
DRAFT

A Strategy for Community Renewal
in Dudley



[INSERT PARTNER LOGO'S]

INTRODUCTION – WHERE WE HAVE COME FROM

Community renewal in Dudley is everybody's business and our Community Renewal Strategy gives new direction and energy to all that we have achieved together in our work to renew our communities in Dudley.

Over time, we have been particularly concerned with those communities where many problems - with skills and jobs, poverty, high crime levels, educational under-achievement, poor health or problems with housing and local environment – come together to create overall deprivation.

We have recognised that these problems are strongly related to one another. We know that these problems cannot be solved by any one of our agencies or sectors working on our own.

For this reason, through our Dudley Community Partnership (DCP) we have a Community Strategy which gives shape to the overall priorities for Dudley Borough as a whole.

The theme of “stronger communities” with an associated aim of “narrowing the gap” are key ideas that influence this Strategy. As part of the DCP, we have all contributed to community renewal through our daily work and activity.

Examples of this contribution in Dudley are

- *individuals* acting as neighbours, friends, carers or democratically elected representatives of their local communities in our Dudley Council
- *groups* coming together in communities with a common interest
- *voluntary organisations* working to meet agreed aims
- *statutory services* provisions supporting communities in many aspects of our lives
- *businesses* creating economic prosperity

We have also had a specific service – the Neighbourhood Management Service - which has given focus for the

- achievements of all of us as partners in our contribution to renewing communities in Dudley
- Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
- specific Dudley Neighbourhood Management Service team plans

National influences which have informed our approach include:

- The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (2000)
- Strong and Prosperous Communities (2006)

In Dudley, the work of the team over time has also been informed by the developing understanding of the needs and priorities of Dudley communities and the way all of us work together. It has also been informed by wider evidence such as

- the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Light Touch national neighbourhood management programme
- Measurement, Evaluation & Learning and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit - strategy development and community audit
- the Local Government Centre at Warwick University - peer review, bench marking and evaluation
- The National Neighbourhood Management Network - benchmarking and professional development
- the Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force - contributions to national policy
- formal Review in 2007 through the DCP commissioned, Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor “Silverlock Review.”

More broadly, we have learned from our experience of the Council's Corporate Performance Assessment and through this strategy we are building on our work to date in co-ordinating our work on deprivation. Our experience has also helped us understand the barriers that can occur in working for community renewal. Some have been:

- Joining-up strategies at local level through responding to co-ordination and duplication challenges
- Numerous small projects and issue of sustainability eg Single Regeneration Budget, City Challenge
- Links between neighbourhoods
- Links between physical regeneration and community renewal could be stronger
- Recognition of the contribution of all partners even within a given lead agency situation

So, we have recognised there has been a need for change. This change is aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the way that we work together. We see the idea of community renewal as a natural progression from the neighbourhood management / neighbourhood renewal approach with a stronger focus upon people based outcomes such as skills development, improvements in health and in enabling and engaging local people, businesses and service providers to develop productive relationships between and within communities, businesses and neighbourhoods, which encourage social entrepreneurship, talent and succession planning and unlock the potential of individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities.

We recognise too, that the restructuring of the approach to community renewal requires coordination, using and building upon established connections, networks and relationships to engage community and voluntary groups along with services and individuals in the renewal of our communities.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Where we are now is determined by important changes in Dudley and beyond and include:

- Strengthened community and voluntary sector arrangements
- Neighbourhood Policing / PACT arrangements
- City Strategy and Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Plans
- Childrens Centres and extended schools services
- Wider public sector changes such as Council re-modelling and integration of two Primary Care Trust

We are also influenced by wider factors from central and local government policy direction such as

- the need to tackle worklessness
- giving local people and communities more say, influence and power to improve their lives
- changing approaches in equalities, diversity and difference
- the enhanced community leadership role of elected members
- deepening our understanding of Dudley as a place

Our strategy reflects a “bottom up / top-down” approach. It is “bottom-up” because our understanding is informed by the will of our Elected Members, the views of all of us as partners and the local knowledge of our staff and communities about their areas and the priorities of all concerned.

It is “top-down” because we can now draw on the experience of work we have done with amongst others, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation; MEL and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit strategy development and community audit; and the Silverlock Report.

Given this context, we have developed the following values and principles which we will use to inform our approach to the place we need to be in Dudley.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES
Community Renewal

- Is everybody's business and so requires shared commitment to improving quality of life for all people but especially those in less advantaged areas
- improves coordination of communities and partners activities to avoid duplication and ensure success through co-operation and collaboration
- is about social inclusion
- helps develop genuine community engagement and leadership such as through elected members and respects what is already in place in terms of community networks and relationships
- makes a difference at local level and is flexible, responding in different ways in different places
- recognises that some communities of place or interest may need more support than others to engage in the social and economic life of the borough
- needs long-term commitment – community renewal is a continuous process and relies on the self determination of individuals and communities and their engagement in the process

services and community umbrella organisations in the strategic issue of

neighbourhood delivery and addressing in deprivation, its main driver is worklessness.

Whereas community renewal operates in the broader context of regeneration and community development and brings together the employment focussed and people- based outcomes (better health, less worklessness, more skills , higher educational attainment), with place- based outcomes (such as an improved environment, better housing , improved community safety).

Community renewal processes are based on social inclusion, community empowerment and engagement as well as coordination of approach and activities to achieve sustainability.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

Our strategy is borough-wide. It recognises that there are areas of acute deprivation that require concentrated focus. In developing a community renewal approach, we are making a concerted undertaking to unite partners at all levels and particularly at senior levels in focusing on deprived neighbourhoods and enabling all of us through joint strategic planning and delivery, to focus on the needs of community localities across the borough, with particular emphasis on addressing deprivation within the borough of Dudley.

A Vision of Community Renewal for Dudley

The factors which affect the effectiveness of regeneration and renewal are the capacity of the community and services to do business together and how these are brought together in partnerships which add value to services and to the development of the community and individuals.

The community renewal process brings together the elements of: geographic communities and services to work in effective partnerships to address local needs. The Community Renewal Strategy is the vehicle for the co-ordination and a structured approach to building on and developing productive relationships which engages community and voluntary groups, individuals and service providers in improving the quality of life.

The process produces the community renewal outcome and is visible in the development of individuals, the capacity of community and voluntary groups, the responsiveness and aptness of services to the local situation and the beneficial relationships between them; there is renewed interest in civic affairs increased cohesion and social capital and greater participation in civil responsibility as well as improvements in quality of life and reduced relative deprivation.

Renewal of communities is long term, though the end results are more sustainable and there is more added - value in terms of new ways of working,

community and service provider capacity and efficiencies through the avoidance of duplication.

Our mission is

To renew our communities in Dudley so that no one is disadvantaged by who they are or where they live

Approach to Implementation and Delivery

- establishing a Community Renewal Steering Group for representation of all agencies and sectors who can engender cohesion across major strategies and action plans
- providing an Area Community Renewal Officer for each grouping of community localities identified,
- preparing an overarching community plan for those localities in consultation with Area Committees alongside local governance frameworks for local areas ie neighbourhood partnership arrangements
- aligning our work to City Strategy areas in the wards identified as being the most deprived in terms of worklessness
- aligning our work to the broader direction and steer from the area committee areas of Halesowen, North Dudley, Stourbridge and Brierley Hill
- Promoting the role and activity of Community Centres as vital hubs of their communities and supporting community associations, groups or individuals to recognise and take opportunities to lead, engage, develop and realise social and economic productivity
- Supporting and developing the role of elected members as community champions in developing plans for their areas
- analysing local data and changing priorities as needed based on community geography

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- listening to the views of local people and groups and providing an engagement framework for local people and services to work together in partnership.
 - Bringing together community-based teams and task groups to support the active involvement of partners and communities in achieving their local objectives including the developing Dudely Community Partnership Community Engagement Strategy
 - Supporting and developing community governance at neighbourhood and community level to complement engagement and activities
 - Supporting and encouraging the responsiveness of service providers and their ability to engage in the community renewal process
 - Working with all parties to improve the quality of life of people living in the borough and in particular those in areas of deprivation

Role of Elected Members

Elected Members derive legitimacy as democratically elected representatives of the communities of geographically defined places across Dudley. Their commitment to community renewal is clear through their interest in serving the people of their communities. Their role is further underpinned by the white paper “strong and prosperous communities”, the central government guidance “Vibrant local leadership” *The Local Government Act 2007* has at its core, the emphasis of a change of relationship – between central government and local government and between local government and communities. Central government will radically reduce targets for local government and introduce a lighter touch inspection framework. *‘This means a stronger role for councils to lead their communities, shape neighbourhoods and bring local public services together’.*

The contribution of elected members to this Community Renewal Strategy is therefore of paramount importance and is made through:

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- *The Cabinet* - in its determination of policy
 - *Area Committees* - in the way they can support local co-ordination and agree Community Renewal Plans for each area
 - *Scrutiny* – through use of the opportunity to scrutinise the Community Renewal Service through the Select Committee on Community Safety and Community Services.
 - *Local involvement* of elected members through partnerships, local surgeries and individual case work

Role of the Area Community Renewal Officer

The role of the area community renewal officer acts as the point for coordination and planning of the local approach to activities, Area Community Renewal Officers have no direct service- specific delivery responsibilities but do have a responsibility for information sharing, for facilitating the work of partners locally, and bringing them together in partnerships which add value and address the complexities of deprivation in renewing our communities. They have a supportive role in relation to elected members, keeping them informed, briefed and involved.

In order to undertake this, Area Community Renewal Officers will network widely within communities and build trust with community groups, voluntary agencies and local service providers, identifying qualitative factors behind the statistics. From this they will produce (or review) the local Community Renewal Plan, align it to city strategy or area committee direction and will promote, support and advance the participation of services and communities in addressing the issues and needs identified.

Area Community Renewal Officers rely on the cooperation of service providers and community groups to support this approach, to share information and to maximise value, reduce duplication and costs through collaboration not competition.

Links across the Dudley Community Partnership (DCP)

The Community Renewal Strategy is intended to be a shared approach by all the partners of the DCP and as such the steering group is led by the Council but linked to the DCP planning structures and is an integral part of the DCP framework for delivering the objectives of the borough challenge .

The strategy seeks to provide a consistent framework for engagement and governance of community renewal. It is concerned with connecting communities with services and elected members at community locality level (through neighbourhood partnerships and community anchor organisations), at area committee level to provide some local accountability. This is underpinned by engagement and response through the health Links, neighbourhood policing /neighbourhood management alignment and Dosti networks.

EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT

The Community Renewal Performance Management Framework (PMF) currently measures community and partner perceptions of interventions, including cost savings, added value and satisfaction; community engagement is managed in accordance with nationally derived standards.

The community renewal activities in identified neighbourhoods are currently managed through a neighbourhood project plan. The overall PMF and will be refined to reflect achievement of local community renewal plans and will apply to all those neighbourhoods covered by the Community Renewal Service

Overall progress against “narrowing the gap” in deprivation is measured on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership by the Strategic Intelligence Team in the Council’s Chief Executives Directorate and is a long term target. The acceptance of proxy measures for progress is a matter for determination and refinement within the framework

All Elected Members will assist evaluation and measurement through the contribution of the nominated elected members on the Community Renewal Steering Group, local co-ordination through agreed Community Renewal Plans for Area Committee and the scrutiny process in the Select Committee on Community Safety and Community Services.

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