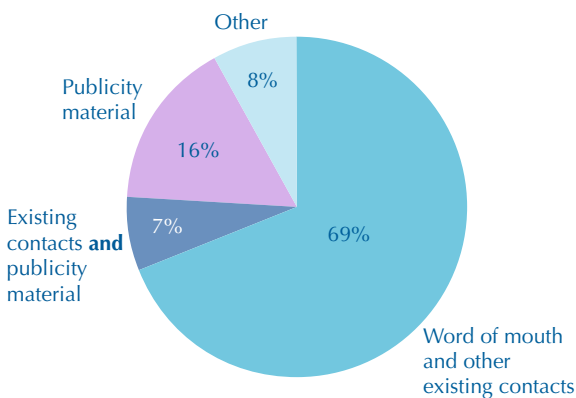
Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

Publicity about the grants is not reaching all relevant groups

2.10 Grant-administering organisations' own publicity materials are not widely distributed²⁷ and are not proving effective in promoting the single Community Programme grants to community groups (Figure 20). Only a quarter of grant recipients heard through these channels and, of these, a third would have heard through existing contacts. Most recipients heard about the grants through existing contacts alone. Well-connected groups are therefore much more likely than others to hear about the single Community Programme grants.

2.11 As a consequence of publicity failures, the single Community Programme is missing some groups with the potential to contribute to neighbourhood renewal. Many are smaller informal community groups, often involved in activities relevant to neighbourhood renewal (Figure 21).

20 Recipients hear about single Community Programme grants mainly through existing contacts



Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

21 Some small groups have not heard of the single Community Programme grants or do not understand their relevance

The Cultural Aim Mixed Medium Art Group in Birmingham is a small community group that works to improve the local physical environment. Recent projects have included a mural with an anti-drugs message and a black community history mural. The group had applied for grants but knew little more about the single Community Programme.

Hayle Writing Club in West Cornwall provides a forum for writing and discussing literature. It publishes a collection of work each year. The local library provides a meeting space but the club often has to pay for visiting authors to speak at meetings. In the past the club has received money from the Local Learning and Skills Council but had not heard of the single Community Programme grants or the Community Empowerment Network.

The Community Health Project in Islington provides advice and information for local residents on health issues as well as organising activities such as bingo, walking and gardening. The organiser is based at a local health centre and receives funding from the Islington Health Care Trust. He had not heard of the single Community Programme grants.

Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

The grants lead a minority of groups to become involved in Community Empowerment Networks

2.12 Among the aims of the single Community Programme is giving community groups the experience, skills and interest to become more involved in neighbourhood renewal and to join Community Empowerment Networks.

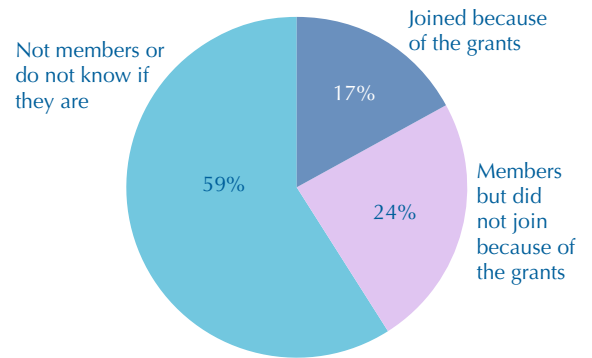
2.13 Community Empowerment Networks have a low profile among grant recipients. Less than half of grant recipients belong to Community Empowerment Networks and less than half of those joined because of the grants

(Figure 22). None of the grant recipients in our survey who are members were able to identify unprompted that the Community Empowerment Networks have a role in relation to Local Strategic Partnerships. Many community groups were uncertain about the distinction between the Community Empowerment Networks, the organisations administering them and the organisations administering single Community Programme grants.²⁸

2.14 Newer and younger groups are less inclined than others to join Community Empowerment Networks (Figure 23). The single Community Programme is attracting these groups through grants but is less successful in persuading them to become more involved (Figure 24 overleaf). ODPM's evaluation noted "the difficulty of selling the Community Empowerment Networks to smaller groups who were focused mainly on their immediate needs and activities".²⁹ Larger and older groups are also more likely to join Community Empowerment Networks without applying for grants³⁰, further emphasising the need to use single Community Programme grants to attract newer and younger groups.

2.15 A lack of clear branding limits the effectiveness of single Community Programme grants in introducing groups to Community Empowerment Networks. The single Community Programme is one of several area-based initiatives targeted at particular neighbourhoods or aspects of deprivation and funded by different government departments. Over 40 such initiatives are potentially relevant to groups that can apply for single Community Programme grants. These other initiatives

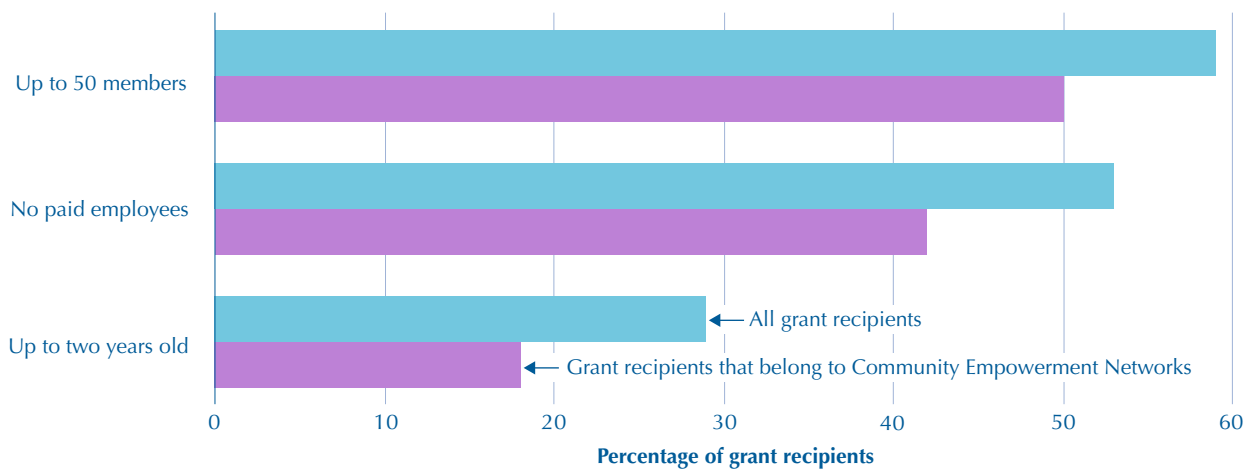
22 Most single Community Programme grant recipients have not joined Community Empowerment Networks



Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

range from widely available schemes, such as Healthy Living Centres and Neighbourhood Nurseries, to more specific funds, such as the Coalfields Fund and the Market Towns Initiative. Branding of single Community Programme grants is particularly unclear where grant-administering organisations look after multiple programmes and use common forms to simplify processes for applicants. Grant recipients were more likely to be aware of the identity of the grant-administering organisation than that of the single Community Programme or the Community Empowerment Network. Some recipients were unsure, even after applying successfully, that what they had received was a single Community Programme grant.³¹

23 Newer and younger groups are less inclined than others to join Community Empowerment Networks



Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

28 National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI.

29 The Community Participation Programmes: draft Second Interim Evaluation Report; University of the West of England, COGS, Liverpool John Moores University; July 2004.

30 National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI.

31 National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI.

24 Small groups have received single Community Programme grants but have not gone on to join the Community Empowerment Network

The QDOS Dance Theatre in Barnsley worked closely with the police and the primary care trust, both of which participate in the Local Strategic Partnership, in tackling youth crime and drug abuse. The QDOS Dance Theatre has received single Community Programme grants but has very little knowledge of the Community Empowerment Network and the Local Strategic Partnership.

The Himmat Support Group in Manchester was established in 1995 to provide emotional support to carers of adults with learning or physical disabilities. The group received £1,500 from the single Community Programme to hire a room, equipment and a translator. The project was partly funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The Himmat Support Group did not go on to join the Community Empowerment Network.

The Praze Golden Jubilee in Hayle (West Cornwall) was established during the Millennium Celebrations and continues to organise community events. It received £500 from the single Community Programme for a children's project and £400 to build a peaceful garden in the town for older people. The Praze Golden Jubilee was not aware of the Community Empowerment Network.

Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

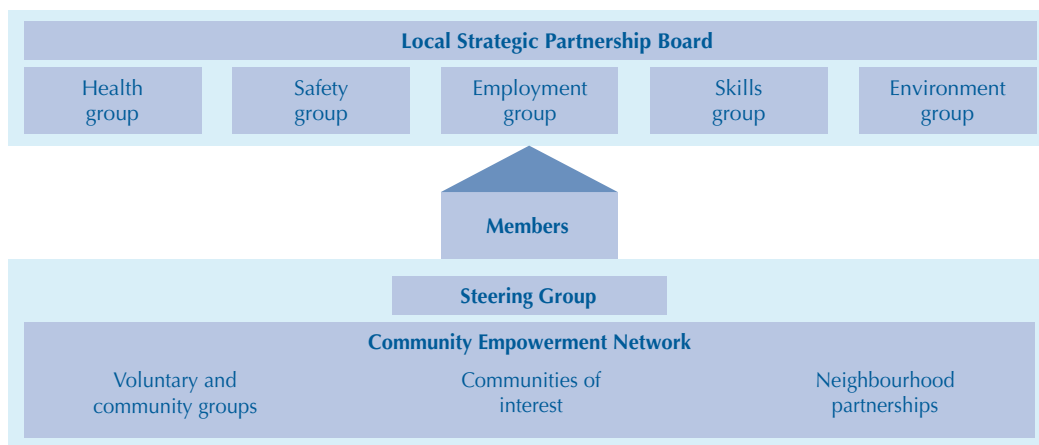
Most Community Empowerment Networks are large enough to reflect the views of communities

2.16 The average membership of a Community Empowerment Network is just under 300.³² Member organisations include neighbourhood and residents groups, umbrella groups and networks, professional voluntary sector organisations and a range of specific interest groups (Figure 25). Most Community Empowerment Networks have a steering group while some have a written constitution. Around half have thematic groups and neighbourhood-based sub-networks.

2.17 The Community Empowerment Networks in our case study areas reflect the views of communities reasonably well (Figure 26). Community Empowerment Networks with small memberships are unlikely to instil the same confidence.

2.18 All Community Empowerment Networks have support staff and spend half of their funds, on average, in employing them. The skills and energies of support staff are vital in promoting the success of Community Empowerment Networks but they have a difficult balance to achieve in ensuring that paid professionals do not dominate and deter community volunteers.³³

25 Each Community Empowerment Network typically has a wide-ranging membership and a steering group



NOTE

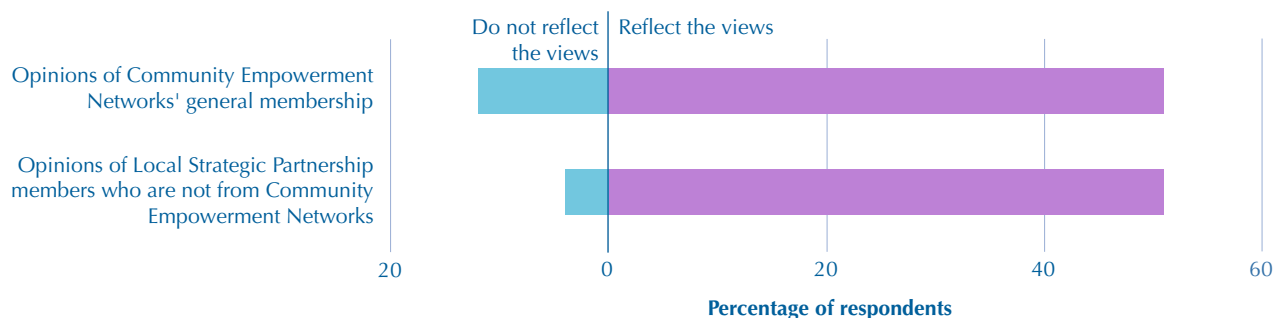
The organisation of individual Community Empowerment Networks and Local Strategic Partnerships may differ in detail from the typical example illustrated

Source: National Audit Office analysis

32 The Community Participation Programmes: First Interim Evaluation Report; University of the West of England, COGS, Liverpool John Moores University; November 2003.

33 National Audit Office interviews and focus groups.

26 Community Empowerment Networks reflect the views of communities



NOTE

Neutral responses are excluded from the graphs

Source: National Audit Office surveys - including one conducted by MORI

2.19 Community Empowerment Networks have taken longer to establish themselves than ODPM had envisaged. ODPM's evaluation commented that "the challenges of bringing together a diverse [voluntary and community] sector should not be underestimated".³⁴ The Government Office for London found that factors affecting the development of Community Empowerment Networks included the complexity of the voluntary and community sector and rivalries within the sector and between the sector and local authorities.³⁵ Uncertainties also remain while ODPM considers the long-term role and funding of community networks and the mainstreaming of the single Community Programme.³⁶

- The voluntary and community sector is a collection of diverse groups often competing for the same funds. Government Offices believe tensions between groups have caused difficulties and delay. Community Empowerment Networks start to be effective when members focus on their common interest in influencing local public sector bodies.
- Community groups become disillusioned if they feel dominated by a professional voluntary sector in Community Empowerment Networks. ODPM's evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships noted "tensions between the organised voluntary sector and the less well-developed and more grass roots community sector".³⁷ Community Empowerment Networks are more likely to succeed where the voluntary sector sees its role as supporting community groups. For example, the County

Durham Foundation administers single Community Programme grants but members of the East Durham Community Network decide who will get them.

- ODPM's evaluation noted that some Community Empowerment Networks had problems in finding a way to work alongside existing structures of community representation.³⁸ Examples include parish councils, rural community councils and forums set up by local authorities. ODPM did not consult or provide guidance about relationships between Community Empowerment Networks and established organisations. In Birmingham, for example, there is an unclear relationship between the Community Empowerment Network and the Birmingham Association of Neighbourhood Forums, which leaves people uncertain about where to go to exert influence. Progress has been greater where Community Empowerment Networks have worked with existing structures rather than independently (Figure 27).

27 The West Cornwall Community Network co-operated with existing networks

The West Cornwall Community Network has become a partner in a capacity building programme called INSTEP. Funding partners include the South West of England Regional Development Agency, Penwith Community Development Trust and the New Opportunities Fund. INSTEP provides free consultancy advice and training to groups in areas such as writing a constitution and applying for funding. It bridges the gap between initial activity such as applying for a single Community Programme grant and more advanced and formalised community activity work.

Source: National Audit Office analysis

34 *The Community Participation Programmes: draft Second Interim Evaluation Report; University of the West of England, COGS, Liverpool John Moores University; July 2004.*

35 *Review of Community Empowerment Networks in London; Government Office for London; January 2004.*

36 *Single Community Programme Guidance; ODPM; November 2003.*

37 *Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships: a baseline of practice, full report; University of Warwick, Liverpool John Moores University, University of the West of England, Office for Public Management; May 2004.*

38 *The Community Participation Programmes: draft Second Interim Evaluation Report; University of the West of England, COGS, Liverpool John Moores University; July 2004.*

Aspects of the single Community Programme are not transparent enough to sustain the confidence of communities

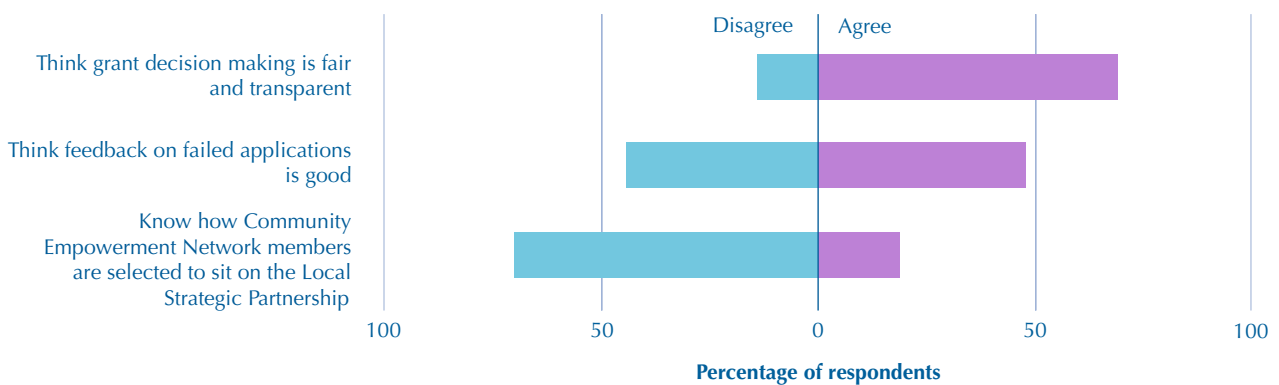
2.20 Some aspects of single Community Programme process and structures are not transparent to community groups (Figure 28). While most community groups believe the grant approval process is fair and transparent, there is much less confidence in feedback about failed applications. Knowledge is exceptionally poor about how Community Empowerment Networks select members to sit on Local Strategic Partnerships. Such lack of transparency risks damaging long-term trust in the single Community Programme.

2.21 Many grant-administering organisations have felt uncertain about what information to collect to confirm that grants have been spent properly. Some have sought guidance from Government Offices but have not received it. Any concern that grants lack careful control would damage the single Community Programme if it undermined confidence about the fairness with which public funds are distributed.

There are six key requirements to get communities involved in neighbourhood renewal

2.22 We found as a result of the research described in this part of our report that there are six key requirements for getting communities involved in neighbourhood renewal (Figure 29).

28 Some aspects of the single Community Programme are not transparent



NOTE

Sample bases are, respectively: all grant recipients; grant recipients with at least one rejected application; and grant recipients belonging to Community Empowerment Networks
Neutral responses are excluded from the graphs

Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

29 There are six key requirements for community involvement

Attract the widest range of groups	Reliance on existing channels of communication will restrict community engagement to those already active. Innovative ways should be used to involve the diversity of the area.
Help groups see their contribution to neighbourhood renewal	Many community groups do not make a connection between their activity and the wider neighbourhood. Helping community groups see the wider impact of their work strengthens their involvement with public service providers.
Build confidence	Single Community Programme grants attract inexperienced groups. Community Empowerment Network staff need to nurture their confidence by providing or pointing towards training in skills relevant to influencing neighbourhood renewal.
Let the community lead	Community Empowerment Network staff should promote community leadership by providing policy and secretariat support. They should lead only where Community Empowerment Networks are very inexperienced and then only as a temporary catalyst.
Take care to be representative	Community Empowerment Networks must reflect the population of their areas to have effective influence with public sector bodies. Community Empowerment Networks should take steps to ensure that populations of deprived neighbourhoods are well-represented.
Demonstrate transparency	Community Empowerment Networks should make information on their processes readily available and give good feedback to unsuccessful grant applicants in order to earn the confidence of communities.

Source: National Audit Office analysis

Part 3

Enabling communities to influence decisions about neighbourhood renewal

- 3.1 The single Community Programme aims to enable community groups to influence decisions about the design and delivery of public services. Services developed with community input are more likely to give people what they want, where and when they want it and in ways that are easy to use. Services' contributions to neighbourhood renewal become more certain because communities are best placed to understand the problems of their neighbourhoods and the types of solutions that will work. Avoiding fruitless work on inappropriate services protects value for money.
- 3.2 The overall picture is that community groups are having some success in influencing local public service providers' decisions and getting services that people want (Figure 30).

30 Community Empowerment Networks are having some success in influencing the decisions of public service providers

A Community Empowerment Network persuaded the Local Strategic Partnership to ring fence 10 per cent of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to create a Neighbourhood Initiative Fund for local residents to use for environmental improvements and community projects. Examples of use include improvements to public seating, tree pruning, a community notice board, goalposts for a youth group, extra heating for an older people's group and setting up a group for tenants of 10 Registered Social Landlords.

A Community Empowerment Network secured a share of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to employ project workers to build the long-term capacity of ethnic minority groups to deliver services under programmes like *futurebuilders*.

A Community Empowerment Network found that people without transport struggled to gain access to emergency medical attention. The Community Empowerment Network persuaded the health sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership to introduce new transport arrangements and to train receptionists to understand patients' transport and access problems.



Source: ODPM evaluation and National Audit Office interviews and focus groups

"We have changed substantially the way the council, the police (in particular), the health service's work in Barnsley as a result of this. ... you wouldn't recognise the social services department ... it's joined-up with the primary care trust - that would not have happened without work going on at the Local Strategic Partnership level." (Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council)

"We had people from the Community Network actually sit on that panel and look at the applications to see what we should support and which ones didn't meet the criteria. So they were involved in allocation of the National Learning for Deprived Communities Fund as well." (East Durham Local Strategic Partnership)

"I know one group that I worked with got a (single Community Programme) grant to get some support for their development. They desperately wanted to get some extra support for people with particular medical treatment. I got them talking to the primary care trust who said actually we're quite interested in that, we'll finance that for you. The two just wouldn't have got together like that without our support." (East Durham Community Network)

"So through [the Community Empowerment Network] ... we became involved with Supporting People funding, transitional housing benefit (and others), so that we are now able to provide a very big service. We have over 24 members of staff and we work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. When we started, we could only afford to be open 2 or 3 days a week but now we're recognised that we form part of the Local Strategic Partnership and we form part of the Strategic Plan of the District Council." (West Cornwall Community Network)

3.3 Our more detailed research shows that:

- the extent of Community Empowerment Networks' representation on Local Strategic Partnerships varies greatly, affecting their ability to influence;
- Community Empowerment Networks have too little influence to date on the main boards of Local Strategic Partnerships;
- Community Empowerment Networks are influencing local public service providers directly;
- neighbourhood-based sub-groups are enabling Community Empowerment Networks to exert more influence;
- there are tensions that must be managed if Community Empowerment Networks' influence is to increase;
- public sector members have a key role in redressing an imbalance of power on Local Strategic Partnerships; and
- Community Empowerment Networks can do more to enhance their influence on Local Strategic Partnerships.

The extent of Community Empowerment Networks' representation on Local Strategic Partnerships varies greatly

3.4 Local Strategic Partnerships "must demonstrate they have consulted the community and voluntary sectors as part of their self-assessment, including the emerging Community Empowerment Networks"; they must "capture the views of their Community Empowerment Network representatives in the self-assessment and action plan" and they must enable the "Community Empowerment Network to fulfil its functions as a key partner with the Local Strategic Partnership".³⁹ The vision of every Local Strategic Partnership must be "owned and agreed by all partner agencies and the Community Empowerment Network" and there must be "genuine community involvement (including the Community Empowerment Network)".⁴⁰

3.5 Community Empowerment Networks' representation on Local Strategic Partnerships varies greatly, affecting the ability of different Community Empowerment Networks to exert influence. ODPM's evaluation found there were seven Community Empowerment Network members on a Local Strategic Partnership on average.⁴¹ The minimum was zero, where there was no effective Community Empowerment Network, and the maximum was 27. The evaluation did not discover what proportion of total Local Strategic Partnership membership these numbers represented. In the North East, where the Government Office collects relevant information, community members provide between 9 and 54 per cent of total Local Strategic Partnership membership. The combined contribution from the community and voluntary sectors varies between 19 and 54 per cent. Self-assessments that Local Strategic Partnerships have recently completed under ODPM's performance management framework may help them identify the most effective proportion for community membership.

Community Empowerment Networks have too little influence on the main boards of Local Strategic Partnerships

3.6 Community Empowerment Network members of Local Strategic Partnerships believe they have too little influence on the main boards (Figure 31). They are much less satisfied than other members, mainly from the public sector, that Local Strategic Partnerships listen to Community Empowerment Network members' views and take account of them. Community Empowerment Networks' wider membership similarly believes their representatives have limited influence on Local Strategic Partnerships (Figure 32). The Government Office for London found that Local Strategic Partnership structures and processes needed to be reviewed to ensure community members feel able to participate as equal partners.⁴² ODPM's evaluation provided an example of how dispirited one Community Empowerment Network member has become.⁴³

- "I don't think my being there has influenced anything. Council officers prepare a document that is presented for endorsement. We vote on it and they win. Quite a few people have given up and see it as a waste of time."

39 Accreditation 2002/03: Guidance for Local Strategic Partnerships; Neighbourhood Renewal Unit; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

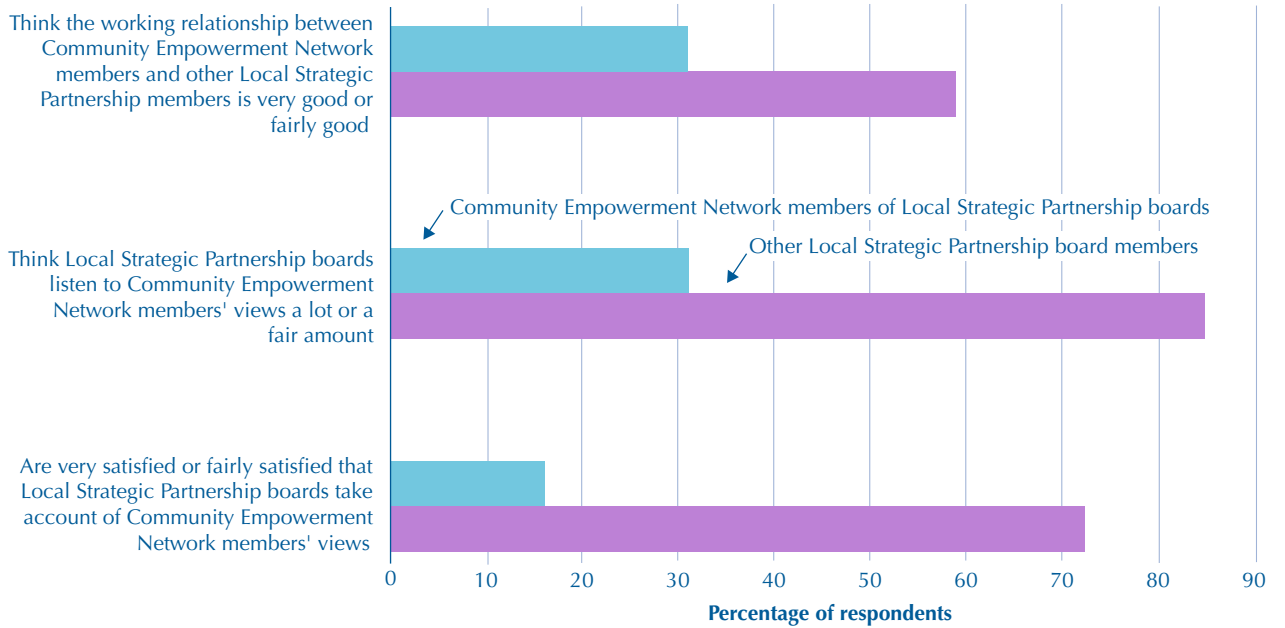
40 Performance Management Framework for Local Strategic Partnerships - Aide-Memoire; Neighbourhood Renewal Unit; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister; 2004.

41 The Community Participation Programmes: First Interim Evaluation Report; University of the West of England, COGS, Liverpool John Moores University; November 2003.

42 Review of Community Empowerment Networks in London; Government Office for London; January 2004.

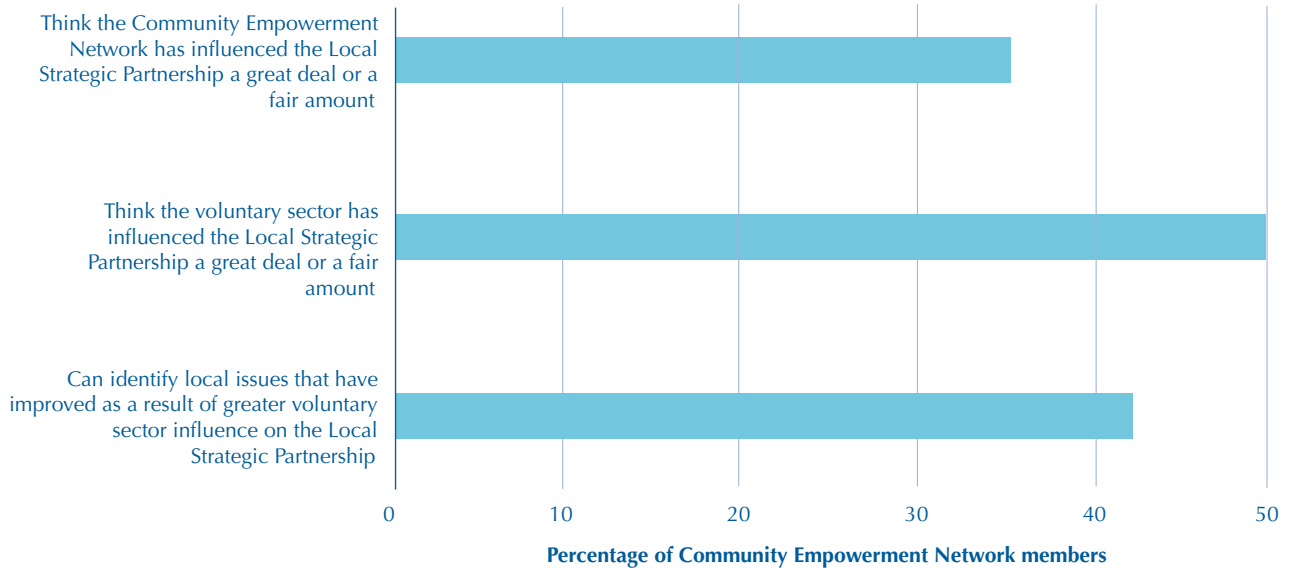
43 The Community Participation Programmes: draft Second Interim Evaluation Report; University of the West of England, COGS, Liverpool John Moores University; July 2004.

31 Community Empowerment Network members are not satisfied with their influence on Local Strategic Partnerships



Source: National Audit Office survey

32 Members of Community Empowerment Networks think their representatives have too little influence on Local Strategic Partnerships



NOTE

Views of grant recipients who are members of Community Empowerment Networks

Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

Community Empowerment Networks are influencing local public service providers directly

3.7 Community Empowerment Networks are enabling community groups to work directly with public sector service providers outside the main boards of Local Strategic Partnerships. These interactions help community groups to gain confidence and to influence neighbourhood renewal. Some public sector organisations have taken involvement a step further by asking Community Empowerment Networks to help examine the quality of public services. Direct involvement by Community Empowerment Networks takes many forms (Figure 33).

33 Community Empowerment Networks are working directly with public sector organisations

Members of the East Durham Community Network are measuring progress against milestones of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund health projects on behalf of the health sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership. Advantages of using Community Empowerment Networks to undertake research include greater openness of users in talking to peers rather than to professionals and greater sensitivity of peers to the real meaning behind what users tell them and to connections with other local issues. Community Empowerment Network members and health professionals believe the experiment is a success.

The Cripplegate Foundation, the administering organisation for single Community Programme grants in Islington, works closely with the Social Services Department of Islington Borough Council, CEA@Islington, the Drug Action Team, Finsbury Park Partnership, EC1 New Deal and Islington Primary Care Trust to ensure there is no duplication in grant giving and to improve the effectiveness of programmes.

The West Cornwall Community Network has worked closely with the West Cornwall Police Constabulary. Linking the neighbourhood beat managers project to the West Cornwall Community Network provided a route for the police to liaise with the community to identify particular problems at ward and street levels. West Cornwall Police Constabulary used the West Cornwall Community Network Newsletter to explain the project when the first beat officers began their work.

Source: National Audit Office analysis



Neighbourhood-based sub-groups are enabling Community Empowerment Networks to exert more influence

3.8 Community Empowerment Networks in all our case study areas are developing neighbourhood-based sub-networks (Figure 34). The approach is consistent with recent ODPM guidance that emphasises the neighbourhood level.⁴⁴ Focusing on smaller areas helps to bridge the gap between debate in Local Strategic Partnerships, which can seem remote, and the action that community groups want to see in return for their involvement (Figure 35). Priority-setting events that focus and identify what activities should receive support in particular areas can also strengthen the link between Community Empowerment Networks and the single Community Programme grants.

34 The Barnsley Community and Voluntary Network is developing an area-based approach

Barnsley Community and Voluntary Network worked alongside the Cudworth and West Green Partnership. An open day brought local people and statutory service providers together to identify local needs and to develop solutions to long term local problems. Participants included the fire service, the primary care trust, banks and building societies, the Action Team for Jobs, Barnsley Development Agency, Objective One, local voluntary and community groups and local residents. The day focused on three themes identified as the main issues facing the area: health, community safety and young people. Short, medium and long term solutions and projects were developed for each theme. Since the event, over £22,000 has been allocated according to locally identified needs.

A **Women's Health day** received £2,717 for health promotion officials, community dieticians, local health visitors, the family planning clinic and Learning Net staff to hold an open day with volunteers at a local sports centre. There were sessions on food and diet, massage and introductory sessions to gym equipment. Local businesses had stalls at the event.

The **Promoting Healthy Eating** project received £1,055 for community dieticians, local health visitors, the Co-operative Group, Suma Whole-foods and Learning Net to organise an open day at a local horticultural project. The focus was on growing, preparing and eating healthy organic and whole-food. There was a barbeque with cookery demonstrations, tasting tables and cookery classes. Locally grown organic foods were on sale.

Weaning Parties received £5,000 for local voluntary groups to hold sessions for new mothers with support from the primary care trust and a nursery nurse. New mothers learnt how to prepare food for weaning their babies.

Source: National Audit Office interviews and focus groups

44 Single Community Programme Guidance; ODPM; November 2003 and Single Community Programme Note 1: neighbourhood level work; ODPM; March 2004.

35 A focus on smaller areas brings Community Empowerment Networks closer to communities

"We brought together people from all sectors who were doers (not talkers and strategists but doers) to work out what they need to do to improve their bit of Barnsley and as a result we put £23,000 that has been followed by money from the primary care trust and commitments of support from other players." (*Barnsley*)

"It's made other statutory organisations become far more aware of what's going on at the grass roots level." (*West Cornwall*)

"It's being done in a way that is accessible and they're meeting new people and now much more open to actually talk to organisations that they would never have done before - like the police. It has broken down a lot of barriers between what I would call "us" and "them" - there's a much better working relationship with the community and organisations now." (*West Cornwall*)

Source: National Audit Office interviews and focus groups

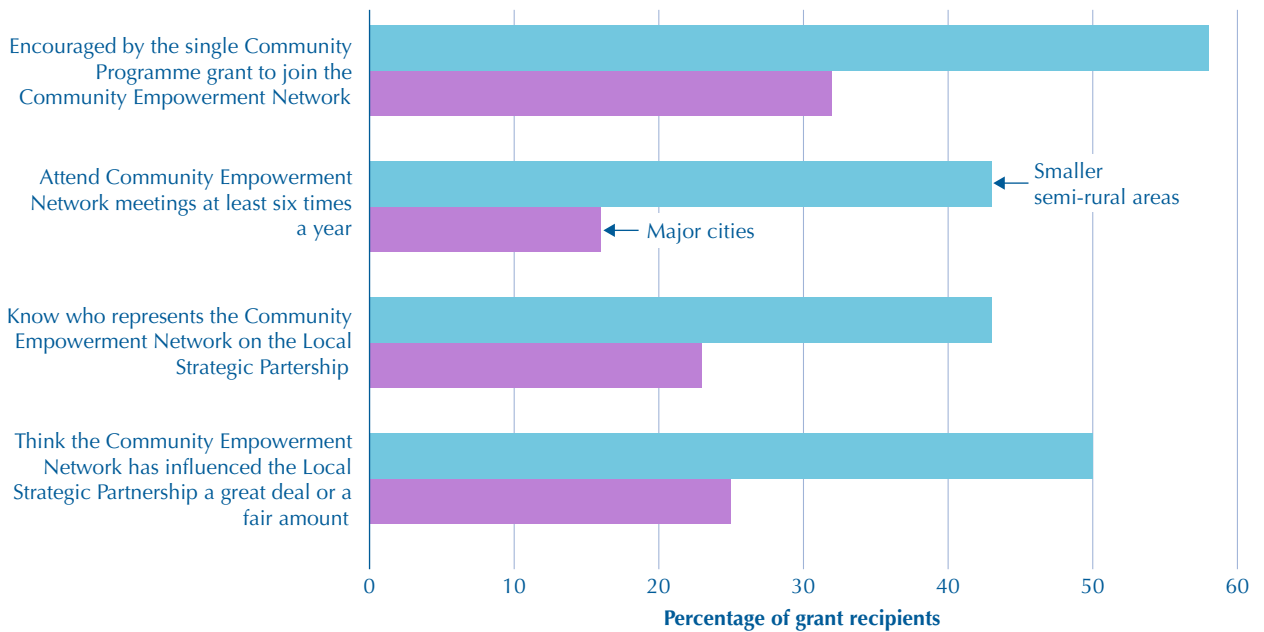
3.9 The contrasting responses of single Community Programme grant recipients in smaller semi-rural districts and major cities illustrate the strength of a smaller focus (**Figure 36**). Our case study areas vary enormously in size, with Birmingham having over ten

times the population of East Durham. Although grant recipients in major cities are slightly more likely to join Community Empowerment Networks, those in smaller semi-rural areas who do join are much more involved and more confident of their influence on Local Strategic Partnerships.

Progress depends on managing tensions between community and public sectors

3.10 Community sector and public sector members of Local Strategic Partnerships come with different perspectives and backgrounds that create tensions affecting their ability to work together. ODPM's evaluation found that, prior to the single Community Programme, "good relationships between the local authority and the voluntary and community sector were relatively rare".⁴⁵ More recent studies by ODPM's evaluation team have found some improvements and a need to make greater progress. Tensions exist in the areas of trust and power (**Figure 37 overleaf**).

36 Community Empowerment Network members are more involved in smaller semi-rural districts than in major cities



NOTE

Views of single Community Programme grant recipients who belong to Community Empowerment Networks

Source: National Audit Office survey conducted by MORI

37 Community and public sector members of Local Strategic Partnerships have to manage tensions over trust and power

	Community sector	Public sector
Trust	Community members can be suspicious that public sector organisations might consult them for appearance rather than to make real changes. They fear Community Empowerment Networks and Local Strategic Partnerships may not last, wasting the time and effort that people have given voluntarily.	Public sector members can be suspicious about whom Community Empowerment Networks represent. Local authorities, in particular, can point to an electoral mandate that Community Empowerment Networks lack. At the heart of the tension is a debate about the relationship between representative democracy and participative democracy. ⁴⁶
Power	Community members lack many benefits that tilt the balance of power firmly in favour of public sector members. ODPM's evaluations found that "voluntary and community partners remain junior partners" ⁴⁷ in Local Strategic Partnerships and that central government needs "to strengthen Local Strategic Partnerships' commitment to working with the voluntary and community sector as equals". ⁴⁸	Public sector organisations control much of the business of Local Strategic Partnership meetings: usually chairing them, setting agendas, preparing papers, choosing meeting places and times, and even determining the number of community members. Public sector members commonly receive briefings about forthcoming meetings and are recompensed for their attendance costs.

Source: National Audit Office analysis

3.11 Tensions are exacerbated where there is poor mutual understanding. Most public sector members in our case study areas knew little about the fund that supports the Community Empowerment Networks or about the single Community Programme grants.⁴⁹ This lack of knowledge may limit public sector organisations' appreciation of what Community Empowerment Network members can bring to Local Strategic Partnerships. ODPM has taken steps to clarify the relationship between councillors and Community Empowerment Network members (**Figure 38**).

3.12 Delays in establishing Community Empowerment Networks damaged their ability to exert influence and coloured their trust in Local Strategic Partnerships. Almost half of Community Empowerment Networks were not involved in the initial design of local neighbourhood strategies⁵⁰ because many Community Empowerment Networks were not running by April 2002 when the strategies had to be written. Similar problems excluded Community Empowerment Networks from the first round of decisions about how to spend the local Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. These problems are beginning to be redressed in subsequent revisions of neighbourhood renewal strategies and funding decisions (**Figure 39**).

38 ODPM has issued guidance about the roles of different members of Local Strategic Partnerships

Councillors	Community Empowerment Network members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ may represent the views of the Council as a service provider; ■ reflect the views of the Council electorate to inform discussions; ■ bring knowledge of the issues in their ward; ■ as a general rule, are not on the Local Strategic Partnership formally to represent their constituents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ may bring the perspective of the voluntary sector as a service provider; ■ reflect the views of particular groups of interest or geographical groups; ■ bring knowledge of deprivation and of the issues in specific neighbourhoods; ■ they are not on the Local Strategic Partnership formally to represent views of the voluntary and community sector.

Source: Single Community Programme Guidance; ODPM; November 2003

46 Representation, Community Leadership and Participation: Citizen Involvement in Neighbourhood Renewal and Local Governance; J Gaventa; prepared for ODPM; 2004.

47 Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships: a baseline of practice, full report; University of Warwick, Liverpool John Moores University, University of the West of England, Office for Public Management; May 2004.

48 The Community Participation Programmes: draft Second Interim Evaluation Report; University of the West of England, COGS, Liverpool John Moores University; July 2004.

49 National Audit Office survey.

50 The Community Participation Programmes: First Interim Evaluation Report; University of the West of England, COGS, Liverpool John Moores University; November 2003.

39 Community Empowerment Networks are beginning to influence revisions to local neighbourhood renewal strategies and funding decisions

"We're heavily involved in the commissioners' briefs for the next round of [the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund]. I've been working on one particular brief for community buildings and at least 4 members of that task group are from the community out of about 6, so there's high representation." (East Durham)

"By Year 3 we were in a much better position. We were involved in some of the thematic partnerships and so we could have a much greater impact on the Year 3 proposals." (Manchester)

"When I first looked at it I just thought, a strategy that says what we're all thinking and not only is it a good strategy but it actually ties into a big pot of funding." (West Cornwall)

Source: National Audit Office interviews and focus groups

Public sector members can help to redress an imbalance of power on Local Strategic Partnerships

3.13 Public sector members can act to reduce the imbalance of power in Local Strategic Partnerships by providing practical support to community members in a range of ways.

- West Cornwall Local Strategic Partnership has a voluntary sector chair in contrast to the usual public sector chair.
- Community members need meeting papers in good time in order to understand the issues and consult more widely on them. Some community members have found difficulty in extracting papers from public sector organisations, fuelling suspicions of deliberate tactics to limit influence.
- The location of a meeting affects its dynamics. The Birmingham Central Strategic Partnership has met in a community hall, the West Cornwall Local Strategic Partnership uses a hotel and East Durham Local Strategic Partnership meets in various community centres.
- Some Community Empowerment Networks alternate evening and daytime meetings to avoid excluding people who can only attend at certain times. Local Strategic Partnerships need to show similar sensitivity to the needs of community members.
- Late changes to meeting times are disruptive for community members who may have to reorganise domestic arrangements. Public sector organisations can help community members by keeping meetings as planned.

3.14 The commitment of public sector organisations is vital to the success of neighbourhood-based sub-networks. In Barnsley and West Cornwall, public sector bodies that belong to the Local Strategic Partnerships send representatives to meet Community Empowerment Networks in their neighbourhood-based sub-networks. Birmingham City Council is devolving its own management structure down to "districts" and is establishing corresponding Local Strategic Partnerships as sub-groups of the City Strategic Partnership. Birmingham Community Empowerment Network has developed matching sub networks that send members to Birmingham's Local Strategic Partnerships. The match between how Birmingham Community Empowerment Network and Birmingham's City Strategic Partnership are devolving their structures is a promising model, although the initiative is too new to show clear results.

Community Empowerment Networks can do more to enhance their influence on Local Strategic Partnerships

3.15 Community Empowerment Networks can help to manage tensions by demonstrating how they contribute to democratic processes, for example:

- area sub-groups of the Birmingham Community Empowerment Network promoted hustings for electoral candidates before local elections; and
- councillors in Easington see the East Durham Community Network as a potential source of new electoral candidates.

3.16 Community Empowerment Networks and the teams that support them can also take specific steps to help community members be effective in Local Strategic Partnerships. Community Empowerment Networks can clarify community members' roles and commit to reimbursing expenses such as travel and childcare incurred in attending Local Strategic Partnership meetings. Support teams can provide briefings to help community members understand meeting papers and determine a line to take on them (**Figure 40 overleaf**).

40 West Cornwall Community Network has a written agreement setting out how it supports its members on the Local Strategic Partnership

West Cornwall Community Network members on the Local Strategic Partnership sign an agreement that includes a job description. Members on the Local Strategic Partnership receive a written declaration explaining the support they can expect from West Cornwall Community Network staff, which includes:

- making relevant information available;
- offering training as needed;
- organising briefings and support before Local Strategic Partnership meetings together with events where members can develop their knowledge, skills and experience;
- assisting members in carrying out communication responsibilities between the West Cornwall Community Network, its members and the Local Strategic Partnership board and sub-groups; and
- reimbursing expenses incurred through representing the West Cornwall Community Network.



Source: National Audit Office analysis

There are five key challenges in enabling Community Empowerment Networks to influence neighbourhood renewal

3.17 We found as a result of the research described in this part of our report that there are five key challenges in enabling Community Empowerment Networks to influence decisions about neighbourhood renewal (Figure 41).

41 There are five key challenges for community influence

Ensure adequate representation	Community Empowerment Networks should be represented in proportions high enough to exert influence on Local Strategic Partnership boards and sub-groups.
Be clear about members' roles	Community Empowerment Network members on Local Strategic Partnerships should receive "job descriptions" to give them clarity about their roles.
Redress the power imbalance	Public sector members and secretariats should take steps to redress power imbalances in Local Strategic Partnerships. Practical points include rotating chairs so no organisation dominates, meeting papers published well in advance and meetings held at times and places that enable community members to attend and feel at ease.
Support the members	Community Empowerment Network staff should give members support including a secretariat, training, reimbursement of expenses and briefings before Local Strategic Partnership meetings.
Work with local democracy	Community Empowerment Networks enhance their impact where they work alongside existing community engagement initiatives driven by local authorities and public sector providers.

Source: National Audit Office analysis

Appendix

Methodology

- 1 We designed our study to answer two questions.
 - Is the single Community Programme reaching all target groups?
 - Is the single Community Programme helping groups to influence neighbourhood renewal?
- 2 We obtained the views of local communities, organisations administering the single Community Programme locally, local public sector organisations, regional Government Offices, central government departments and national organisations representing participants and interested third parties.
- 3 We used six case study areas (described in the main report) to examine the single Community Programme in detail. We selected case study areas to obtain a broad view of different kinds of deprivation and ways of tackling it. Our case study areas:
 - span six of England's nine regions from the south west to the north east;
 - cover the highly varying circumstances faced by small semi-rural districts and major cities;
 - include areas that have experienced colliery closures; and
 - embrace coastal resorts that face specific issues like seasonal employment.
- 4 We commissioned MORI to undertake some of our case study work. MORI has a group specialising in regeneration. MORI also brings expertise in telephone surveys and in visiting estates and neighbourhoods to explore local opinion.



Telephone surveys of grant recipients

- 5 MORI conducted telephone interviews with 30 grant recipients from each case study area using a structured questionnaire that we designed with MORI. Lists supplied by the grant-administering organisations provided the sampling base. Responses were unprompted wherever possible, with results back-coded into categories to enable quantitative analysis. MORI provided an analysis of top-line results, a summary report, a cross-tabulation of each question against every other and a database of responses in SPSS, which we analysed further.

In-depth interviews and focus groups with community groups

- 6 MORI undertook more in-depth investigations within a single ward in each case study area. We selected wards at the more deprived end of each area that showed a reasonable level of single Community Programme activity as measured by grant value. MORI consulted 17 groups in each area (16 in one area where fewer groups appeared to operate), selecting interviews or focus groups to suit individual circumstances and using a structured topic guide that we designed with MORI. The basis of selection was to ask grant recipients for further contacts, use desk research such as national databases and employ on-site "snowballing" to gather leads from a variety of local sources such as libraries and community halls. The aim of this research was to explore general awareness within communities of the single Community Programme and to understand the types of projects in which community groups were engaged.

Survey of Local Strategic Partnerships

- 7 We conducted a survey of Local Strategic Partnership Board members for each of our case study areas. The survey sought views on the contributions of community members of Local Strategic Partnerships.

In-depth interviews and focus groups with organisations closely involved in the Single Community Programme

- 8 We visited each case study area, holding focus groups with Community Empowerment Networks and Local Strategic Partnerships. We interviewed local authority leaders, Chief Executives and other staff. We interviewed staff at regional Government Offices and organisations administering the single Community Programme. We used structured topic guides for our focus groups and interviews and we recorded our work onto tape for further analysis including transcription of focus groups and key interviews.



National Evaluation

- 9 We kept in close touch with ODPM's national evaluation of the single Community Programme, run by Professor Marilyn Taylor at the University of the West of England, and examined its results.

Third party views

- 10 We sought views from relevant third parties through interviews and by inviting written responses.

Organisations interviewed

Community Development Foundation
 Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations
 Institute of Development Studies
 National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service
 New Economics Foundation
 Urban Forum

Organisations submitting written responses

Action with Communities in Rural England
 Centre for Local Economic Strategies

Interviews with officials

- 11 We interviewed staff from ODPM, in particular from ODPM's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, and we interviewed staff from the Home Office.

Literature review and record examination

- 12 We conducted an extensive literature review, focusing on academic research and documents issued by ODPM and other government departments. We examined financial records held by ODPM and organisations administering the single Community Programme.