
REPORT

WORKING IN NEIGHBOURHOODS, ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND LOCALISM

LESSONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Liz Richardson

This report sets out the findings of the Working in Neighbourhoods project, which the JRF ran in Bradford Metropolitan District from 2009 to 2011.

Drawing on the views and experiences of practitioners and stakeholders in Bradford and other localities, it offers useful lessons for local authorities, neighbourhood practitioners and communities on the potential benefits of effective working in neighbourhoods.

In particular, the report looks at how working in neighbourhoods can:

- strengthen partnership working and enhance creative problem-solving in neighbourhoods;
- facilitate more active citizenship and manage the perceived risks of handing over control, assets, decision or services to communities;
- steer citizens towards greater civic responsibility and pro-social behaviour, and make models of service provision more empowering;
- exploit the opportunities offered by devolution for local tailoring of services to neighbourhoods' different needs, priorities and identities;
- mitigate any risks within devolution of unhealthy competition between neighbourhoods; and
- promote community leadership roles for local elected members.

CONTENTS

	Executive summary	04
	Summary of implications for local policy-makers	09
1	Background to the Working in Neighbourhoods project	12
2	History of neighbourhood working in the UK and Bradford	15
3	Working in neighbourhoods and partnership working	19
4	Working in neighbourhoods, active citizenship and the Big Society	26
5	Working in neighbourhoods, devolution and localism	44
6	Working in neighbourhoods and roles for local councillors	54
7	Conclusions – what is the future for working in neighbourhoods?	61
8	Where next? Implications for local policy-makers in the UK	68
	Acknowledgements	72
	References	73

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

1 Bradford Metropolitan District Council neighbourhood working structures	18
---	----

Tables

1 Lines of inquiry for the WIN project	14
--	----

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report looks at the role that working in neighbourhoods can play in delivering effective partnership working, generating more active citizenship and civic responsibility, maximising the opportunities created by devolution and helping local councillors to play strong community leadership roles

Background to the Working in Neighbourhoods project

- The JRF Bradford Working in Neighbourhoods (WIN) project ran between 2009 and 2011. It brought together an action learning network (ALN) of active residents, community and voluntary organisations, elected members of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (MDC) and of parish and town councils in the district, as well as council officers and other public sector professionals. The aims of the project were to learn and debate together, explore how to adapt practice in neighbourhood working across the Bradford district and share learning more widely.
- The WIN project offered a relatively rare opportunity to study neighbourhood working across a whole local authority area. It used an action research approach, so that the discussions and feedback from the ALN sessions formed part of the evidence base for the project. Lines of inquiry for the WIN research were structured around themes for the project as a whole. These included: the purposes of neighbourhood working; developing partnership working; active citizenship; relationships between neighbourhoods with different needs and groups within these neighbourhoods; and roles of elected members.
- The report is based on contributions from around 250 neighbourhood practitioners in Bradford and other areas of the UK.

History and national policy context

- There is a long tradition in the UK of working in neighbourhoods. The concept of the neighbourhood endures despite changes in policy fashion and neighbourhoods continue to be seen by central government as a site for devolved decision-making and action. However, the neighbourhoods

agenda has sometimes been relatively marginal for central and local government compared with other priorities.

- The scaling back of central government regulation and targets for public sector organisations generates new demands locally to agree local priorities and actions, paying attention to residents' preferences.
- Neighbourhood working can be designed with distinct rationales or goals, which can be civic, economic, political and social. These aims are potentially complementary but achieving them together is challenging and could be helped through the use of different structures and scales of operation.

There were many positive examples of progress in Bradford on neighbourhood partnership working with environmental services, police, health and youth services

Working in neighbourhoods and partnership working

- Dealing with complex non-routine neighbourhood problems with multiple, interrelated causes, complicated patchworks of players and competing interests requires flexibility and creativity at a very localised level. Collective problem-solving in the fragmented environment of neighbourhoods necessitates someone to co-ordinate action between stakeholders and to oversee the process – to 'hold the ring'.
- A core focus for neighbourhood working in Bradford and other places in the UK has been to improve services and partnership working – in line with the social and economic rationales referred to above. There were many positive examples of progress in Bradford on neighbourhood partnership working involving environmental services, police, health and youth services. Neighbourhood wardens also played a key role in mediating between communities and services.
- In Bradford two key factors that helped promote success in partnership working were: consistent and regular yet flexible and proactive structures; and skilled individuals and mature, in-depth relationships between people. Practitioners' skills were underpinned by understanding and first-hand experience of issues in neighbourhoods, as well as 'local knowledge'.
- Working in neighbourhoods requires creative problem-solving skills to broker the messy realities of complex neighbourhood issues. One term for this role is 'civic entrepreneur', and there were several examples of civic entrepreneurs undertaking creative problem-solving in Bradford. Frontline practitioners were better able to engage in creative problem-solving if they were given enhanced responsibility and encouraged to engage in critical reflection on their own practice. There was scope and encouragement for further development in these areas in Bradford.

Working in neighbourhoods, active citizenship and the Big Society

- Another core aim of neighbourhood working in Bradford and elsewhere, has been to encourage active citizenship – this is the civic rationale. This is underpinned by a desire to promote voluntarism, mutuality and self-help in order to balance the power and dominance of the state. The UK has a healthy base of citizen activity but there is the potential for this to be expanded.
- Citizens in Bradford have been involved in a wide range of voluntary activities including community clean-ups, fun days, youth activities, interethnic festivals and social events for older people. In addition, neighbourhood working has developed and supported different forms of engagement in a way that suited each neighbourhood.

Bradford MDC was actively seeking ways to enhance the contributions citizens could make in communities

- In Bradford and other local authority areas, attempts were being made to use more participatory methods within formal neighbourhood structures such as 'marketplace' formats and there were examples of creative outreach. Bradford MDC was making a fundamental shift, from a consultative approach with the onus on public sector for resolving problems, to a joint problem-solving approach with communities.
- Using an Active Citizens Framework, which sets out seven possible roles for active citizens, Bradford MDC was actively seeking ways to enhance proactive roles citizens could play in their own communities. However, there were concerns about the risks involved in transferring more control, delivery, assets and decision-making to communities. In Bradford and other local authorities, transferring control could involve an acceptance of a higher degree of risk and a more informal approach than public sector bodies were used to. Emerging from Bradford and elsewhere, there were examples of and proposals for new ways to manage these risks to allow more community control.
- Participants in the ALN, across the public, voluntary and community sectors, wanted to gain a more sophisticated understanding of the full range of reasons for the variation in levels and types of community capacity and community activity in Bradford. Such an understanding could be used to enhance practitioners' ability to remedy gaps in active citizenship.
- More effective ways to encourage pro-social behaviours were of keen interest to people working in neighbourhoods, both in Bradford and a number of other local authority areas. Increased public provision within a conventional model of service-delivery was seen as having sometimes displaced citizens' own efforts.
- Across the UK, several public sector organisations, including Bradford MDC, felt that they faced a challenge and an opportunity to change models of service provision from ones that induced dependency to more facilitative and agency-enhancing approaches. To make this change, organisational cultural change and innovative techniques were required.
- Promising approaches to behavioural change seen in the WIN research included ideas based on behavioural economics (notably the 'nudge' principle) as well as ambitious attempts at whole-system redesign.

Working in neighbourhoods, devolution and localism

- Devolved decision-making means that decisions are made at the level, and in the interests of, the neighbourhood.
- Critics of devolution, both in the Bradford WIN research and more widely across the UK, argued that the process present risks, including that neighbourhood interests will be prioritised at the expense of the needs of areas as a whole, that unhealthy competition between places and groups will be exacerbated, that community tensions will be worsened and that strategic interests will be undermined.
- However, devolving decision-making, powers, assets and budgets to bodies or structures below the local authority level could also offer an opportunity to enhance neighbourhood working by providing scope for local tailoring that recognises the distinct needs, priorities, identities and heritage of different neighbourhoods.
- Across the UK, other commentators have argued that how far devolution leads to greater inclusion or exclusion partly depends on how debates about the issues mentioned above are brokered. There were positive examples from Bradford and elsewhere of ways that inclusion had been

promoted through devolution based on facilitation, deliberation and greater transparency.

- Allocation according to need does not necessarily resolve questions of fairness, as the definitions of 'need' and 'fairness' may be contested. In Bradford and other places, people on different sides of debates about the allocation of resources appealed to the concept of fairness to justify their claims, but defined this variously as equality of inputs or equality of outcomes.
- Devolution should be to the most appropriate scale. What constitutes the appropriate scale depends on which of the goals or rationales is being pursued (civic, economic, political or social). Looking at examples across the UK, including Bradford, locality- and neighbourhood-working structures can be complex and multilayered in order to suit multiple rationales and functions. However, this can present a confusing terrain for laypeople and there are trade-offs to be made between structuring to the most appropriate scales and having more parsimonious structures offering simplicity to citizens.
- Examples from Bradford illustrated the wider point that, in neighbourhoods, there is a complicated patchwork of existing local bodies and structures to which powers, services, budgets and/or decisions could be devolved. Research suggests building on what already exists, but there are unresolved questions about how to guarantee sufficient accountability for both elected member-led and community-led bodies. Parish and town ('local') councils offer a model for democratically elected bodies at neighbourhood level. Bradford MDC has long offered its support for local councils within its jurisdiction but elsewhere, relationships between principal authorities and local councils have been fractious at periods in the past.

Working in neighbourhoods and roles for local councillors

- Working in neighbourhoods had many party-political aspects and there were clear 'political' rationales for neighbourhood working. In Bradford, the support and active involvement of local councillors played a crucial role in the success of neighbourhood working, with many areas of good practice, but councillors' skills were variable. There were gaps in both the capacity of members and the support systems for them that made it harder to achieve effective community leadership. These gaps included: action being taken without reliance on funding; poor information flows between council officers and elected members; and underdeveloped roles in arbitrating between competing or conflicting interests within a ward.
- There were also positive examples of councillors in Bradford challenging, mediating and brokering between different groups on sensitive issues of faith and ethnicity.
- Good quality relationships between councillors, citizens and community groups were critical. In line with the outcomes of other research carried out in the UK, respondents in Bradford felt that councillors were expected to make decisions, to conduct their business in a transparent manner and to be accountable to the full range of interests. They were also expected to be communicative and visible in wards, to exercise more control over a wider range of budgets than they currently do and to get things done. Citizens were expected to have reasonable expectations, play their part in democracy and work jointly with councillors. Both sets of parties wanted to build more open, honest, trusting and communicative relationships in order to move forward together on a shared agenda.

Conclusions – what is the future for working in neighbourhoods?

- Practitioners were concerned that reductions in public spending might damage working in neighbourhoods. At the same time, national policy was often largely irrelevant to those working, living and practising in neighbourhoods. One tension in centrally directed programmes for decentralisation is that each locality decides how to respond.
- If initiatives to transfer power to communities are implemented begrudgingly, their success is likely to be undermined. Communities and public authorities therefore need to work together to find creative solutions to the challenges posed by devolution, acknowledging that with the mobilisation of citizens comes the potential for challenge. One possible measure of success of any new community rights is that they are not used, and that communities and public authorities find creative solutions together before the need to invoke the right formally arises.
- Public institutions play a crucial role in mobilising and responding to citizens. Transferring more control to communities requires a rethink of how a variety of neighbourhood bodies can be held accountable and how local authorities can retain oversight and democratic accountability in a more diffuse organisational environment. It also requires new approaches to risk management.
- Neighbourhood workers act as intermediaries between their institutions and communities and negotiate within their own institutions to make things happen. Service-led approaches neglect the efficiencies generated by more flexible, responsive and engaged ways of working between services, citizens and other partners. Challenges for the future include: finding ways: to protect this role within public sector bodies; to ensure an appropriate balance between ground-level flexibility and strategic interests of organisations; for practitioners to engage in greater critical reflection on their own practice, that of their organisations and the practices of others; and for the public sector to work together with other partners to bring in more capacity.
- Devolution offers opportunities for deliberation and more open and transparent debate with citizens about the understanding and application of fairness in resource-allocation between neighbourhoods. There was potential for elected members to play a leadership role in these complex and controversial debates.

SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL POLICY-MAKERS

Working in neighbourhoods and neighbourhood working

- Local practitioners, especially those in the public sector, need to set their own prescriptions and guidelines for how to develop and implement policy on active communities and devolution. (Chapter 7)
- Local authorities need to create or maintain a neighbourhoods agenda as a key strategic approach, recognising that neighbourhood working generates added value for citizens and services. Managers of public services should consider the evidence that a purely service-led or public services approach neglects the efficiencies generated by more flexible, responsive and engaged ways of working between services, citizens and other partners. (Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7)

Working in neighbourhoods and partnership working

- Neighbourhood-working structures need to be flexible, proactive, relationship-based and grounded in local knowledge. (Chapters 3 and 7)
- Organisations should nurture civic entrepreneurs at the front line and create spaces for more creative problem-solving. This may include moves such as: not punishing apparent failure and allowing flexibility, risk-taking and experimentation; conferring enhanced roles and responsibilities on frontline staff; checking that performance targets are aligned with organisational goals and desired outcomes; and considering bringing in new organisations and capacity from different sectors. (Chapters 3 and 7)
- In addition to brokering and mediation skills, effective neighbourhood working requires skills development to broaden the community-outreach capacity and creative problem-solving abilities of practitioners. This work is also enhanced by a capacity on the part of practitioners to engage in critical reflection about their own practice, that of their organisations and the practices of others, as well as the possibility for individuals to make constructive challenges to approaches taken within their own and other sectors. This may benefit from independent facilitation and/or skilled management, as well as network- and relationship-building and safe spaces for reflection and sharing. (Chapters 3, 4 and 7)

Working in neighbourhoods, active citizenship and the Big Society

- Public bodies should look at the opportunities for system redesign, including: whole-system redesign to increase responsiveness; reconfiguration of delivery models to enhance community responsibility and pro-social behaviours; and transformation of neighbourhood-working structures into new models of joint problem-solving.
- Active citizenship could be further enhanced by focusing on a broad range of ways that citizens get involved in neighbourhoods – what this report calls ‘working in neighbourhoods’ – alongside the more formal structures and processes entailed in ‘neighbourhood working’. (Chapter 4)
- Formal or official neighbourhood-working structures could generate additional community contributions by moving from traditional consultative approaches to joint problem-solving. Deliberative techniques are one way to achieve the common ground required for joint action. (Chapter 4)
- The community and voluntary sectors could develop a clearer case for their unique strengths in providing services and facilities to communities. They should also be open to reviewing their own practice to ensure strong connections with other residents in the wider community. (Chapter 4)
- The pool of active citizens could be expanded by tapping into ‘willing localists’ – people who are not currently involved in their neighbourhoods but who express an interest in becoming more active. Community engagement and development needs to be based on more sophisticated intelligence as well as what is already known about levels of participation across different groups and drivers for participation. Existing intelligence should also be used to inform specific intervention, particularly those targeted at areas with lower community activity and capacity, with different needs, with different cultural mixes and with different histories of intervention and engagement. (Chapter 4)
- Both the transfer of control to communities and greater community action could be facilitated by a more courageous approach to risk by the public sector. Possible ways forward include: stronger and more tailored relationships with neighbourhood groups that better inform risk-management strategies; more tailored ways to demonstrate the care that communities or neighbourhood groups will take in their activities; and communities sharing risk and accountability as well as rewards. (Chapters 4 and 7)
- Responsible citizenship could be strengthened through the exploration of a broad range of complementary approaches to citizen behavioural change, including those based on the concept of ‘nudge’. Nudge tools need to be used within a wider redesign of systems for co-production of outcomes that benefit society as a whole, and other ideas for reconfiguring relationships between citizens and the public sector. (Chapter 4)
- Public sector organisations need to respond constructively to citizen mobilisation, whether this is invited or not and whether it presents a challenge or not. These organisations also need to start conversations about the possibility of transferring decision-making to citizens long before the need to make such transfers becomes urgent, or has to be enforced by communities. (Chapters 4, 5 and 7)

Working in neighbourhoods, devolution and localism

- The perceived risks of devolution need to be balanced against the significant opportunities it offers for identifying localised and tailored responses to neighbourhood issues, building on local assets of identity and heritage and organising collaborative debates with communities and others about balancing the needs of specific neighbourhoods with the needs of the local authority areas as a whole. (Chapters 5 and 7)

Transfer of control to communities could be facilitated by a more courageous approach to risk

- Appropriate facilitation, deliberation, careful brokering and greater transparency could produce more inclusionary outcomes from devolved decision-making and mitigate some of the potential risks of exclusionary pressures such as nimbyism. (Chapters 5 and 7)
- There are opportunities to debate and deliberate with citizens on different definitions of fairness in resource allocation. The risks of unhealthy competition between localities, which are carried within devolution, could be mitigated by a more transparent debate over who gets what and what citizens accept as being fair between places with different capacities and needs. (Chapters 5 and 7)
- Neighbourhood-working structures should be designed with greater clarity about their goals and devolution should be tailored to appropriate spatial scales for different goals. Any new structures should work more sympathetically with what already exists while the structures for neighbourhood working as a whole should be as parsimonious as possible and simple enough to be comprehensible to laypeople. (Chapters 5 and 7)
- Devolution must allow for representation of the full range of interests, including those of powerless groups. This strongly suggests the need for other forms of accountability to complement democratic accountability and for devolution to multiple bodies and/or stakeholders, or to single bodies representing multiple interests. (Chapters 5 and 7)

Working in neighbourhoods and roles for local councillors

- A debate is needed with elected members of each local authority on how power can best be shared or transferred, while retaining accountability. Councillors could be better supported in their community leadership roles. These roles include arbitrating between conflicting interests and providing leadership on difficult issues of resource-allocation between places and groups. (Chapters 5, 6 and 7)
- Relationships between members of local authorities, community groups and the public could be strengthened by greater transparency and visibility in local democracy at a neighbourhood level, more control for elected members at a neighbourhood level and more effective back-up systems and information flows from officers to elected members. Local councils' neighbourhood workers could play a key role in making this happen. (Chapter 6)

Messages for national policy-makers

- Central government could offer support, guidance and leadership for action at the local level on the tough and shared challenges facing local public sector organisations and local government. This should be delivered through the most appropriate bodies.
- In particular, there could be more help on: sharing practice on how best to encourage creative problem-solving on the front line; data and analysis to improve understanding of differences in levels of participation between groups, as well as the drivers of participation for those groups; intelligence on effective interventions to stimulate citizen participation; ideas and examples of successful mechanisms for risk-sharing between community-based organisations and local government; support for organisations attempting whole-system redesign; clarification of different forms of accountability; trials of approaches to broker and mediate debates within devolution; and exemplar activity to deliberate ideas of fairness with citizens.

1 BACKGROUND TO THE WORKING IN NEIGHBOURHOODS PROJECT

In 2004, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) made a ten-year commitment to working with the city and people of Bradford as part of its longstanding commitment to addressing poverty and disadvantage across the UK. Between 2009 and 2011, JRF ran a project on Working in Neighbourhoods (WIN), which brought together an action learning network (ALN) of active residents, community and voluntary organisations, elected members of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and of parish and town councils in the district, as well as council officers and other public sector professionals. The WIN project used an action research approach, so that the discussions and feedback from the ALN sessions formed part of the evidence base for the project.

The overall aims of the WIN project were to:

- improve dialogue, learning, sharing and understanding between the various agencies and individuals involved in neighbourhood work in the area covered by Bradford Metropolitan District Council (MDC);
- offer a safe space for reflection, learning, challenging current practice and debate;
- help to change and improve Bradford's neighbourhoods agenda by contributing ideas about how to improve policies, practices and outcomes in ways that make a real difference in neighbourhoods; and
- share lessons from the project widely within Bradford and also with other local and national players.

Within the overall WIN project, the research component offered a relatively rare opportunity to study neighbourhood working across a whole local authority area. The ALN also offered the scope for more in-depth debates between researchers and neighbourhood practitioners and a higher level of challenge (in both directions) than is usually possible. Bradford is a large local authority area with its own set of social and economic challenges (Richardson, 2011a). The area is extremely diverse ethnically, with an ethnic minority population of 26% in 2007. It is also diverse in other ways – for example, two-thirds of the area is classified as rural and one third as urban (although the

majority of the population lives in the urban centres). It has experienced many different small, area-based initiatives in the past and the authority had chosen a universal coverage approach to working in neighbourhoods.

Over an 18-month period, the ALN met for a total of ten sessions. Participants were drawn from a cross section of neighbourhood practitioners from five key groupings: Bradford MDC neighbourhood services staff; other services active in local neighbourhoods; voluntary organisations working in neighbourhoods; resident activists; and elected councillors. Participants were selected on the basis of soundings made with key partners. In total over the course of the project, the ALN involved 35 different people. The ALN met for ten sessions, where the group showcased practice from within Bradford, heard from neighbourhood practitioners from different areas of the country, brought in national commentators to discuss new policies and policy proposals and went out on two study visits to Newcastle and Birmingham.

The WIN research used an action research approach, so that the discussions and feedback from the ALN sessions formed part of the evidence base for the project. This report is based on:

- A desk review of relevant documentation on working in neighbourhoods in Bradford, academic literature and national policy documents.
- Discussion and feedback from the ten ALN sessions that took place between March 2010 and September 2011 involving a total of 35 participants from Bradford and external speakers from nine organisations from across the UK.
- Feedback from a Bradford MDC workforce development event facilitated by the WIN team in December 2010 involving 15 council staff who had not participated in the ALN.
- Research visits to all five of Bradford MDC's constituency areas between July 2010 and March 2011. The visits involved: interviews with council officers, community and voluntary organisations and elected members; tours in the neighbourhoods; and observations of meetings. In total, 50 people were interviewed during these visits.
- One-to-one strategic interviews with 46 key stakeholders in Bradford.
- Scoping interviews with five local authority staff and other preparatory work for two study visits, to Birmingham and Newcastle, as well as input from over 60 other contributors during the study visits.
- Face-to-face and telephone interviews in August 2011 with 13 national commentators operating in the fields of neighbourhood working.
- Feedback from the advisory group convened by the JRF to help steer the project. This Project Advisory Group (PAG) was made up of key individuals from the Bradford district, national experts and practitioners from other local authorities.

Quotes from respondents have been anonymised. It was recognised in the WIN project that the lines of membership were blurred, as many respondents had multiple sectoral memberships. Each respondent is identified by a number and their primary sectoral membership in the context of the project. These sectoral memberships (and the initial used to denote them) are:

- public sector paid staff, including social landlords (PS);
- voluntary sector paid staff, including those working for national organisations (VS);
- community activists, volunteers and residents (CS);
- elected members, including councillors for Bradford MDC and parish and town councillors within the local authority area (EM).

Feedback from cross-sector group discussion in the ALN and the PAG is attributed as (ALN) and (PAG) respectively.

Lines of inquiry for the research were structured around a set of themes that operated as the framework for the project as a whole, including the ALN sessions and research. These were formulated in the initial development of the project by JRF, based on strategic interviews with 36 people from across a range of sectors and subsequently amended by the WIN team in discussion with the ALN and PAG. Table 1 shows a summary of the lines of inquiry and where they appear in the report.

Table 1: Lines of inquiry for the WIN project

Line of inquiry	Chapters
What are Bradford's neighbourhood structures designed to achieve?	2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
How do neighbourhood working and the work of formal or statutory neighbourhood structures relate to each other?	3
How can partnership working between agencies in neighbourhoods be strengthened?	3
How do residents get involved in neighbourhood activities and organisations?	4
What techniques can help communities to take responsibility for themselves?	4
How can resources be focused on the most deprived neighbourhoods?	5
How can neighbourhoods be empowered to play a positive role in mediating conflicts between different groups in their area?	4 and 5
What should the role of elected members be?	6

2 HISTORY OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING IN THE UK AND BRADFORD

This chapter gives a brief overview of what is meant, for the purposes of this report, by ‘working in neighbourhoods’ and ‘neighbourhood working’. It looks at what these types of activity are designed to achieve and their historical background, both across the UK and in Bradford in particular

The definitions of ‘neighbourhood working’ and ‘working in neighbourhoods’ are contested and the two generic terms are applied differently in different local authority areas with no clear common usages amongst practitioners (Durose and Richardson, 2009). The box below sets out the loose definitions of the terms as used in this report.

Definition of terms

Working in neighbourhoods: any activity that focuses on, or is based in a locality or neighbourhood and that involves citizens, informal groups, community and voluntary sector organisations, public bodies and other agencies either working together or independently with the aim of improving quality of life of residents who live there.

Neighbourhood working: a subset of the activities described above, where there are specific processes and/or structures based on the neighbourhood or locality as an organising concept and dedicated to engaging citizens and improving, tailoring or co-ordinating services.

Rationales for neighbourhood working

Arguably, the size, scale, definition and organisational set-up for neighbourhood working should be determined with reference to its aims and purposes. According to Lowndes and Sullivan (2008), these aims and purposes (or rationales) fall into four broad categories:

- civic goals, which are about community action and empowerment;
- economic goals, which focus on more efficient service delivery – for example, through shared services and effective problem identification;
- political goals, which aim to deliver greater transparency and democratic accountability and give citizens more of a say over services; and
- social goals, which aim to ensure that services are designed around citizens' needs.

The policies of the previous and current (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010) governments have reflected these rationales and, in theory, neighbourhood working can contribute to all four simultaneously. However, achieving the aims in a complementary way is extremely challenging, as they each require very different operational and governance structures and scales of operation. In practice, tensions and problems are often caused by different structures designed to achieve one of the rationales not meshing with the others. The civic rationale is most often neglected (Durose, *et al.*, 2011).

A historical perspective

It is useful to understand the historical context for neighbourhood working and many writers have argued that work in neighbourhoods is less effective if lessons from the past are ignored (Stewart and Taylor, 1995; Taylor, 2011; Rutter, *et al.*, 2012). Policy development in this area is recognised in the literature as a messy, non-linear process (Gains and Stoker, 2011) with a lack of reference to previous experience. This lack of organisational memory, condemning bodies to repeat their past mistakes, was described by one respondent in this research as “corporate Alzheimers” (VS1). Another respondent used the phrase “organisational ADHD” (PS1) to describe the way that organisations can seem to flit from one initiative to another.

Nationally, there have been numerous barriers to effective community engagement in neighbourhood schemes over the years (McArthur, *et al.*, 1996; Low, 1999; Goodlad, *et al.*, 2005; Barnes, *et al.*, 2008; Foot, 2009). One respondent coined the terms “consultivitis” and “promisification” (VS2) to describe some of these barriers, where communities are consulted numerous times and a response is promised but little changes as a result. These issues have been cited as a barrier to sustained and meaningful work in neighbourhoods in other research (Duncan and Thomas, 2000). For residents across the UK who may have seen initiatives come and go and whose neighbourhood has been the subject of various interventions, this can create cynicism and mistrust. This was the experience in some neighbourhoods in the different authorities included in the WIN research.

There are three key strands that can be seen as feeding into current understanding of neighbourhood working: community development; regeneration; and municipal approaches. There are lines of continuity between community-development work in the past and current forms of neighbourhood working. For example, a number of neighbourhood workers who are still practising in the field began their careers working in community

development in the 1960s and 1970s. As one worker in Bradford put it: "I am a battle-scarred veteran of 40 years community development." (PS3)

Across the UK, many community workers feel that their practice remains underpinned by community-work principles and approaches. Community work is done in neighbourhoods of all types, but has tended to be concentrated in areas of deprivation, particularly when the work is grant-aided. In parallel, a vast, eclectic, diverse and constantly changing community and voluntary sector has grown up and developed around a variety of grant regimes focused on a range of area types, from the inner cities to isolated rural villages and taking in more and less affluent neighbourhoods.

While not discarded, previously 'independent' or truly non-directive and value-based community development work has seen itself translated, mutated, incorporated, co-opted, diverted or integrated into regeneration. While it remains a distinct discipline, much community work has been subsumed within wider regeneration activity. The two have co-existed since the era of Urban Aid in the 1970s and 1980s. However, during the 1980s and 1990s, regeneration started to overtake stand-alone community work in the development of larger-scale programmes for economic, social and latterly, environmental change. For a variety of reasons, regeneration started to fall out of favour with policy-makers from around the mid-2000s and the round of programmes ending in the late 2000s have not as yet been replaced with anything comparable to the large-scale, ringfenced investments seen in the past. There is growing interest in the idea of 'community resilience', or what some are calling 'ready for anything' communities, as a new way of thinking.

While regeneration has focused on addressing deep-rooted socio-economic issues in distressed places and communities, over the past two decades, there has also been an emergence of municipal approaches across more and less affluent neighbourhoods. For example, there was a sharp rise in area-based arrangements in the UK in the 1990s, with the formation of area committees and other neighbourhood-based structures as devolved bodies with budgets and decision-making powers delegated from local authorities (Lowndes, *et al.*, 2001). These arrangements should be seen against a backdrop of more general programmes for local government modernisation, reform of public service delivery and the focus on generating efficiencies in public services, as well as the maturation of arrangements for partnership-working at neighbourhood and local-authority levels and moves towards democratic renewal (although these strands were not necessarily always explicitly linked in practice).

One way in which community development, regeneration and municipal approaches have come together and been reconfigured is through the development of neighbourhood management, which is perhaps the most identifiable precursor to neighbourhood working. However, neighbourhood management differs from neighbourhood working in that the model of a dedicated neighbourhood manager and neighbourhood team, as well as some aspects of the process, are diluted in neighbourhood working.

History of neighbourhood working in Bradford

Bradford MDC has a long history of working in neighbourhoods, which broadly follows a similar pattern to that described above and has evolved over the last 20 years. This is detailed in the WIN interim report (Richardson, 2011a) and includes: a history of community development work in the district and a thriving community and voluntary sector supported under various grant regimes, particularly from the 1970s on; area-based regeneration initiatives

There is growing interest in the idea of 'community resilience', or what some are calling 'ready for anything' communities, as a new way of thinking

in some deprived neighbourhoods; and devolved decision-making, starting with the introduction of area panels in 1991. Current work by Bradford MDC has partly followed on from earlier work on neighbourhood action planning between 2002 and 2007 by an arms-length local strategic partnership called Bradford Vision. The MDC built on the strengths of this work and adapted it to be more fully integrated into political decision-making and other structures for neighbourhood working. There continues to be a variety of work in neighbourhoods in the district involving community and voluntary sectors, parish and town councils and other public sector bodies and agencies. For example, during 2009 and 2010, the police, health services and one social landlord realigned their boundaries to be co-terminus with those of the council and each agency has made its own provision for neighbourhood working.

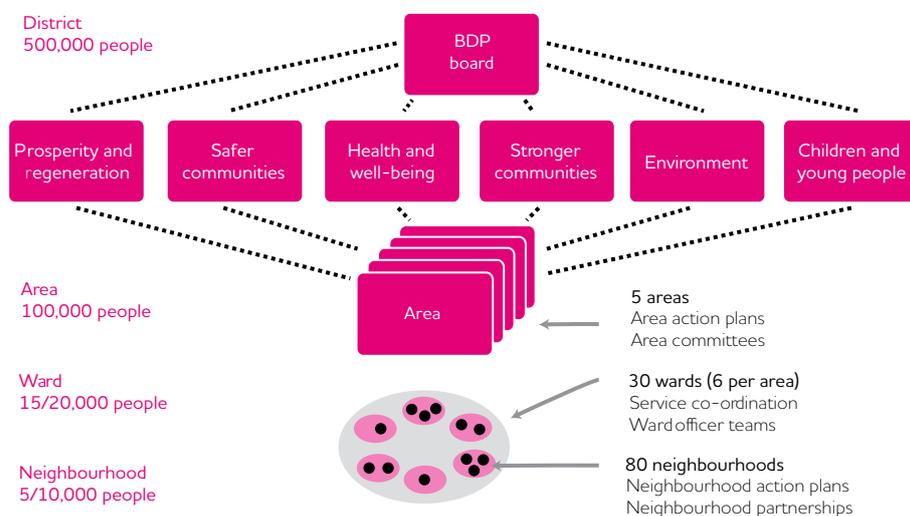
The WIN interim report also described the current Bradford MDC structures for neighbourhood working operated by its neighbourhood services department, while recognising that other council departments also do work in neighbourhoods. An overview of the structures is shown in Figure 1.

These structures were adapted to their current format in 2008 and operate across the authority at three levels: area, ward and neighbourhood. There are five constituency 'areas', each of which comprises six wards; the population for a ward is between 15,000 and 20,000, so an area's population is around 100,000 people. The areas have area committees for elected members and area offices, which co-ordinate area action plans. Each one also has a 'clean team' from the council's environmental services and a new wardens team that integrates several previously separate uniformed services including park rangers, neighbourhood wardens and parking enforcement officers.

At ward level, there are ward action plans and multi-agency ward officer teams (WOTs), which are named ward leadership teams (WLTs) in those areas where elected members are involved. Neighbourhoods, which have a population of around 5,000, are the site for neighbourhood forums and neighbourhood planning.

The main changes that have been made to these structures since the interim report was published are reductions in staff numbers, the integration of uniformed services and a move from neighbourhood action planning to ward-level action planning.

Figure 1: Bradford Metropolitan District Council neighbourhood working structures



3 WORKING IN NEIGHBOURHOODS AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

This chapter describes progress made on partnership working in Bradford and examines the key factors of success. It looks at the role of creative problem-solving in neighbourhoods, focusing on 'civic entrepreneurship' and enhanced roles for frontline staff

One of the core aims of neighbourhood working in Bradford is to improve services and therefore outcomes, for neighbourhoods (Richardson, 2011a). This has also been a core focus for schemes in other parts of the country (SQW Consulting, 2008). Other schemes have been successful in securing long-term engagement with a range of service providers to alter and improve mainstream services (SQW Consulting, 2008), although some partners (such as the police or environmental services) have been more involved than others.

The contribution made by neighbourhood or locality working to improvements in public services also needs to be considered in the context of a long-term programme of public service reform in the UK. There has been a steady upward trend in public service performance (Martin, 2008) and, under the last government, there was sustained investment in public services for several years. It is therefore arguable that neighbourhood working has made progress, in part, on the back of these other factors.

Progress in Bradford

Some positive examples of public service improvement and multi-agency partnership working that were observed in Bradford in the course of the project are summarised in the box below. The MDC's neighbourhood services department's area offices were central to many of these activities, performing a co-ordinating role to bring partners together, organise projects and help with

community engagement. As with neighbourhood management initiatives in other councils, the police and the environmental services department had been key partners.

Examples of partnership working in Bradford

- 1** In one neighbourhood, environmental services worked together with resident volunteers to create an allotment on a disused patch of land near a primary school. Environmental services helped with layout, flagged the land and put in benches. The residents have taken over management of the allotment.
- 2** Days of action were organised as an additional service for neighbourhoods with high levels of fly-tipping and other environmental hazards. They involved a wide range of partners, including street cleansing (environmental services), schools and community groups and the police, co-ordinated by neighbourhood workers and neighbourhood wardens. The days of action involved working intensively in an area over a short period, going from street to street, clearing up litter and dumped items and giving people contact details for disposing of any future bulky refuse, as well as dealing with abandoned cars, fire risks, trees in need of attention, broken streetlights, illegal business practices, abandoned properties and graffiti.
- 3** One neighbourhood management scheme introduced a resident-led 'street reps' initiative. Street reps were residents who volunteered to act as the 'eyes and ears' for their street, helping neighbours and reporting issues to the relevant council services. When the ringfenced funding for the neighbourhood management scheme came to an end, the street reps were supported by neighbourhood wardens and ward co-ordinators from the neighbourhood services department.
- 4** Neighbourhood services had set up an environmental steering group in one neighbourhood, involving a local community centre, local community development project, a community association, adult and youth volunteers, the fire service, a social landlord, the council departments dealing with rights of way, community payback and business volunteers. The steering group delivered clean-ups of problematic pieces of communal or neglected land, including a local park, the recreation area around a youth centre, a small memorial garden and former railway line walkways. This activity shed light on other issues experienced by residents, such as high rates of burglary and attempted burglary, trespass and criminal damage to residents' properties backing onto the railway line and around the youth centre. This then led to further action by neighbourhood services, drawing in other agencies.

In several areas, neighbourhood services gave credit to the police for their participation in environmental audits (PS4). One respondent said: "Every operation, the police are seen as part of it, even though the environment is not really their remit, but they've got buy-in." (PS5) For their part, the police saw these activities as part of their wider problem-orientated policing approach. By tackling nuisance small fires, for example, they had been able to bring about reductions in anti-social behaviour.

To take another example, when the ALN first met, the police had been struggling to convince members of the public to report crimes they witnessed in Bradford's city centre. One respondent described the progress made over the following year and a half, resulting from intensive joint work with neighbourhood services on small-scale community outreach:

“There was apathy in the city centre [...] but I see this as changing hugely over the last 18 months. It’s credit to [name of council neighbourhood worker]. Now there’s a small band of people taking an active interest, who are prepared to be seen, be visible. They are across all age ranges and cultures.” (PS6)

The respondent felt that the key to this achievement had been “consistency, familiarity, trust, relationship-building”, adding that, “if residents see the same face month after month there’s an evolution over time” (PS6). Similar points were made by respondents in other settings in Bradford (PS7).

Despite barriers to involving services that do not conventionally work on a neighbourhood basis, such as health services, there had been joint work between Bradford MDC’s neighbourhood services department and the local primary care trust (PCT). This included organising preventative health events and joint health partnership meetings. Health staff said: “We rely on each other.” (PS8)

Neighbourhoods can contain many overlapping structures and neighbourhood working had started to make connections between these to avoid duplication and maximise the impact of the work being done. For example, potential tensions between the council’s neighbourhood services and children and young people’s services teams had been overcome by establishing liaison between ward officer teams (WOTs) and children and young people locality staff, as well as links at senior manager level through district office teams. This allowed the services to work well together and avoid overlap (PS10). There had also been joint events between extended services working in schools with parents, the PCT and neighbourhood services, such as family fun and health days. One social housing provider used local area planning in neighbourhoods separately to neighbourhood action planning by the council, but then linked up via the WOTs.

Success factors – structures and people

There were two key factors in the success of neighbourhood working in developing partnership projects in Bradford: structures; and people and local knowledge.

Structures

Bradford MDC’s WOT structures had been put in place in 2008 to facilitate joint working and were functioning effectively in many ways, although there was some debate about whether to increase their flexibility and to adopt a more proactive approach (Richardson, 2011a). Some WOTs had undertaken proactive work, such as mapping hotspots using police data on repeated complaints about anti-social behaviour in particular locations, fire incidents and other council data on environmental problems in order to target resources.

One of the local authorities that was the subject of a study visit as part of the WIN project also demonstrated a proactive approach in this area:

“We did an analysis of anti-social behaviour hotspots then mapped youth provision and put the maps against the hotspots. The provision wasn’t in the right place. So then we influenced providers as well as giving extra money for additional provision e.g. a mobile bus which went to hot spots. We got 900 young people over 12 months. They all filled in surveys, so we used that to develop the youth strategy.” (PS12)

People and local knowledge

While practitioners agreed that getting the structures right was important, they felt that the human element – the people involved in the structures,

Respondents suggested that individuals' ability to work in neighbourhoods was reliant on first-hand knowledge of the issues and direct experience of neighbourhoods

their different ways of approaching things and the relationships between them – had a critical qualitative impact on the success of partnership working (PS15; PS16; PS17; PS18; PS19). One respondent (PS20) talked about how Bradford's neighbourhood working structures operated differently, with disparities in the approach taken by different area offices, which they felt was driven by the quality of individual officers involved.

The importance of individuals in organisations has long been acknowledged. More specifically, respondents suggested that individuals' ability to work in neighbourhoods was underpinned by first-hand knowledge of the issues and direct, on-the-ground experience. This local knowledge and experience was additional to the wide range of skills needed for working in neighbourhoods, including project management, knowledge of the council and technical, organisational and communication skills.

Local knowledge has been identified as a critical resource in neighbourhood working (Foot, 2009; Durose, 2009) and has been defined as a "kind of non-verbal knowing that evolves from seeing, interacting with someone (or some place or something) over time" and a "very mundane yet expert understanding from lived experience" (Yanow, 2004). In Bradford, respondents had an instinctive understanding of the value of local knowledge as a key resource for working in neighbourhoods. For example, community and voluntary sector participants argued that their lived experience gave their perspective greater validity. While not necessarily recommending that neighbourhood-focused staff should live in the neighbourhood where they worked, respondents from some agencies suggested that not living locally could result in these staff being "out of touch" (PS21). It was suggested that there were various ways to acquire improved first-hand knowledge, including direct experience, face-to-face discussions with people who had direct experience, or spending time out and about in neighbourhoods: "In [name of local authority] you didn't meet or see any neighbourhood wardens. You see ours [in Bradford] out and about. They're face-to-face and on the ground. They know loads about our community." (CS1)

"I'd love to be out every day, but I get taken away by riots and murders. But I like going out because it's neighbourhood policing. It's about relationships. I like to deal with people I can influence. It's leading by example." (PS22)

In one ALN session, participants asked whether elected members should live in the wards they represented. The consensus was this had as many disadvantages as advantages – for example, it would restrict and reduce the quality of the pool of candidates for election. However, some elected members suggested that detailed local knowledge was harder to obtain if not gained by direct experience:

"When residents talk about an issue [if you live in the ward] you know what they're on about. Even if you walk round, it's not the same as living there and being exposed to the same things as the people who live there." (EM1)

The importance of the relationships between individual members of staff involved in partnerships and in facilitating neighbourhood working was also acknowledged. One police officer (PS13) had asked themselves: "What justifies my driving to the WOT, staying there for the meeting and driving back?" They had continued to attend because they felt that face-to-face meetings created strong service accountability and a real incentive to follow up on actions agreed there ("It's embarrassing if you've done nothing."), in addition to the more general benefits derived from people working together to solve problems. A neighbourhood worker said WOTs were useful because "you can't shirk

responsibility by not answering an email” (PS14). Respondents from other agencies suggested neighbourhood working, in particular through the WOTs, had made their service more visible and effective at the local level, helping them to link to other services in order to meet residents’ needs. They credited the connections at WOTs and the group dynamics as making collective solutions easier to generate and adding value by agencies doing “that bit extra” (PS11) to help each other out. The ALN itself was greatly valued by participants for its contribution to fostering a sense of teamwork across sectors and building relationships between people who were working in neighbourhoods.

Creative problem-solving in neighbourhoods

Conventional approaches to neighbourhood working in the UK acknowledge the importance of individuals and relationship-building within institutional structures. However, there is another perspective that puts even greater emphasis on the human aspects of partnership working. Drawing on Lipsky’s groundbreaking work on street-level bureaucrats, Durose has argued that adaptive responses by frontline workers are entrepreneurial and innovative responses to the “muddle and mess” (Goss, 2001) of the circumstances found in real-life neighbourhoods. In this analysis, individual frontline workers in neighbourhoods are called “institutional entrepreneurs” or “civic entrepreneurs” (Durose, 2011). Neighbourhood working is thus an opportunity to re-empower frontline staff and shift their role from what one national commentator (VS3) called “galley slaves” to that of creative problem-solvers.

Some members of the ALN recognised themselves as fulfilling this role: “We are the intermediary. We stick heads above the parapet and be that dogsbody and gofer in between public services and the public themselves.” (ALN10) Bradford MDC environmental and neighbourhood services staff described their work as “the best job I’ve ever had” (PS23), because they enjoyed working with people as well as the degree of responsibility entailed in their ability to take decisions on the spot. Frontline staff liked the challenge of facing a variety of situations and tackling them with a ‘can-do’ attitude. One of the local authorities that was the subject of a study visit claimed that sickness levels had been reduced as a result of a move to give more responsibility to frontline environmental staff (PS24). Across the UK, frontline staff in other local authority areas have benefited from being given enhanced roles and responsibilities alongside supportive management.

Neighbourhood workers in Bradford engaged in creative problem-solving, brokering between communities and agencies and within their own organisations, particularly where responsibilities for neighbourhood issues were spread across different services. They described their role as: “front-of-house for the council [...] we’re the bit in the middle of the hourglass” (PS17; PS18); a “middle man [...] we get shouted at even if it’s not our problem” (PS14); and making “oil and water mix – we broker the jiggery-pokery” (PS3). One elected member articulated how they saw the role:

“Society would dissolve without people’s endeavours. Neighbourhood working is about testing the pulse of a neighbourhood and seeing what to do to channel [endeavours] [...] and build a community’s ability to stand on its own feet and exercise its muscle, advocating for its interests in the political process.” (EM2)

To some, neighbourhood working sometimes felt like “just another layer of bureaucracy”; they said: “I’m not sure why we have this extra layer of

co-ordinators there. Wouldn't it be better if the public just went straight to the service in question to get it sorted?" (CS2).

However, some of the critics of neighbourhood working also praised neighbourhood workers for their contribution to resolving complex neighbourhood issues, such as the management of reservoirs on wetlands, involving multiple partners, including planning services and specialist private sector companies.

There were also examples of problem-solving and brokerage that could be viewed as explaining why the "extra layer of co-ordinators" was necessary. In Bradford and other local authority areas, organisations did not necessarily implement policy evenly and there could be resistance from specific departments or agencies. In one case, neighbourhood services had overcome objections from one service to broker joint youth sessions involving a parish council, the MDC youth service and the police. In another instance, there were debates over competing possible uses of underused or derelict land and buildings owned by the council: "There's always a bit of friction between what the community wants and what [name of council department] wants because it is about capital receipts versus community use." (EM3)

Neighbourhood services had worked with these departments and local community groups to set a precedent for the more flexible use of council assets, as well as transferring some assets to community control. In some cases, community mobilisation to take over management of underused or derelict assets had initially been resisted and neighbourhood workers had put in intense effort to negotiate a more positive response. This work is described in more detail in Chapter 4.

Expanding creative problem-solving in neighbourhoods

As described above, there were already many excellent examples in Bradford of creative problem-solving by MDC neighbourhood workers. Respondents in the WIN research pointed out that there are also opportunities for local people and others outside public agencies to play a civic entrepreneurship role. At the same time, there was potential for an expansion in creative problem-solving across all neighbourhood-based staff in different agencies across the district. This would require people working in neighbourhoods (across sectors) to understand the large, but sometimes underexploited, scope for flexibility and initiative-taking that existed. According to a respondent, in one sector: "[Neighbourhood workers should have] a can-do attitude, look for solutions and have an overview. Some have this in spades, others struggle." (PS26)

The potential of neighbourhood practitioners to become effective problem-solving civic entrepreneurs was also reliant on their capacity to engage in critical reflection and their confidence in taking the initiative. These practitioners need to be able to identify gaps in their own practice, their organisations' practices and the practice of others in order to improve and play a fully problem-solving role. There was an open debate within the ALN group about the need for greater reflection to enhance working in neighbourhoods and about benefits of critical challenge: "Negatives are positives – it holds a mirror up to yourself and makes you think. It stimulates ideas. You learn from negatives." (ALN4)

In the ALN, participants from all sectors could occasionally become defensive of their respective sectors and organisations. However, overall, the ALN achieved its aim of creating a safe space for honest debate, the frank exchange of views and critical challenge within the group. This was welcomed and enjoyed by the group as a refreshing experience. At the outset of the WIN

project, the participants were keen to celebrate positives about Bradfordians and the district and to avoid “running themselves down” (PAG1), but they were also willing to look at working in neighbourhoods with fresh eyes. Relationship-building, supportive networks and development opportunities, like those offered by the Bradford ALN, have been used elsewhere for similar ends, particularly because change in people’s professional or voluntary practice is often complex and challenging to achieve.

Another part of expanding creative problem-solving involves increasing the level of flexibility allowed by systems while managing the associated risks. For example, interviews and observations in the WIN research suggested that there was already scope within Bradford MDC’s existing management systems for staff to exercise a high degree of flexibility. After a discussion about how to take new behavioural change ideas forward, officers were concerned about being given authorisation to implement their ideas, prompting a senior manager to say: “Go off and do this stuff. You don’t need our permission!” (PS26). At the same time, some staff felt that, in some instances, their performance targets had not been amended to reflect the outcomes their service wanted to achieve overall and some could feel constrained by performance targets. For example, in a discussion about their inability to change the frequency and membership of WOTs because of their performance targets, staff in one area made the following comments: “We were attracted to the job because we like to be creative but we’re restricted [by performance targets]. We want to have localised and specific responses.” (PS18) In another example, council staff developed new ideas to solve neighbourhood problems, but worried that it was “difficult to free up time [to deliver the ideas] because we’re so focused on neighbourhood forums” (PS27). There were plans in Bradford MDC to amend performance targets to be more fully aligned with desired outcomes.

What degree of flexibility to allow staff is an age-old dilemma for organisations; it is also critical to working in neighbourhoods because this activity involves particular challenges arising from complexity and accountability, multiple players and the need for creativity. This question applies equally to voluntary and community sector organisations and to political groups, as well as to paid staff in the public sector. In the context of the public sector, one think tank has argued that occasional failure might be a risk of innovation but that “in the long run, the cost of risk-aversion is far greater” (Carr-West, *et al.*, 2011). Others have looked at the risk of system-failure across community involvement in different types of public services and concluded that experimentation needs resilient systems (Bovaird, 2011). In Bradford, there have already been significant moves towards performance management based on qualitative rather than not quantitative measures (for example, looking at the outcomes from neighbourhood forums rather than solely counting the number of events and attendees).

4 WORKING IN NEIGHBOURHOODS, ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND THE BIG SOCIETY

This chapter looks at the role of neighbourhood working in developing active citizens and responsible citizens. It explores issues of risk in transferring more control to communities, differences between more and less affluent areas in levels of participation and suggests ways forward to strengthen people's pro-social behaviours

One of the core aims of neighbourhood working in Bradford was to encourage active citizenship. This has also been a core focus for central government policy in different guises, during Labour's period in office and currently in the form of the 'Big Society'. At its heart, the Big Society is an idea about creating a more civically active society with, for example, citizens acting as good neighbours, donating time and money, involving themselves in decision-making and so on. While these may be worthwhile or unobjectionable ideas, the Big Society policy has been relaunched four times since the current government came to power and has been described in the press as a damaged brand (Neville, 2011).

Bradford MDC launched an active citizenship framework in 2009. It was relatively comprehensive compared with similar policy frameworks produced by other local authorities at that time. It set out seven possible roles for citizens:

- supporting local democracy (e.g. councillors, hospital board members, school governors, magistrates);
- volunteering (e.g. helping out a youth group, mentoring a new business);
- community and service user engagement with public services (e.g. attending neighbourhood forums);
- citizens working together in groups (e.g. residents' and community groups);

- campaigning and lobbying to make people aware of concerns;
- public fundraising (e.g. taking part in sponsored events); and
- good neighbours (e.g. putting someone's bins back).

Underlying recent interest in active citizenship across the political spectrum at national level is a belief that 60 years of state welfare provision, however well-intentioned, has eaten away at citizens' capacity and desire for mutuality and self-help. As the then opposition leader David Cameron put it in 2009: "The recent growth of the state has promoted not social solidarity, but selfishness and individualism [...] we need a thoughtful reimagining of the role [...] of the state."

These are not new ideas. William Beveridge, seen by many as the founder of the British welfare state, argued in 1948 for the importance of the "mutual aid motive in action" (Beveridge, 1948). He also recognised the state's role in nurturing "solidaristic [...] human motivations and their capacities for expression" (Kendal, 2009). In Beveridge's view, the state was to exercise self-restraint and voluntarism could balance the power and dominance of the state.

Working in neighbourhoods and active citizenship

In Chapter 2, it was argued that, although neighbourhood working has antecedents in community development work, many recent examples of this activity in the UK and Europe (Durose, *et al.*, 2011) have, in practice, neglected or failed to deliver on their civic goals. In other words, structures for neighbourhood working have not successfully mobilised citizens. Research shows that citizens are often misunderstood and marginalised by official structures and public bodies (Durose, *et al.*, 2009). In Bradford, there was also a perception on the part of some community volunteers who participated in the WIN ALN that there was a lack of recognition of their efforts, despite schemes to celebrate and reward such volunteers (ALN5) and that the public sector did not always listen or respond to their concerns and priorities. One respondent suggested: "They think if they ignore you, you'll go away, but we don't." (CS3) One result of this was that some people who continued to be active in the community were wary of the public sector and reluctant to acknowledge any weaknesses in their own organisations or sector, which then further exacerbated poor relationships. Stakeholders also suggested that citizens were less likely to get and stay involved if they did not feel that their efforts were valued.

There was a perception across respondents in the WIN research that formal structures for neighbourhood working had both strengths and limitations. For example, structures such as neighbourhood forums, or parish and town councils, were only some of a much larger number of ways that people engaged in their neighbourhoods. Ward officer teams (WOTs) and ward leadership teams (WLTs) focused on what agencies could do rather than joint action with residents or communities. Although area committees used feedback from neighbourhood forums and neighbourhood action plans, the committees themselves were not structured in a way that enhanced civic goals. For example, in common with many other local authorities, if residents in Bradford wanted to ask questions of the area committee, they had to notify the committee and post the questions in advance. One of the five areas ran their area committees as a public meeting, with three holding them in the town hall and one in the local council office. In one area, there had been an experiment to hold one meeting in a café, but this was not repeated.

Structures such as neighbourhood forums were part of a larger number of ways people engaged in their neighbourhoods

It was suggested that there was a danger of neighbourhood staff being diverted into “servicing the structures” (organising and chairing meetings, writing minutes and reports etc) as an end in itself, rather than tackling problems or carrying out community outreach: “We spend all our energy into getting people to meetings but not why they are there or what they do afterwards.” (PS29) Where neighbourhood forums had been run in a traditional style, they were seen by some as having “had their moment” and offering an inflexible, “old-fashioned” and “very dry” way of engaging people, when more effective alternatives were available that better suited citizens such as online engagement (ALN5). In other local councils, there were similar issues with neighbourhood structures, which did not engage a wide and diverse group of residents and could operate in a “traditional model” (i.e. a formal and hierarchical top-table meeting style and structure). In one of the local authorities that was the subject of a study visit, respondents said that it could be difficult to shift the traditional model, as those who attended meetings liked the format, but “that’s only the ten who turn up” (PS24).

Therefore, one role for neighbourhood working in Bradford – the formal structures – was to facilitate working in neighbourhoods – anything that encouraged people to get more involved in their communities and neighbourhoods. Community centres provided support for residents, families, younger and older people and these were seen by ward teams as critical facilities for the neighbourhood, even where there was no direct help from neighbourhood services. Ward co-ordinators and area development officers worked closely with community groups and help set up new groups. Area committees supported local clubs, associations, community projects and groups through small grants. Neighbourhood workers developed and supported all forms of engagement in a way that suited that area; examples of this work in a range of neighbourhoods with different levels of community capacity are shown in the box below.

Examples of how neighbourhood working in Bradford has supported community engagement

- 1** Door-knocking exercises, fun days and social events to persuade people to participate.
- 2** Neighbourhood wardens working with school children as ‘eco warriors’ in a deprived area doing neighbourhood clean-ups.
- 3** Joint work with voluntary organisations to set up social groups for older people, showcasing how they can be active and happy and give back to the community in later life.
- 4** Community organisations working together with ward teams to develop new projects, including a community farm in one area and a community orchard and nature park in another. Ward teams had helped organise consultation for the nature park, with around 300 people involved in an area that had previously had extremely low levels of engagement. They provided funding to fence and develop the site.
- 5** Community associations and centres working consistently with neighbourhood workers over many years, resulting in environmental improvements, upgrades to local shops, youth and leisure facilities and liaison between residents and the police.
- 6** Funding from neighbourhood working for a faith-based organisation which used volunteers to run a range of activities including parent and toddler groups, baby groups, sewing clubs, gentle exercise, coffee mornings, luncheon clubs, debt counselling and computer classes, as

well as *Jamie's Kitchen*-style cookery training for young people. This was part of a neighbourhood partnership between a local church, residents' association and neighbourhood services.

- 7 Neighbourhood funding supporting several 'Friends of Parks' groups.

Many other councils are trying new ways to engage people. As the Bradford MDC active citizenship framework recognises, one way people can get involved is through public fundraising. An analysis in the WIN research of how the council focused its work and resources across the framework showed that public fundraising was an area where more emphasis could be placed. An example of this from outside the district arose in the London Borough of Lewisham, where a public fundraising campaign was organised for a fireworks night in one neighbourhood after council funding was withdrawn. The campaign raised £25,000, of which £1,000 was raised through eBay auctions and £2,500 was donated by individuals through PayPal. Attendance on the night also increased (Governance International, 2011).

Working in neighbourhoods also included work across different sectors that contributes to quality of life, regardless of whether it was co-ordinated by neighbourhood working structures. Participants in the ALN gave a host of examples of projects that supported community cohesion and active citizenship, including intergenerational and interethnic projects led by the community, voluntary and faith sectors. On a deprived, largely white estate, a group of community volunteers were running a successful community centre. The elected member of the MDC for the ward in which this estate was located said of the initiative:

"One or two years ago there was nothing going on. Now it's a well-funded centre with 15-plus regular activities and clubs. [Name of community activist] has led this, it shows how important community activists are. It's a really good example of community action." (EM3).

Other examples are shown in the box below.

Examples of community and voluntary sector-led projects for cohesion and citizenship in Bradford

- 1 A dance-off between ballroom dancing led by older white people from a local Christian church and Michael Jackson-style dancing led by younger Asian people from a local mosque.
- 2 Volunteer drivers helping to give lifts to older or poorly people, for example to health appointments.
- 3 A lawn bowling league and tournaments to bring different people of different ages together.
- 4 'Cohesion cricket' bringing together young men from settled Asian and white British communities with newer arrivals from Eastern Europe.
- 5 Older people providing knitting demonstrations in a primary school, which led to the creation of a knitting club in the school.
- 6 A faith-based organisation running tai chi classes and a drop-in for isolated people. It had also been serving over 40 people a three-course meal every Friday for over ten years in its community café.
- 7 Befriending schemes, playschemes, gentle exercise classes, IT for older people and community centres operating as venues for health centres.

Moving from consultation to joint problem-solving

Bradford MDC had not given up on the potential of more formal structures to generate active citizenship. For example, there was already a solid basis of work in the consultative neighbourhood forums, with around 10,700 people participating in 2009–2010. Structures like neighbourhood forums offered face-to-face interaction and dialogue between residents and services as well as accountability mechanisms that were not available in other places for residents to hold services to account: “It’s an opportunity to refine ideas in a shared space, have discussion and hear more than one side of the story and debate over time.” (PS17)

Neighbourhood forums in some places were adapted to make best use of existing local resources, for example, coinciding them with well-attended parish council meetings. However, many neighbourhood forum meetings had traditionally been run on a conventional model where residents could come and report concerns to the council and council staff would then take concerns away and attempt to resolve them. This led to people sometimes becoming frustrated with neighbourhood forums when run in this way, as they became “grumble shops” (VS4) or “moan shops” (EM4; PS29). This criticism has been made of consultation structures in many other local authorities and across public agencies.

During the period of the WIN research, there were moves being made by neighbourhood services to change the way that they ran neighbourhood forums. Partly, this was about innovating some of the ways that consultation was conducted, including taking away a top-table format for meetings and using more participatory approaches such as café-style or marketplace formats, holding meetings in different venues and doing more outreach. This meant “not expecting people to come to us” (for example, going to talk to people at the school gates and having family open days) and generally “putting the fun back into it” (ALN5). There was recognition outside Bradford of the potential importance of making small changes to the ways things were done, including the use of walkabouts and carousel-style events at ward committees in Newcastle. An external speaker to the ALN from Yorkshire and Humberside said:

“We have many years of experience of the council not listening. So organisational behaviour was the thing we had to change – e.g. don’t sit on the same side of the table, split up residents and officers. It made the officers uncomfortable [initially, but] we ended up in a trusting relationship, able to be really honest.” (ALN8)

These changes placed different demands on neighbourhood workers to be more creative and go beyond simply running conventional consultation forums. In Bradford, some council staff, with backgrounds in community engagement and development, took readily to these new ways of working. Others were more reluctant to move out of their comfort zones. Innovative examples of outreach included workers using health events for women and children to generate community action from a low base of activity:

“We door-knocked in fancy dress. [Name of worker] dressed as a giant grape and my colleagues as strawberries. We got ten names of people keen to do more. And from that, [residents] got involved and organised International Women’s Day.” (PS14)

In addition to making meetings more informal and doing community outreach, there was a more fundamental change taking place in Bradford. The shift was

from a consultative to a joint problem-solving approach: "It's set up so it's oppositional between the council and the community. That's counterproductive to doing joint problem-solving." (ALN5) "Not 'you said, we did'. That creates dependency. It should be 'you said, we did together'." (PS3; PS15; PS29).

A new model was being proposed, whereby discussion would focus on how residents, officers, councillors and others could all make a contribution to resolving issues. There are similar moves towards joint problem-solving in other places in the UK such as the London Borough of Lewisham.

Although the local authorities involved in the research did not explicitly use the term, their new models were along similar lines to an engagement technique called 'deliberation'. Deliberation is a structured process of dialogue where the goal is common ground for action. Supporters of the technique argue that exchanging views in public, with mutual respect, makes it more likely that people will consider others' opinions, be more accepting and tolerant, less self-interested and more likely to compromise for the common good. By drawing on each other's knowledge, experience and capabilities, different and better solutions to problems are generated, leading to joint action (John, *et al.*, 2011). The principles underlying deliberation are also in line with UK frameworks for local councillors playing a community leadership role. For example, one political skills framework described negative behaviours that councillors should avoid, such as preferring "political 'blood sports' to collaboration". Positive behaviours included encouraging trust and respect by being approachable and empathising with others (IDeA, 2007).

The deliberation method has been used around the world, including in many thousands of national issue forums in the US, which use a process of 'think, deliberate, act'. There have also been deliberative polling and citizens juries on high-level policy issues in Canada and Australia. In England, deliberative techniques have been shown to resolve long-standing disagreements between public bodies, communities and local (parish and town) councils in a positive way that generated community contributions. For example, a process called Talk Toilets in South Lakeland, Cumbria, helped to resolve a decade-long stalemate over the future of public toilets in need of investment and threatened with closure. Talk Toilets could be seen as an illustration of a deliberative approach called "Getting to Yes" (Fisher and Ury, 1991). Another interesting deliberative technique is philosophical inquiry, an example of which in the UK was Contour Housing's Big Chin Rub community philosophy project. The project has changed residents' behaviour, encouraging them to become involved in or re-energised about civic and community activities (John, with Richardson, 2012; NWTWC, 2011).

Deliberative techniques can resolve long-standing disagreements in a positive way, generating community contributions

Active citizenship and risk

In Bradford, there were some key debates among respondents in the WIN research about the potential contributions of the voluntary and community sectors. Despite some positive collaborations between the public sector and voluntary and community sectors in the city, relationships overall were patchy. Joint work and trust were undermined by a number of things. Some community centres were perceived by stakeholders to be dominated by 'cliques' and as not fully open to all groups in the neighbourhood: "[Name of community centre] is supposed to be multicultural and for the whole community but mostly it's used for personal and private use by their own families and friends. [...] [It] is a boys' club." (EM5)

There was other evidence to suggest that this perception was shared by people in the wider community in the Bradford neighbourhoods where

the centres were based (ICPS, undated; Pearce and Milne, 2010). This was a highly contested perception and the circumstances varied widely between centres and neighbourhoods. Community volunteers in the ALN stressed their efforts to invite in and be open to the wider community. However, this was not necessarily the case in all areas and has been a well-documented phenomenon in other parts of the UK since the 1960s (Dennis, 1961). In Bradford, criticisms were also levelled at the amount of use some centres received: "Go to community centres and it's tumbleweed. They say they've got keep-fit classes and tea on Tuesdays. But you're a community centre so where is the community?" (PS25)

Debate about the relative effectiveness of the public and voluntary sectors extends beyond Bradford (Richardson, 2011a), drawing on the UK's long history of contracted-out or commissioned provision. Some voluntary organisations in Bradford were hungry for a bigger role in service provision. Nationally, there is an ongoing debate about the pros and cons of moving in this direction. On the one hand, it is argued that this would provide more appropriate locally tailored service-provision and an income stream for the voluntary and community sectors; on the other, some feel that it risks over-professionalising the sector, damaging its independence and undermining its ability to perform an advocacy role (CS4; ALN, various). Different forms of service provision suit different places. Bradford itself already has a significant amount of commissioned activity.

In the WIN research, concerns were expressed about risks in transferring control to communities generally – from transfer of services to voluntary organisations and community centres, to more informal community activities. Practitioners in Bradford highlighted their concerns about community-led action – for example, whether people would be adequately protected against risks to health and safety, how legal issues like Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks would be dealt with or how food-growing projects would handle contaminated land. Respondents also queried how projects dealt with community 'apathy' and organisational sustainability if they were dependent on a few active members. The ALN group were anxious about the lack of relevant skills among participants in community-led activities, the financial sustainability of projects and the costs of set-up and support. Lack of elected member involvement in community projects was raised several times. Where community or voluntary organisations were involved in delivering services, the ALN group questioned whether this provided sufficient democratic accountability. Respondents were concerned that some communities would not be accountable to the wider community. There were also doubts about the capacity and willingness of communities to take up offer of more responsibility and control.

These are legitimate and practical concerns. However, they focus on the risks on the community side – both in terms of demand from the community for opportunities to be involved and of the quality of what the community might supply by way of action. However, there is another perspective, which looks more at the demand generated by institutions for more community activity and the opportunities these institutions create for such activity to take place. While the public sector in Bradford and elsewhere is genuinely keen for communities to do more, sometimes the way it operates creates unintended obstacles that prevent greater levels of community-led activity.

A better understanding of levels of community demand can help public sector institutions to stimulate this demand in different places with more or less capacity for community-led action; this is explored in more detail later in this chapter. Institutions can also create scope for community action by supplying opportunities. This can involve the acceptance of a higher degree of risk than some WIN respondents, and many other local authorities, were prepared for.

as well as a willingness to transfer control to communities and a more informal approach to organising than some in the public sector were comfortable with. A respondent with experience of the public and voluntary sectors commented: "Bradford Council aims to engage with local democracy. The problem is they need to devolve power to the community, so the council feels threatened." (VS2)

Leaving aside the issue of sharing power, institutions like local authorities have a different approach to risk, as was illustrated by one respondent from Bradford:

"I have a heart attack if we involve volunteers as the council – the health and safety and legal departments. If they work for us, there's all the risk and liabilities. They're not supposed to do half of what they do. It links to the Big Society – there are implications for anyone in public organisations trying to recruit volunteers." (PS29).

In observations of meetings during research visits to the five Bradford areas, there were mixed messages about what agencies were comfortable with residents doing for themselves. Other JRF research, based in neighbourhoods in the North West, shows that some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods have the potential to come up with the most creative solutions to their own problems, but sometimes official public agencies overlooked this potential because it was seen as involving too high a risk (Lynn, 2008). Streets Alive, an organisation that promotes street parties, estimates that around half of the councils it deals with require insurance for a street party, when this is not necessary, because the councils are focusing on legal liabilities rather than risk per se.

In the WIN research interviews with national commentators, respondents talked about municipal vested interests as a barrier to greater community-led activity. One survey of senior people in local government (councillors and officers) by a national think tank found that "current approaches to risk management may stifle creativity and put obstacles in the way of innovation solutions involving the community" (Carr-West, *et al.*, 2011). The think tank argued that meeting the challenges posed by the current government's localism and the Big Society policy agendas will require:

*"innovation in service delivery and greater exposure to risk. Local authorities must develop their risk tolerance levels if they plan to devolve and delegate more services to the community [...] [T]hey must distinguish between risk avoidance and risk management." (Carr-West, *et al.*, 2011)*

The same survey found that, although councils already have a long history of delivering active citizenship and devolved control to communities, they were extremely risk averse and this was a barrier to further engaging communities. Half of the councils that responded to the survey described themselves as "risk averse", the other half described themselves as "risk tolerant", but the report suggests that councils are not actively or effectively managing risk. A report for London Councils (Travers, 2011) also found that there was a well-established and pragmatic approach by local government to the use of third-sector providers to deliver services. There were several examples of localism and active citizenship in action, such as the well-established mixed market in housing, a trust in one south London borough that manages heritage buildings, leisure trusts run by arms-length organisations and community transport services. However, the report cautioned that the difficulties of transferring risk, the fragmented nature of the third sector and variable quality and capacity would all need to be dealt with before London councils could be persuaded to significantly extend the use of "Big Society-type providers". Others have

concluded that greater co-production in public services will only come about if institutions are “ready for the scary world of ‘trusting’” citizens and communities (Bovaird, 2011).

Different approaches to managing risk

Lessons that ALN participants drew from neighbourhood and community engagement work in Birmingham City Council included “trusting residents to do things for themselves and removing barriers” and “start small, give residents more power” (ALN7). Illustrating a different approach to risk, one of the visiting speakers to the ALN from another region said:

“We sat round a [kitchen] table and said: ‘We need bottom up.’ We didn’t do a consultation, or a strategy – it is just community action. [...] Stop whinging and waiting for someone to give you a chequebook to start. [...] We’re bored to death of waiting for permission to get on and do things to improve our own lives. [...] This is the art of the possible. [...] There aren’t any [barriers] because I didn’t let it stop me.” (CS5)

Participants from other case study projects from outside the district who came to speak to the ALN also emphasised a more laissez-faire approach to community action. For example, when questions were raised about CRB checks for a good neighbours project, where residents made home visits to neighbours on a housing estate, the answer was: “We don’t do them, because it’s all informal. People ring the office and ask for help. The [council team] then match the volunteer good neighbours with people who need help.” (CS6)

Perceptions in Bradford that some groups were too risky for councils to support were being very slowly overcome, case by case. Key to this was the work of neighbourhood workers as civic entrepreneurs or problem-solvers, described in Chapter 3. Some examples of and proposals for managing risk more creatively from Bradford and elsewhere are shown in the box below.

Examples of and proposals for sharing risks and rewards between local government and communities

Examples

- 1 Neighbourhood workers in Bradford gathered information to demonstrate that neighbourhood groups would behave in careful ways, for example when managing council-owned land transferred into community control. One way to see this is as a community pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ). A PQQ is a process that organisations competing for contracts sometimes have to undergo where they provide supporting materials such as references from previous clients, audited accounts, annual reports, insurance certificates and equalities and environmental policies to demonstrate their fitness to work for the body awarding the contract. In Bradford the community PQQ process for small community groups, which did not have more formal documents, included elements such as council officers: visiting the groups in neighbourhoods; meeting the volunteers and seeing their work first-hand, asking the groups how they managed to bridge between different parts of the community and observing this directly

(for example, in community meetings); looking at informal skills audits of the groups and hearing more about the personal backgrounds of the people involved; supporting groups in costing out projects and writing business plans to include all contingencies. Neighbourhood workers have played a key role in running this informal process, which has already had very positive results.

For example, on Cecil Avenue Allotments a community group was given permission to refurbish the allotment site following some of the community PQQ checks described above. Only six weeks after receiving permission and a small grant from the council, the group had presented their public liability insurance and began work on site. They organised three community clean-ups with volunteers from both the allotment and an environmental voluntary organisation. A neighbourhood worker organised for the council's refuse collection team to help the clean-ups. In one afternoon, they removed twelve tonnes of rubbish. The group has cut back privet and trees to a manageable state, installed new security gates and hired skips to get rid of waste from the site. One of the allotment holders, who works as a welder, was able to design a bespoke locking device for cold-water taps. The allotment association group is still at an early stage, but wants to keep developing. This work has cost significantly less than it would have done had it been carried out by other contractors.

- 2 Another example of a community PQQ is Fit for Purpose (DTA, 2008), a diagnostic tool to help a new or developing community enterprise in assessing its strengths and areas for improvement against the following key criteria: governance, including accountability to the wider community and the strength of community ownership and influence over the direction of the organisation; enterprise and business planning, including risk analysis and income and expenditure projections; financial management; partnership-working; and policies and procedures, such as reviews of performance and guidance for committees and boards. The tool has been produced by Locality, a national network of settlements, development trusts, social action centres and community enterprises.
- 3 A town-wide local food project in Todmorden – Incredible Edible Todmorden (IET) – has already inspired similar projects in several other towns, which aim to be self-sufficient in food. IET has promoted local produce, persuaded supermarkets to take on local producers, created an egg map of local people keeping chickens and selling eggs and set up a fish farm at the local school.

Alongside this, the group has also become known for its use of neglected, publicly owned land to grow fruit and vegetables. Initially this was done without the explicit legal consent of the landowners, who have since given full backing to the group and its work as a result of seeing the positive results. The group emphasises that its approach to managing risk is to use common sense and the collective knowledge of the community rather than legal measures:

"The biggest nightmare is the mindset that looks for reasons why we can't do anything. If it was your garden you'd be sensible. Get people together, someone will know [a way round a problem]. Soil contamination is a heavy-handed way of saying: 'Don't do it.'" (CS5)

However, some legal changes have been made – for example, a social landlord changed its tenancy agreement to allow tenants to keep chickens in their gardens, which was previously cause for eviction. A community licence has also been created to allow temporary use of publicly owned land by community groups.

- 4 Bristol City Council is developing a risk-benefit policy for adult services, which sets out how the council can actively manage risk in ways that encourage innovation and community control. This extends their existing work on play services based around Play England's guidance on managing risk in play provision.
- 5 Streets Alive, an organisation that promotes street parties, has worked with groups in several council areas. They have created a disclaimer that the applicant for the community event signs. The applicant, such as a community group, agrees that they are fully responsible for any problems, such as people hurting themselves during the event. This is to reassure the council that they will not be sued in case of any problems. It transfers the risk to the community group, making it more likely they will be extra careful and communicate this to the people attending the street parties.

Proposals

- 6 The Young Foundation has proposed the idea of a community dividend, which would allow communities and public sector organisations to share risks and rewards. Community dividends are "rewards, intended to bolster existing volunteerism and incentivise new local action by financially rewarding communities that take action themselves to tackle chronic issues in their local area". By way of examples, the Foundation suggests that "if an estate cuts the prescription drugs bill by half, or reduces graffiti tags on street furniture by 75%" they should be "rewarded with half of the saving to the state" (Young Foundation, 2010).
- 7 Professor Tony Travers of the London School of Economics has promoted the idea of community improvement districts (CIDs) – an idea based on the success of Business Improvement Districts. CIDs would be created by groups of people and/or businesses and agreed through a referendum, with the option of an add-on to local council tax and set up for a fixed time period. The CID could then operate as the vehicle for running services, neighbourhood planning and other community-led activity (Travers, 2011).
- 8 The Local Government Information Unit has described local councils as "stewards of community risk" (Carr-West, *et al.*, 2011) and recommends that they: establish a scrutiny panel dedicated to corporate risk management in relation to the voluntary and community sectors; produce a risk-appetite assessment for services across the council, determining the authority's appetite for risk and which areas are most appropriate for community involvement; audit the local community's appetite and capacity for risk; prepare for potential demand-side risks on the part of the community; review the accessibility of procurement and commissioning policies; and invest in capacity and resilience building for the voluntary and community sectors.

Latent demand from communities for more engagement and differences between more and less affluent areas

Active citizenship requires citizens to be willing to take action. However, there were doubts in Bradford that many communities had the capacity or will to take up civic and voluntary opportunities, especially in the context of public spending reductions. There were repeated statements that citizens were not willing to get involved and that this was about apathy: "Community organisers – whoopee doo! But how do we get the community involved? We can't

get volunteers.” (EM6) “How do we get people away from *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*? People don’t want to volunteer.” (PS30)

Identical discussion can be found among neighbourhood practitioners in many other local authority areas (Durose, *et al.*, 2009). Data does show that “the average UK citizen spends nearly 17 hours a week watching TV, but only one hour engaged in voluntary work” (Cabinet Office, 2010) so there is some basis for these reservations. Research in other local authority areas shows similar perceptions. For example, one survey found that 66% of councils felt the community would be unmotivated to take on more responsibilities, assets or services (Carr-West, *et al.*, 2011). However, it is unclear how much this is based on second-guessing what citizens may or may not want to do, as fewer than 20% of respondent councils had formally assessed communities’ appetite for more involvement. A report for London Councils found that councils felt that there was little evidence of a “groundswell of enthusiasm [by citizens] to ‘join up and take part’” (Travers, 2011).

Data on levels of different forms of civic action in the UK suggests that there is a healthy base of citizen activity generally and the potential for more. Some surveys (Ipsos MORI, 2010a) show that 5% of the population want to start getting actively involved in local issues. This may be a small proportion, but in absolute terms, it would mean 1.7 million people. A further 24% want a say over decisions that affect them, which would amount to nearly 9 million people. The Hansard Society’s *Audit of Political Engagement* (Hansard Society, 2011) suggests that 14% of the population are already active, but 51% felt that getting involved could make a difference. Only 14% were ‘willing localists’ – people who were not actively involved, but willing and likely to do so on a local level. The audit described 11% of people as ‘exaggerators’ – individuals who say they want to be more involved but may well be overstating their intentions. Local areas have their own estimates of what is realistic to expect from their citizens and these were in line with the results of national surveys. For example, one local authority that was the subject of a WIN study visit “work[ed] on a 1% basis”, with 1% of the population active consistently in neighbourhoods, another 14% who “dip in and out” and 85% who want information or may come to meetings if there are big issues (PS24).

The explanations put forward by respondents in the WIN research for low levels of participation often focused on poverty: “The reality is, in the winter with the snow, people in [name of more affluent rural area] helped each other, like moving bins. They were active citizens. In [name of more deprived urban area] the [rubbish] piled up.” (PS29); “People are living hand-to-mouth on estates so they don’t volunteer.” (PS30); “[Lots of people] just haven’t got the confidence. People can’t give three hours to help the library if they are worrying about feeding their family.” (PS18) In some parts of Bradford, neighbourhood working tried to take account of different levels of community participation and community capacity by tailoring community development to suit each area.

There were serious concerns in Bradford that attempts to increase active citizenship would further exacerbate inequalities between more and less affluent neighbourhoods because the greatest community capacity was generally concentrated where needs were low, while areas of greater need tended to lack community capacity. There are successful, large-scale, community-led projects in deprived neighbourhoods in some local authority areas in the UK, where residents are responsible for running mainstream services worth hundreds of millions of pounds. For example, on the study visit to Birmingham, the ALN heard about the transfer of assets to community control in deprived neighbourhoods, as well as resident-managed social housing through tenant management organisations and community-

Data on levels of different forms of civic action in the UK suggests that there is a healthy base of citizen activity generally and the potential for more

based housing associations. There had been a long period of community development in areas with lower community capacity to lay the groundwork for these initiatives and other research suggests intensive support is needed in communities that have a long history of disadvantage (Taylor, *et al.*, 2007).

Nonetheless, both nationally and in Bradford, aggregate levels of active citizenship are lower for the poorest people and places. Evidence from across the UK indicates that in more disadvantaged areas, there are relatively high levels of mutual aid – being a good neighbour – but lower levels of other more formal types of civic activity (Tunstall, *et al.*, 2011). Participation is strongly linked to income, wealth and education (Pattie, *et al.*, 2005). Lower-income households and communities experience barriers to engaging in more civic activity through lack of resources (Tunstall, *et al.*, 2011), although more affluent or well-resourced groups also experience barriers such as being “cash rich but time poor”. It is also true that, for some forms of active citizenship, levels of participation are relatively low and have remained relatively constant for some years, despite successive governments’ attempts to increase them.

However, the socio-economic profiles of households and neighbourhoods does not fully explain drivers for participation. For example, there was awareness in the ALN that lower levels of formal education and income were barriers to participation, but there was also confusion about why some low-income households did participate and what might raise participation rates in the face of socio-economic barriers. Participants in the WIN project and ALN were keen to gain a more sophisticated understanding of the full range of reasons for the diversity in community capacity and levels of community activity, for example, between and within urban and rural places, ethnically mixed and more homogenous areas and more and less affluent households and neighbourhoods. They felt that this knowledge would enhance their ability to remedy gaps in participation.

Responsible citizens and behavioural change

In line with local authorities and other public bodies across the UK and beyond (Richardson 2011b), participants in the WIN research were keen to see more civic responsibility, with citizens behaving in socially responsible ways such as recycling, eating more healthily and sweeping their own driveways. Pro-social behaviours and the need for more civic responsibility were key threads of discussion throughout the project and participants wanted to know how behaviour could be changed. There was frustration that increased public investment had failed to address serious neighbourhood problems. There were examples and evidence of this on a large and small scale in Bradford and the local authorities that were the subject of study visits. There is a much broader debate here about the persistence of structural inequalities and issues with transient populations in areas at the lower end of the housing market, which some have argued are bigger problems than individuals’ behaviours (Lupton, 2003). Notwithstanding this, one respondent in Bradford pointed to a “£100m investment by 2015 in [name of ward] and it is still in the top five most-littered wards, there is high infant mortality, low average household incomes” (PS5), arguing that this was due in part to a lack of change in people’s behaviours, lifestyles and aspirations: “What is missing is education about how people think and behave.” (PS5)

In Bradford, increased public provision was seen as displacing citizens’ own efforts, substituting for, not adding to them (Richardson 2011a). Additional public spending on neighbourhood renewal was felt to have undermined communities’ capacity to help themselves, for example with the creation of

paid worker posts squeezing out volunteering, substituting action by workers for building skills in the community (PS15; VS2; VS6), the availability of grants overwhelming community self-help or community groups' original missions and investment in physical improvements not going hand in hand with increased responsibility by home owners (PS25). There was a perception that there had been a change in public expectations:

"There's a complete dependency culture, which is a burden on council budgets. They think we owe them because services have always been provided. There's a blame culture always on the council [...] people think the police should be on their front door and we should clean four times a day." (EM5)

Other local authorities have had identical debates. For example, Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council commissioned a report on behavioural change among citizens in 2006–07 because:

"Although between £40 and £60m has been invested over the past seven years, core problems such as worklessness, low educational attainment and poor health remain. [...] Improved service provision has not yet been able to tackle root causes, such as why people do not contribute more to maintaining quality environments." (Goodwin and Richardson, 2007)

Some practitioners from public services in Bolton identified particular models of service provision as a contributory barrier to behavioural change. One said: "We don't give people the powers to make a difference; we don't give them opportunities. We create a paternalistic culture." Another suggested: "The way services act affects peoples' efficacy. If we don't change then they feel helpless." (Goodwin and Richardson, 2007)

The chief executive of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council has talked about a "longstanding paternal culture" in the town, where life was once dominated by a mining industry that met the population's needs from "cradle to grave", and pointed to a "fundamental problem of dependency across Barnsley communities". He argued that (as in Bradford) there had been a "realisation [that] this is not solved by better (traditional) public services and more money – they may increase dependency. But [it is] not solved by ripping money away either. [We] need a new starting point based on engagement, social capital, mental wellbeing, putting individuals and communities back in control [...] recognising people as assets." This demanded significant change from the council and public services, requiring: "completely different skill sets, capacities and working arrangements ... [and] many services to be rethought and redesigned with the community. Managing the transition is daunting." (Coppard, 2011)

Some aspects of Bradford's neighbourhood working arrangements and structures were felt to have helped to create these sorts of paternalistic or 'dependency' relationships between communities, councillors, services and agencies. Changing unhelpful expectations and negative relationships required changes in behaviours and attitudes for all these partners. A key conclusion practitioners and senior managers drew was that some models of service provision were disempowering while other ways of delivering services could help facilitate community self-help. In this way, behavioural change among citizens was seen as enhancing empowerment. Nationally, there have been many debates about possible tensions between behavioural change, which can be viewed as paternalistic or top-down and empowerment, which can be viewed as bottom-up. Some have argued that the two priorities can be complementary if citizens view attempts to change their behaviour as

legitimate (John with Richardson, 2012). Changing the model of service provision from a dependency-inducing one to a more facilitative approach was a significant challenge and opportunity for Bradford. Bradford MDC saw itself as at the stage of redefining what it wanted to achieve through its provision of public services, before moving on to reconfiguring delivery models.

Officers and elected members from other local authorities who made presentations to the WIN project ALN group suggested that this can be a difficult challenge to address and requires careful negotiation with residents:

"People rely on the council to clear the street but those days are over. People ring me up and ask for things. I want to say to them: 'Can't you clear your own path?' But I can't say what I really think to them because I want to get re-elected." (EM7)

Ways to strengthen pro-social behaviours

Bradford MDC and its partners felt that producing behavioural change in citizens would require cultural change within their own organisations. They were wrestling with what a new, empowering model of service provision would look like and how to embed behavioural change more deeply in practice. This desire to reconfigure relationships between citizens and public services is also found in a number of other local authorities and public sector bodies (Keohane, 2011; iMPower Consulting Ltd, 2012). As the experience of public sector providers in many other local authority areas indicates, the challenge with community engagement, active citizenship and behavioural change was not in writing the policy, but in operationalising it across the board, using appropriate and effective tools (Richardson, 2011a; John with Richardson, 2012). Bradford MDC had already made a start on this – the restructuring of frontline environmental services had given an opportunity to create a behavioural change team of integrated uniformed services including park wardens, traffic enforcement and neighbourhood wardens.

There was interest from Bradford practitioners in exploring a broad range of complementary approaches to behavioural change and active citizenship. In the ALN, the group was introduced to a range of different approaches, including the topical concept of 'nudge' (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008; John, *et al.*, 2011). The core proposition underlying nudge is that people use many kinds of mental shortcuts to make behavioural decisions, such as what other people like them are doing, how it makes them feel and the identity of the person offering them different options. Understanding these shortcuts help to identify effective ways to influence behaviours. One useful framework for operationalising nudge is described by the acronym MINDSPACE (Dolan, *et al.*, 2010; see also debates in Richardson, 2012). This stands for:

- Messenger: people are influenced by who communicates information.
- Incentives: responses are shaped by mental shortcuts such as avoiding losses.
- Norms: we are strongly influenced by what others do.
- Defaults: we 'go with the flow' of preset options.
- Salience: our attention is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant to us.
- Priming: our acts are often influenced by subconscious cues.
- Affect: our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions.
- Commitments: people want to be consistent with their public promises and reciprocate acts.
- Ego: we act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves.

Practitioners in Bradford had started to think about how elements of MINDSPACE might be used, for example to tackle the issue of parents parking dangerously at school drop-off times. One idea was to get parents to put stickers in their car windows to support safe parking, which would use parents and pupils as messengers to establish the norm, as well as changing defaults with arrangements for alternative drop-off points.

There are many other approaches to behavioural change being piloted in local government, some but not all of which are nudges. For example, in December 2010, West Sussex County Council had a challenge session where it set out the principles of behavioural change, inviting representatives from departments. Another example is the London Borough of Barnet with its policies on green champions. Kent County Council has extensive policies and employs a behavioural change manager. Salford City Council has been pioneering work on health. Other councils have introduced initiatives more focused on individual services, such as Coventry City Council's work with the consultancy iMPower to find creative ways to persuade the parents of children with special educational needs to move over to personalised budgets for school transport. These pieces of work use a concept called 'value modes segmentation', which involves targeting and tailoring interventions by categorising people into groups based on market research on aspirations and lifestyles (e.g. settlers, prospectors and pioneers) (Keohane, 2011). Some do not explicitly reference nudge-style approaches, but all contain some similar ideas. For example the value modes segmentation work could be reinterpreted in the MINDSPACE framework as using social norms of different groups, increasing the salience of behavioural change policies to those groups by tailoring interventions to aspirations and appealing to people's egos based on their values.

The nudge and MINDSPACE models are not a single solution and are set by their proponents in the context of wider systemic change. One useful model is that developed by consultancy Governance International, which comprises four elements of co-production: co-design, co-commissioning, co-delivery and co-assessment (Governance International, 2011). Governance International has developed a model of how to achieve co-production in public sector organisations with the following stages: map it, focus it, people it, market it and grow it. Nudge ideas would form part of the 'market it' stage. The organisation has created an online self-assessment tool based on its model called Co-production Explorer. Some examples of behavioural change work led by community-based bodies and by local government are shown in the box below (for more detail on these examples, see John with Richardson, 2012).

Examples of behaviour change work in localities

- 1** Zest, a development trust in Sheffield, runs programmes to tackle childhood obesity as well as fitness classes for older people and those recovering from serious operations. Zest has implicitly used behavioural change techniques that redesign systems around an 'intelligent consumer', e.g. successfully introducing self-service in the local library branch it managed.
- 2** Bolton Community Network has used innovative methods based on intelligence about nudge-style behavioural change interventions, such as Upsy Downsy, a workshop to promote positive mental health, using a board game based on Snakes and Ladders. This uses statements cards about good or 'upsy' habits and bad or 'downsy' habits to help people make choices and 'think happy habits'. After participating in

the game, participants make pledges to take on a new good habit and are contacted a few weeks later with a gentle reminder and support information about local classes and organisations they may find useful. As a result of the programme, there has been greater equity in uptake of health promotion programmes and services, including an increase over the period of the project in women from ethnic minority communities attending cervical screening appointments. The Upsy Downsy game has been delivered to over 1,150 people, all of whom have pledged to take on a new habit to improve mental health and wellbeing (NWTWC, 2011).

- 3** Manton Community Alliance (MCA) uses its resources to build community action, engagement and citizen trust in institutions. Using participatory budgeting, it has evidence of significant behaviour change where residents who were not previously democratically engaged have now taken part in local decision-making. MCA sees deliberative activity as both complementing and promoting democratic electoral engagement (Manton Community Alliance, 2011).
- 4** Huntingdonshire District Council has introduced neighbourhood agreements which are non-legally binding contracts between residents and services. In one neighbourhood, the agreement focuses on 'Things to do' with the aim of increasing community action and community spirit through a negotiation about what the council, other services and residents themselves will try to contribute.
- 5** London Borough of Lambeth is seeking to reshape the settlement between the citizen and the state by empowering the community, using a new model of a 'co-operative council', based on ideas from the co-operative movement. This involves incentivising reciprocity and participation and working closely with communities and the community and voluntary sector to plan, commission and deliver services, with the council acting as a strong community leader (Co-operative Council Citizens' Commission, 2011).
- 6** Somerset County Council is working with consultancy Micah Gold Associates and the Big Society Network to look at how to redesign all of its systems for 'total engagement', with residents moving from passive recipients of services to active citizens. This work is in its early stages, but may include training for frontline staff at service points and in contact centres to recruit citizens to be more active (e.g. by volunteering) as well as forming a Somerset citizen 'membership' of the council. Proposals include: a menu of different services that could be devolved to parish councils, and criteria for what sorts of risks could be delegated to parishes; extending the functionality of software firm Inovem's Inclusionware to support the new approach; and community action teams made up of council services, residents, third sector organisations and councillors working together in neighbourhoods to sort out problems. Another key thread of the approach is to review commissioning and procurement arrangements so that potential new service providers from voluntary sector groups can be identified and fostered and a more level playing field is created for these groups to compete for contracts (Big Society Network with Micah Gold Associates, 2011).
- 7** Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council has undertaken specific pieces of behaviour change work, including a change to its approach to recycling. It introduced recycling bins across the borough, which increased recycling levels from 16% of waste collected being recycled in 2006–07 to 29.4% in 2009–10. A survey of 15,000 residents had previously reported that 43% said nothing would encourage them to recycle more.

-
- 8 Carlisle City Council has a policy called Scores on the Doors, which awarded environmental health scores to different takeaways and restaurants in the city, so that the public could know which were safest. Midnight football games were set up for workers in the takeaways and restaurants working late nights as a way of building trust and encouraging them to attend food safety courses, especially those for whom English was an additional language (NWE0, 2010a).
 - 9 The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's Recyclebank incentive scheme awards points for recycling that can be exchanged for discounts on food, clothing and leisure activities.

5 WORKING IN NEIGHBOURHOODS, DEVOLUTION AND LOCALISM

This chapter explores the complex area of devolution to neighbourhoods. It includes an examination of the opportunities and risks involved in devolution and looks at how the process can be managed to promote inclusion and broker difficult debates about the distribution of resources between and within neighbourhoods, as well as examining questions about appropriate scales and structures for devolution

The current government's localism policy focuses on the devolution of power to local authorities and directly to neighbourhoods in order to deliver six principles, which it has outlined as: removing bureaucratic burdens; empowering people to take action; making public bodies and services transparent; strengthening democratic accountability; giving local people control over public spending; and diversifying the supply of services (HM Government, 2010a). This policy was prefigured by the 'double devolution' debate that took place under the previous government, which identified some similar aims and ideas. Underlying arguments about devolution is a sense in the wider literature that "command-and-control" models of governance (EM8) are not longer capable of, or suitable for, managing complex human and policy challenges (Durose, *et al.*, 2009). Devolution implies a transfer of decision-making, powers, assets and/or budgets to bodies or structures below the local authority level. Some policy-makers go further than this and seek to apply the principle of subsidiarity, which means devolving decision-making power to the lowest possible appropriate level.

Neighbourhood working and devolution are overlapping but precise and distinct terms. Neighbourhood working does not necessarily involve devolved powers, nor decentralised provision of mainstream services. There

are many different configurations. The WIN research was carried out before the Localism Act was passed at the end of 2011. Bradford MDC was Labour-controlled at the time of the research, and the ruling administration aspired to subsidiarity, with ambitions to devolve power to the lowest possible appropriate levels. Historically, the MDC has not had experience of devolved budgets or decentralised provision to the scale that has been tried in other authorities, although its neighbourhood working shows a solid basis of devolution to area, ward and neighbourhood level over a long period. For example, the council introduced area panels across the district in 1991 and neighbourhood forums were also created in the early 1990s. In addition, for several years, the council had devolved budgets to area committees in relation to a number of powers and functions such as highways, community clean-ups, parks and landscaping and seed money for community groups. These devolved budgets have totalled around £525,000 per annum for each area committee. Action-planning has taken place at neighbourhood, ward and area levels while partnership working has been focused at the ward level. In addition to these district-wide arrangements for neighbourhood working, there have been a series of time-limited initiatives in specific neighbourhoods, including a New Deal for Communities scheme in one locality between 1999 and 2010, neighbourhood management in five localities between 2006 and 2010 and a Bradford MDC initiative called Urban Village Planning between 2004 and 2005, which focused attention and some additional resources on some of the more affluent neighbourhoods that had not received neighbourhood renewal funding.

Risks and opportunities in devolution

Risks

Critics and opponents of devolution, both across the UK and in the Bradford WIN research, have argued that it is potentially divisive and may increase unhealthy competition between neighbourhoods, based on “petty jealousies” (PS31). Devolution creates incentives for each neighbourhood to advocate for its own interests and therefore, it is argued, strategic interests are undermined if no-one acts to oversee the process: “If every single little community wants its own library, it is not going to work. It is set up to fail.” (PS5) Devolution was seen as undermining economies of scale for service areas like highways and areas of provision such as youth facilities, which could have the added advantages of broadening aspirations and promoting mixing between groups if they were not limited to single neighbourhoods. Some respondents were concerned about the risks that greater devolution (through mechanisms such as neighbourhood planning in the Localism Act 2011) could lead to nimbyism and pressures from more affluent, organised and resourced communities to exclude outsider or unfamiliar groups.

When devolution is tied to political structures, it is sometimes thought to risk leading to ‘pork-barrel politics’ – elected representatives using their control over the allocation of resources specifically to favour their own interests or those of their constituents. As is suggested by this phrase’s US origins, concern about this broad issue extends beyond the UK to many other countries. In Bradford, respondents illustrated this concern:

“Because people want provision in every single neighbourhood, if money is controlled by ward members and self-styled community leaders, they will argue they don’t want to give money to other wards, for example for a [...] facility that everyone could use in the next ward [...] They want their own [...] because they want to be re-elected.” (PS9)

Devolution creates incentives for each neighbourhood to advocate for its own interests and therefore, it is argued, strategic interests are undermined if no-one acts to oversee the process

Elected members of another local authority were also concerned about the electoral consequences of political control over resources: "There are three ways to decide who gets money: where there are the most votes; who shouts the loudest; and worst first. We do worst first and maybe we suffer for it." (EM11)

In Bradford, some respondents felt that some resources had been "misused to buy votes" (EM8) and that decisions had been made on the basis of "favours for votes" (PS9). Similar criticisms have been levelled at politically controlled community funds in other local authorities in the past. Other respondents made the point that some better-off Bradford areas received area committee resources because, it was felt, "they are louder" (EM12; PS7) and some said that some duplication of provision was the result of elected members advocating for specific constituencies, in contradiction to written criteria for allocating community funding.

Another perceived risk of devolved decision-making was the possibility that it would create spaces at the lowest levels for disproportionate political influence being exercised by ward councillors, citizens and interest groups. Respondents in Bradford worried that this handed power to those best able to play the system:

"Neighbourhood working is easier to manipulate by [elected] members than command and control structures; there are fewer checks and balances, so it's harder to have accountability especially with members. [...] People think they want power, but they want the role, so it's easy for barracudas in the pond to take over." (EM8)

Negative consequences of centralised systems

Questions about where it is best to place resources and how to target investment for greatest return as well as equity, are very real questions, regardless of where, how and by whom decisions are taken. The fears are that devolution will cause (or, at least, greatly exacerbate) competition and division between neighbourhoods. However, the experience in Bradford suggests that devolution is just another way of allocating responsibility and risk for decisions that, by their very nature, can lead to, or mitigate, existing or underlying competition between localities. There were several examples in the district of competition and division between and within neighbourhoods over resource-allocation where there was no significant devolution. These cases were partly a result of well-intentioned decisions by central decision-making bodies, including central government, to target resources in the areas in most need and local decisions about where best to focus strategic investment. Most decisions about resource-allocation are extremely complex and many will leave one or more of the potential recipients and other stakeholders dissatisfied. However, in some cases, whatever the reality, the grounds for decisions have been construed in the most negative fashion by particular groups (see debate in Lachman, 2011).

Bradford's diverse and spatially concentrated population meant that competition between areas could also involve an ethnic dimension. In the mid-2000s, in response to the potentially invidious nature of central government funding for deprived areas, Bradford MDC directed additional spending towards more affluent areas through 'urban villages' to complement regeneration spending in more distressed and often majority-Asian, localities. There has been concern nationally about the impact on the growth of far-right parties of differential levels of funding between and within neighbourhoods as these parties sought to exploit a racialised discourse on the perceived unfairness in resource-allocation across multi-ethnic areas (Garner, 2009). Other

research in the UK has identified racialised resentment which can lead to 'victims' blaming 'victims' across disadvantaged groups (Hudson, *et al.*, 2007). In Bradford, members of the WIN project were trying to challenge these types of attitudes: "There are resentments between areas about which communities get. My community is a white community, they think Asians get everything. [But community activists] tell them it's not true." (CS7)

"What's good about [name of ward] is there's a lot of diversity, with an active community who give back. Residents have adopted the park; people are solving their own problems. What is not so good is that a lot of people feel left behind, that their voices are not heard, they do not get their share. They feel they are forgotten." (EM3)

The Bradford MDC policy on mainstream services at the time of the WIN research was for all neighbourhoods to receive the same level of service regardless of levels of deprivation, in order to avoid accusations of unfairness between areas: "We need to be seen to deliver services [to areas with fewer needs]." (PS29) Despite these different approaches, a catch-22 for the devolution debate in Bradford was that providing top-up monies to more affluent areas, or providing equal resources to all neighbourhoods had not resolved the underlying issues. Demands for local tailoring were still being made. Many respondents to the research, including politicians, officers and resident volunteers, wanted to see more flexibility to adapt levels and types of provision and neighbourhood working between areas, based on need. However, stakeholders in the research in Bradford said they experienced or perceived strong pressures on public sector bodies and political leaders to ensure that provision was, and was seen to be, equitable:

"The average citizen in Ilkley doesn't have a problem organising themselves; they don't need [neighbourhood working]. But we have it in all areas because we don't want to be seen to be unfair [and get] criticism that you help [the people] down the hill." (EM8)

Opportunities

Part of the broader case for devolution is the argument that each local place or neighbourhood has a unique set of characteristics to which local services, plans and approaches need to be tailored. In the current policy context, this also implies potential for greater efficiencies in public spending. As discussed in Chapter 1, there are significant differences between and within areas, wards and neighbourhoods in Bradford in terms of their 'feel', populations, histories and needs and wants. Chapter 4 explored how neighbourhood staff wanted more localised and tailored responses to neighbourhood issues, suggesting that devolution could enhance neighbourhood working.

ALN participants saw neighbourhood working in a devolved system as an opportunity to adapt resources to suit different sorts of needs in Bradford. Participants emphasised local difference throughout the project, for example between inner urban and outer rural areas, between the city and other parts of the district and between people from different generations and ethnic and cultural backgrounds: "Wards in Bradford are so different – chalk and cheese. [In the rural ward represented by the elected member], it is nothing like the ward work in inner cities." (EM2) "Bradford might as well be in Australia as far as some people [name of neighbourhood] are concerned." (VS7)

Devolution was also seen as a way to build on local assets of identity and heritage that were unique to each neighbourhood and participants described people's emotional connections with the places where they lived and worked as

“positive territorialism” (VS7). This opportunity was also highlighted the projects from other local authority areas that were showcased in the ALN. This included an oral history project involving residents who had been moved out of inner city housing in Manchester to an overspill council estate in the 1960s. The project used residents’ old photos and memories of past times to reconnect neighbours with each other. This had led to resident volunteers setting up a Good Neighbours Project (see also NWTWC, 2010).

Devolution was also seen by some in Bradford as an opportunity to stimulate deeper more collaborative debates about planning at a neighbourhood level, balancing the needs of neighbourhoods with the needs of the district as a whole. Across the district and predating the Localism Act there were already patches of local resistance to and high levels of community debate over, new residential development. Some of these debates focused on how the neighbourhoods would cope with additional demands on services. As in many other local authority areas, this mobilisation by citizens had not been entirely welcomed by everyone working for public bodies and it was seen by some as nimbyism rather than a genuine concern for the sustainability of the neighbourhood’s infrastructure.

As well as concerns about how local infrastructure would cope with new homes, other community objections to development centred on the provision of social housing. While some Bradford respondents saw this as opposition to social rented homes, the reality was quite complex. For example, community lobbying in one area was not against social housing per se, but around the master plan for the development. This grouped together social housing rather than ‘pepper-potting’ it throughout the development in line with government guidelines and good practice for sustainable urban neighbourhoods (Falk and Carley, 2012). In another example in Bradford, opposition to a proposed major new housing development centred similarly on the destabilising effects of concentrations of social housing and protection of environmental conservation areas (VS8).

The prospects for more deliberation with communities over contested decisions through devolved neighbourhood planning were welcomed by some respondents to the WIN research. For example, one councillor argued that they would prefer a mature discussion in their village than rely on the planners to make the decision for them:

“We can argue here for housing on the grounds that without it, you might lose your school, your GP or your shop. And there’ll be nowhere for your children to live when they grow up. And villages can think things through: ‘OK, we want more homes, but what about the traffic and more places at the school?’” (EM10)

Promoting inclusion in devolution

Some commentators have argued that the degree to which devolution can lead to greater inclusion or exclusion depends in part on how decision-making processes are brokered or mediated. Policy-makers and practitioners in the UK and other countries have suggested that appropriate facilitation, deliberation, careful brokering and greater transparency could produce more inclusionary outcomes from devolved decision-making and mitigate some of the risks identified. This view was supported by respondents in Bradford to the WIN research: “If people knew first hand what the conditions are for neighbourhoods next door, they would want it to be fairer than they are. Transparency is [...] important.” (EM2) “It’s not about being equal across the board, but if you are

transparent, people are more likely to accept it [...] It's being open about who is getting what." (ALN10).

Some practical examples of brokering and mediation are described in the box below.

Examples of ways to promote inclusion in devolution

- 1 Across the UK, including in Bradford, there are examples of where participatory budgeting (where communities decide on how to allocate pots of funding) can shift attitudes and resources, towards the most vulnerable groups and overcome divisions: "We gave out £100,000 in [name of area in Bradford] to projects – community gardens, tool clubs, physical improvements. Three hundred groups applied for up to £7,500 each. Some groups gave money back so other groups could have it. They saw the bigger picture." (PS14)
- 2 One of the key outcomes from the WIN ALN was to give participants a better overview of what was happening across the Bradford district as a whole and in other neighbourhoods. Their discussions with people in other neighbourhoods helped them understand that they "all face the same problems" and "are all committed to neighbourhoods" (ALN9). This type of network across neighbourhoods can create a platform for a debate about how to best meet different needs in an inclusive way.
- 3 In one authority in the North West of England, elected members were persuaded to allocate part of their ward's resources to more deprived wards after visiting different neighbourhoods to see at first hand what the different levels of need were between places (NWE0 2010b).
- 4 Experiments in the UK and internationally suggest that it is possible to deliberate on sensitive cohesion matters – including intergenerational and ethnic issues – with large groups of people in a spirit of respectful debate and in some cases increase tolerance (John, *et al.*, 2011). Deliberation is a structured and facilitated form of dialogue that follows specific ground rules. It is described in more detail in Chapter 4.
- 5 Neighbourhood agreements, sometimes called community contracts or charters, set transparent local standards for services' and residents' behaviours, negotiating between residents and services about what each will offer or receive; these can be tailored to each neighbourhood. Monitoring and accountability of service performance and outcomes are devolved under a voluntary agreement (IPEG, 2010, IPEG and NANM, 2011). The general idea of more transparent service standards, potentially related to the different needs of individual localities, has received some support from different parties in local authorities (PS24).

Ways to allocate resources and definitions of fairness

There are many criteria by which resources can be allocated. For example, investment in leisure facilities could be based on protection of heritage, the likelihood of leveraging in private sector investment or tourism income, simple population numbers, where there is the most demand or the greatest health needs, or any number of other factors. Within this, one key concern in the WIN research was fairness. A resource-allocation strategy based on need may seem fair. Compared with allocation based on 'who shouts the loudest', it certainly seems fairer to have criteria and a strategy (EM8; VS10). But allocation according to need does not necessarily resolve questions of fairness, as the definitions of 'need' and 'fairness' may be contested. In Bradford and

The idea of equality of inputs appealed to a sense of fairness in some parts of Bradford, where it was felt that people should get back at least what they have put in

other places, people on different sides of debates about the allocation of resources appealed to the concept of fairness to justify their claims, but defined this variously as equality of inputs or equality of outcomes.

Wider debates have distinguished between equality of inputs and equality of outcomes. These are two different definitions of fairness. Equality of inputs means that all areas receive the same proportion of investment and that different levels of need, or choices about where to invest and in what services, may then generate unequal outcomes. Here, fairness is defined as a situation when each resident, taxpayers or neighbourhood gets their equal share of public resources. The idea of equality of inputs appealed to a sense of fairness in some parts of Bradford, where it was felt that people should get back at least what they have put in. Some WIN respondents questioned whether it was 'fair' to penalise areas that did more to help themselves and therefore experienced fewer neighbourhood issues by giving them fewer resources (ALN4):

"If you keep the streets clean, you get less service. [Name of area] gets penalised because they pay higher rates but they don't get extra resources. The [parish council] precept pays for a gardener and litter picker; we pay extra but the perception overall is we get less in reality." (EM6)

These debates on definitions of fairness go beyond Bradford. For example, in Bolton, a decision to target reduced ward resources on more deprived areas was criticised by one political party: "Everyone pays their taxes, so why should some people miss out? Money should simply be allocated according to which area has the most residents." (*The Bolton News*, 21 August 2011)

In contrast, equality of outcomes means all areas should meet the same standards (e.g. for street cleanliness) and that resources are tailored to achieve this: "To treat people fairly sometimes we need to treat them differently." (ALN10) Some in Bradford argued that if everyone gets the same, this means that "budgets are skewed towards the better off" (EM8). Fairness here means that some more disadvantaged people and distressed places will receive additional resources and support to get them to a roughly equal position with other areas. This appeals to many as a definition of fairness that supports social justice, as it does not penalise those who experience the worse conditions arising from a situation partly caused by deep structural processes: "[Should] people in disadvantaged communities [...] be punished because they haven't had as good a start in life?" (CS7)

As was pointed out in the WIN project, there is already general acceptance in many European societies of systems, such as taxation, where some citizens pay more than others into a pot that is then distributed for the common good. In Newcastle at the time of the WIN research, there was a formula for allocation of devolved budgets to ward level that combined a standard amount for all areas and two variable elements reflecting the size of population and relative deprivation of the ward. The phrase "proportionate universalism" has been coined to describe the attempt to deliver equality of outcomes.

Deprived areas are often thought to receive more investment and services than other areas already, meaning there is a de facto form of proportionate universalism in operation. However, evidence suggests this perception is mistaken. One study of street cleanliness that showed resource allocation, which appeared to be progressive relative to deprivation, was shown in fact to be regressive when factors such as the size of workload were taken into account. Although public spending was higher in deprived areas, it was not sufficient to make up the gaps in outcomes (Hastings, 2009; Bramley, *et al.*, 2012). A review of research across public services found that the middle classes have advantages in public service provision, including an "almost inbuilt

predisposition towards addressing the expressed needs of affluent groups” (Hastings and Matthew, 2011). It can be difficult to identify how the totality of resources flow to different areas, which is one driver for various central government attempts, such as Total Place and Community Budgets, to map or pool spending across services in specific neighbourhoods or policy areas. Where there was data on which areas got what, councillors in Bradford sometimes felt that they did not have access to this or that the information was not completely transparent (EM2).

Devolution to which scale?

A perennial issue in neighbourhood working is the question of which are the most appropriate scales for different sorts of activity. Looking across the UK, there is a bewildering range of uses of the term ‘neighbourhood’. For example, councils across England refer variously to ‘natural neighbourhoods’ of anywhere between 50 to 10,000 people, ‘Neighbourhood Co-ordination Areas’ and ‘Priority Neighbourhoods’ of 20,000 to 30,000 people and ‘Constituency Areas’, ‘Area Committees’, ‘Neighbourhood Management Areas’ and ‘District Committees’ of 40,000 to 100,000 people.

The rationales for neighbourhood working outlined in Chapter 2 hold a clue to untangling this confusion, as these suggest that the scale at which structures operate is, or should be, driven by what these structures are trying to achieve (Durose and Richardson, 2009). For civic goals, decision-making at a street or small or ‘natural neighbourhood’ level suits citizens, as this is a scale at which people relate to areas on a human level. A natural neighbourhood is somewhere people could easily walk to the local shops (a 15- to 20-minute walk) and a scale at which they feel comfortable greeting neighbours in the street (CLG, 2008, cited in Durose and Richardson, 2009). The Bradford street reps mentioned in Chapter 4 were just that, operating at the level of the individual street. Meanwhile, decision-making at a ward or area level better suits services, as this is the scale at which they operate and are organised. Elected members often like to deal with issues at a ward level, as they represent wards, but are also happy to work within larger areas as this gives more room for common action and leverage of resources. For those neighbourhood-working structures with underlying political goals, existing constituency and ward boundaries are also ‘recognisable’ to local politicians and therefore more viable in terms of representative democracy. As one WIN respondent put it: “The ward is a useful unit as it has some basis – [it is a] political entity, accountable etc.” (PS28) Local authorities trying to achieve economic and social rationales use what have been called ‘public’ or ‘strategic’ neighbourhoods of 4,000 to 15,000 residents and above (up to roughly 8,000 households) “where more structured governance starts to make sense” (Young Foundation, 2005). In Birmingham, for example, budgets for significant number of services, including play, highways and leisure and libraries, were devolved to a constituency level (i.e. areas with a population of around 100,000).

The fact that different sorts of activities need to be devolved to different levels – natural neighbourhood, ward or area – implies the need for rather complex layered and multiple structures. However, the desire of respondents in Bradford was for simplicity and structures that were easy to understand and communicate (ALN3). There are trade-offs to be made between finessing structures to suit multiple rationales and functions and having a simple format that residents and others can easily make sense of. One of the non-specialist WIN project participants described how many structures can seem extremely complex, or simply tedious, when viewed from the outside by laypeople: “Wards

committees this and area that – I glaze over. I can't understand anything to do with the council. [...] I can't get excited about the mechanics of the structures." (VS11)

Even those who were more heavily involved said: "In Bradford, we struggle to explain governance structures to ourselves. We have areas, wards and neighbourhoods, but there is lots of duplication, the same issues are being discussed [in the different structures]." (ALN3) Other wondered about the added value of "layers on layers on layers" (EM13). Structures in some other local authorities were also seen as having "too much confusion, the residents must be really confused as to who is responsible for what" (ALN7). An early meeting with national commentators to inform the development of the project heard that complex structures for neighbourhood working nationally could, in their worst forms, resemble "early Stalinism", or were "barmy and pointless" and "bleeding energy out of neighbourhoods".

Devolution to which structures?

Devolving decision-making to appropriate locality or neighbourhood bodies raises several serious implementation issues. Key among these are the questions of which bodies or structures to devolve to and who makes decisions in the neighbourhood under the devolved structures. In many neighbourhoods across the UK, there is a complicated patchwork of existing local bodies and structures to which powers, services, budgets and/or decisions could be devolved. The evolution of area-based arrangements in local government described in Chapter 2 means there are now established and mature bodies in place in many local authority areas. Research on neighbourhood governance suggests that governance structures should build on the organisations, structures, processes and relationships that already exist. For example, in Bradford there were community centres, community and tenants' and residents' associations, faith organisations with a community outreach role, village committees, steering groups, neighbourhood partnerships, community councils, parish councils, town councils, civic trusts and urban village partnerships, as well as the main council neighbourhood structures. Other public services and agencies also had their own neighbourhood structures or mechanisms for community engagement, such as health services' community outreach, children and young people's services' locality partnerships, the police and communities together (PACT) meetings. Some organisations and bodies were legacies or leftovers from earlier regeneration schemes. There is also the possibility of creating new or adapted governance bodies or structures. Other JRF research has found similarly complex local governance arrangements in other places (Foot, 2009).

Arbitrating between these different structures to determine where to devolve decision-making within the "muddle and mess" of neighbourhoods (Goss, 2001) is fraught with difficulties and raises issues of democratic accountability. Community anchor organisations, such as local development trusts or settlements, have long been proposed as viable alternative structures and some of these have found positive ways to work with local elected members (Cotterill and Richardson, 2011). Accountability is a challenge for any organisation as it grows and becomes more distant from the communities it serves; there are no easy solutions to this. Democratic accountability, which is discussed in Chapter 7, was not unproblematic either. There are also examples from other parts of the country of resistance from local councillors to the transfer of power to community-led structures. For example, an external speaker at the ALN said of participatory budgeting in their project in Yorkshire:

"The only rule is that people decide over the money. Councillors found the concept very hard – they wanted to know: 'Where is the rule book?' We [the community] took control and we are all equal partners now. [...] People have said it takes power away from councillors, but they are more empowered because they are delivering what people want." (ALN 8)

Previous experience of community-led schemes in Bradford had also seen a confrontational stance from residents: "[Name of project] had total opposition to the idea of the council. They blocked every turn by the council. Community control ended up as a stand-off, when it should have been joint working." (VS2) Meanwhile, several Bradford MDC officers felt devolution to community organisations, as seen in other areas such as Birmingham, would not guarantee sufficient democratic accountability, i.e. accountability to elected members (ALN7).

Members and supporters of parish and town councils in the Bradford project and nationally have argued vociferously that these bodies, known as 'local' councils, are well-placed to take over devolved powers as they already deal with local budgets through precepts, are involved in neighbourhood planning, deliver services and run facilities, can be quality accredited and, crucially, are democratically elected and accountable. Not all local authority areas in the UK are parished and some are only partly covered by parishes.

However, it was not necessarily the extent of coverage of local councils that was the cause of disputes over their roles. Nationally, relationships between principal authorities and local councils have been fractious in the past, especially in three-tier areas (White, *et al.*, 2006a). In other regions of the country, parish and town councils and their principal authorities have been inching towards better accommodations than have been in place historically (NWTWC, 2010). In contrast, in Bradford there has been broad support for local councils from the MDC over a long period. In some Bradford neighbourhoods, there was joint work with parish councils to develop and implement neighbourhood plans. However, even with these positive relationships, there had been concerns. For example, a previous Bradford study found concerns about "extra layer[s] of local government", capacity to deliver on their promises and insufficient numbers standing as town and parish councillors, requiring the local authority to step in (White, *et al.*, 2006b). Not all local councils in Bradford were seen by all respondents as capable of working in a positive way and some were even described in the WIN research as damaging and dangerous. Despite support being in place for all local councils in Bradford and many examples of close working, this was not the case across the board, with one local council feeling it was not "fully accept[ed]" by Bradford MDC councillors (EM14). In other local authority areas, principal and second-tier authorities have been lukewarm towards existing local councils, or have "never been enamoured" of proposals for new urban parish councils (PS24). Both Bradford MDC councillors and parish or town councillors are elected representatives and in Bradford, as elsewhere, this sometimes forced them into competition (PS35). And while parish and town councils are categorised together as 'local councils', there were signs of rivalry and tension between the two, described in the WIN research area visits, interviews and the ALN.

6 WORKING IN NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ROLES FOR LOCAL COUNCILLORS

This chapter examines the roles of elected members in working in neighbourhoods and the barriers that prevent them performing these roles more effectively. It then looks at how relationships can be built between councillors, residents and community groups

One political barrier to devolution and neighbourhood working can arise from the natural reluctance of ruling political groups on local authorities to hand over control of decision-making to neighbourhoods in wards that have elected councillors from opposition parties. Similarly, there are political aspects to debates about fairness, universal versus targeted investment and the level of resources going to places with more need, as traditionally more deprived wards have voted for certain parties and more affluent areas for others. In one example from a local authority in Yorkshire, a councillor had supported community and neighbourhood work on a deprived estate but observed: "They are not going to vote [for my party], [...] If you don't watch postcode politics, people get nowt, then you get thrown out." (EM2). In another example, criticisms of the targeting of reduced resources in the wards in Bolton in greatest need were dismissed on the grounds that the political party making the criticisms only wanted to "get more money in some of their wards", which happened to be the more affluent wards that were seen to be losing out (*The Bolton News*, 21 August 2011).

Conversely, the balance of political control in authorities such as Bradford MDC could be a driver for cross-party political support:

"All [political parties] say they support neighbourhood working, but they do it for different reasons. The [name of one party] want neighbourhood working because they realise they will never control the council, so they want

control over one or two areas. [Name of another party] has it because [it] represents the poorest areas which can potentially benefit the most.” (EM8)

Working in neighbourhoods was seen by many respondents inside and outside Bradford as a political activity, as articulated by one external speaker to the ALN from another local authority: “I used to think there was no political way to empty bins, until there was a strike!” (EM15) Local elected members play a key role in neighbourhood working, but this raises several key questions, which are discussed further in this chapter.

Gaps in community leadership in working in neighbourhoods

New ‘community leadership’ roles have been developing for councillors in England over the past decade. Community leadership puts members into a neighbourhood-facing rather than a ‘town-hall’ facing position, or, as some have argued, a two-way facing position, brokering between neighbourhoods and the local authority. In common with local government across England, Bradford’s elected members had a varied set of backgrounds and brought different skills and expertise to the role. Inevitably, this meant that some councillors were more active in their wards and in neighbourhood working than others, a point made by many respondents and articulated by one elected member: “There is a huge difference in performance between members. Some engage intensively in their own ward, others don’t know where the main street is.” (EM2)

Elected members in Bradford performed work in neighbourhoods through: their casework with individual residents; surgeries; involvement on area committees; attendance at neighbourhood forums; and membership of neighbourhood organisations, such as school governing bodies, district-wide bodies, such as local strategic partnerships and partner bodies. Despite the various ideas on and proposals for, a community leadership role for councillors, it was not always clear what this might mean in practice for specific Bradford neighbourhoods. This led to respondents asking the question, what are councillors trying to achieve when they do work in neighbourhoods? The WIN project interim report (Richardson, 2011a) outlined a set of three roles for elected members in neighbourhood working: area action planning, action taking and arbitrating interests. The interim report’s description of the many areas of progress and solid positive work by councillors on all three sets of roles is not repeated here.

However, there were some critical gaps. Elected members had few alternatives for supporting community activity if or when funding to support neighbourhood activities was no longer there. There were similar experiences in other local authorities. For example, in one council in a different region, previous neighbourhood structures made up of councillors and community representatives were described as having been: “obsessed with allocating money. They had £150,000 each [for around 30,000 residents]. The new boards have no money, so they need to influence mainstream spend. The lesson is if you set up boards, don’t give them any money.” (PS32).

Some elected members of Bradford MDC had found it hard to help citizens to resolve neighbourhood issues because of a lack of response to their queries from departments in the council, or gaps in tracking of jobs in the system. One political group on the council had proposed changes to electronic systems to tackle this. In the WIN research, elected members from across the political groups in Bradford said that they wanted a better

There were positive examples of Bradford District councillors challenging, mediating and brokering between different groups on sensitive issues of race, faith and ethnicity

information flow in order to perform their roles and respond to residents' queries more effectively. "The key thing is we like to know what's going on: not be told about it when it's already happened." (EM10; EM17)

"Councillors want more information on what's happening [...] so I can say there was actually a clean up two weeks ago and the next action day is then. Lots of councillors' time is spent asking for information from officers in response to queries [...] and councillors don't always have the information. Residents presume councillors have the information but we're only as good as the information we get from officers." (EM16)

Members' roles in arbitrating between competing or conflicting interests in a ward or area were underdeveloped in some places, as described by one respondent: "An ideal role for ward members would be to challenge and be assertive [...] and be real community leaders are prepared to say no. Lots of promises are made. There's no challenge, they won't say no." (PS29)

There was a need for community leadership in Bradford by elected members, particularly as some council officers felt unable to address key issues for communities in the district around ethnicity and faith. For example, there are live debates in Bradford and other places around the UK about how society could and should adapt to some Muslim communities' commitment to Islamic religious practices. Officers in Bradford did not feel comfortable entering into some of these debates, or were unsure how to start a conversation on these issues.

In several wards, elected members were unsure how to resolve conflicts other than to reject all parties' claims. For some, this was also driven by electoral considerations. Although many councillors were vocal and articulate, some were cautious about taking a community leadership role where there were community tensions and found it challenging to manage debates in their wards, particularly if these centred on conflicts over complex and controversial issues such as ethnicity, nationality, faith or culture. For example:

"The Asian community want [...] a mosque. [But] if I said yes, [...] I would lose votes, so I can't. But I can't tell them no, because I'd look racist. [...] Muslims want to use the church – there's only eight people there on a Sunday. But I can't ask [the church] because of politics." (EM4)

Examples of positive community leadership on sensitive issues

There were also positive examples of Bradford MDC councillors challenging, mediating and brokering between different groups on sensitive issues of race, faith and ethnicity and these are described in the box below:

Examples of elected members brokering diversity issues

- 1 One elected member said:

“There are two community associations on either side of the road. [...] One side is Kashmiri and the other side is Punjabi and they won't share. They want their own community centres. We've offered them one [for both groups] but they don't want that. I've told them they can't have [a centre each]. I'm honest with people – tell them straight.” (EM12)

- 2 In another ward, a councillor described how they had been part of successfully addressing community tensions:

“There were tensions because the Eastern Europeans were drinking and the Pakistani boys said: 'Go back to your own countries.' Housewives filtered information to us. [We] did consultation and feedback sessions. We had interpreters to work with the young people. [...] We've been out there to make a difference. [...] I don't worry about speaking up. [...] You get disgruntled constituents [if] they see favouritism [being shown towards certain groups over others].” (EM5)

- 3 Other Bradford elected members were handling very sensitive issues, such as mediating with community leaders about how to handle far-right demonstrations. There were suggestions that a counter-demonstration had been planned, but the police asked the community not to: “hype it up by starting an anti-protest, let the police handle it. Ignore the English Defence League [EDL]. It'll make it worse.” (PS22). Supported by diverse networks of faith organisations, voluntary groups, women's groups, community elders and youth workers (Lachman, 2011), councillors from different parties and ethnic backgrounds had responded proactively:

“The first pillar of democracy is freedom of speech, so if the EDL wants to demonstrate, OK we'll stay away. [...] It's best to ignore it and not march against it because it makes it [worse]. [...] We need councillors and community leaders to tell people: 'Please stay away.’” (EM18)

“I was a facilitator behind the scenes on [arrangements for managing policing of] the EDL march. [...] I've been advocating to ignore the EDL for months. [I've been] disappointed because people won't be honest. Relationships blossom if you are honest. Most politicians are scared to put their head above the parapet.” (EM2)

- 4 In other local authorities, councillors had also been involved in work to address community cohesion. This included Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, where councillors and community representatives had undergone training as part of a good relations programme and had then initiated work including pre-emptive relationship-building between pupils prior to the merger of two schools that primarily served two different ethnic communities. There were also innovations such as life-swaps, where elected members and families from different ethnic backgrounds spent a weekend in each others' homes (NWTWC, 2010). One of the lessons from the good relations programme was: “Find the space for minority voices to be heard, however unpalatable. You need to use politics to voice dissent, not violence.” (PS32)

Relationships between local elected members and residents and community groups

Good quality relationships between councillors and residents were seen by respondents to the WIN research as critical to successful neighbourhood working. Gaps in relationships in Bradford were illustrated in the ALN discussions and feedback. For example, respondents across the group discussed negative perceptions of elected members, which included: “councillors never give a straight answer”; “councillors are not really a decision-maker – more a political puppet”; “as a resident, why do I have to ‘shout’ to be heard and get things done?” (ALN6). Not all of the group agreed these perceptions were widely held, or were even correct, but there was a broad acknowledgement in the ALN group that negative perceptions of councillors did exist. Elected members of other local authorities acknowledged some of the issues: “Politics isn’t about making speeches, it’s about listening. People are surprised when we knock on their door. They ask if there is an election, even if it is June.” (EM15).

Much has been written about the difficulties of delivering democratic accountability and effective representation in western democracies. Issues such as poor connections and a general lack of trust between the public and elected representatives are not confined to Bradford, but can be seen across the UK and more widely in Europe (LGA, 2008; CLG, 2008; Hooghe and Marien, 2011). In the UK, in particular, the evidence suggests that there is room for substantial improvement in the state of local democracy (Stoker, 2006). Representative democracy has been criticised for neglecting minority interests and innovative techniques have been used in some local authorities in England to help bring in new or unheard voices to politician-led forums (John, *et al.*, 2011).

Contributions and presentations to the ALN from elected members of Bradford MDC and two external local authorities were welcomed by participants in the ALN because “they were open and honest” and “gave a good insight into how the system works” (ALN6). The group also appreciated finding out more about how to become a councillor and the costs of standing as a candidate. Several moving personal accounts from elected members who spoke at one of the ALN sessions reintroduced a human element to these aspects of neighbourhood work. They talked about their passion for their wards and constituents: “We’re all here to make a difference for the better. [...] Political representation is bottom of the list; the real thing is to get to know the community you serve and be an advocate and a champion for them.” (EM2). The elected members revealed the pressures they experienced as representatives and made a plea for residents “to have reasonable expectations of us, we’re not at your beck and call. We have lives, too. Don’t ring at 11pm.” (ALN6). Another described their experience as like living “in a goldfish bowl, everyone is looking at what I’m doing” (EM7).

During the WIN project, elected members showed themselves as prepared to acknowledge criticisms and misperceptions of them in a light-hearted way. For example, an elected member from a local authority outside Bradford said:

“Councillors are white, male and old. I want a better spread of councillors but I don’t want it to be me that loses my seat. [...] When I was elected [...] you get a brown envelope [...] but there was no cash inside. [laughter from audience] [...] Some councillors complain, but they’re all there at election time trying to get back in.” (EM7)

Another member of an external local authority talked to the ALN about the importance of community groups to their work:

‘Tenants’ and residents’ associations are a key group for me. [...] There is no parish or town council in the ward, so the areas where there is an active residents group makes it so much easier for me to get things done. [...] They’re one of the best groups I have.’ (EM15)

One elected member of Bradford MDC described their background as a community activist, which had led them into politics: “I started out as a community activist. Sometimes I felt like I was banging my head against a brick wall.” (EM1) As a councillor, they felt they now had more influence to get problems tackled.

Reactions from other members of the ALN group to these candid contributions from councillors included: “I learned quite a bit about how councillors work – demystified their role. This was very useful.”; “A better understanding of the work that councillors do and that they’ve been involved in the community before they were a councillor.”; “Councillors are all very different! But all are constrained by their politics.”; “Councillors are people too. Not just a pain in the backside of council officers!”; “Learned about the need for councillors to have a life!” (ALN6)

One of the positive outcomes from the ALN was to build, deepen and strengthen relationships between elected members of Bradford MDC and community organisations in their wards. For example, early on in the WIN project, a community activist had said:

‘I’m the voice of the people at meetings, if [a councillor] challenged me I’d say: ‘I’m doing what I’m doing – what are you [councillors] doing? You get paid.’ Councillors get complacent. They think they’re big and almighty. They need to be kept on their toes like any other service. I’ve lobbied for ages for the estate and know all about my estate, but it shouldn’t be like that.’ (CS7).

By the final ALN session, this activist and their ward councillor were working very closely together, praising each other’s work and acknowledging their previous misconceptions. However, this exposure to the human side of local councillors and the space to build relationships was limited to those who participated in the ALN, who made up a very small proportion of the elected members of Bradford MDC and an even smaller proportion of the electorate.

The ALN group identified what people need from councillors, what councillors need from people and what both parties need from each other (ALN 6) and the resulting points are set out in the box below. These findings echo other research nationally (Cotterill and Richardson, 2010).

Building relationships between councillors and residents

Councillors should:

- make decisions and account for them;
- be accountable to the full range of interests in the neighbourhood, including “the silent majority not just the big mouths”;
- be transparent and communicative and “have answers”;
- have control over ward budgets and more local control over a wider range of budgets than currently exists;
- spend time in their wards and not be diverted off to get MDC-level business and communicate with people outside of meetings;
- be visible and known in their wards;

-
- get things done, be well-connected and have influence;
 - help represent the council to the people, including explaining how the system works.

Residents should:

- have reasonable expectations of what councillors could do and understand the limits of the system and councillors' powers within it;
- play their part in democracy by voting, giving their views, being clear about what they want and simply taking an interest;
- form or become members of residents' groups and work jointly with councillors ("come forward and take part");
- build relationships and contacts with councillors.

Both parties should:

- have more open, honest, trusting and communicative relationships;
- move forward together on a shared agenda.

7 CONCLUSIONS – WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR WORKING IN NEIGHBOURHOODS?

This chapter summarises the findings of the WIN project as set out in this report, focusing on the policy context, issues of accountability and risk, creative problem-solving and devolution and fairness

Just a short time after commentators were predicting the “death of neighbourhoods” (Durose and Rees, 2011) or, at least, the end of neighbourhood policy, the idea is back in policy vogue. Neighbourhoods are a key focus for the current government’s localism policies to decentralise control to the lowest possible levels and also a key focus in policy aims to promote the Big Society. New community rights and planning policy are all centred on neighbourhoods as the site in which policy will be enacted. Neighbourhoods feature as places where newly active citizens will be mobilised to take action, take over services, be charitable, hold decision-makers to account and so on.

Chapter 2 describes how working in neighbourhoods has a lineage in the UK reaching back over 40 years. As this report sets out, the concept of neighbourhoods contains other enduring policy ideas or goals: citizenship, decentralisation, democratic representation, user-focused public services. Working in neighbourhoods is something of a yo-yo policy idea – swinging in and out of fashion and surprising those involved in this area each time it bounces back. However, it must be remembered that, compared with bigger departments, budgets and priorities, neighbourhoods are often minor or marginal priorities for central and local government overall. Some local authorities have no neighbourhoods agenda and for those that do, this may not be a key strategic priority. Where it did exist, neighbourhood working has, along with other local services, recently been subject to major restructuring, with the loss of many frontline jobs. In times of recession, discretionary services are more vulnerable to cuts than statutory services and neighbourhood working is especially vulnerable.

Over the past 20 years, devolved decision-making and neighbourhood working have been evolving in Bradford, as well as in other local authority

areas around the UK. At the time of the WIN research, Bradford MDC had in place a set of structures and processes that delivered neighbourhood and locality planning and opportunities for community decision-making and self-help. Neighbourhood working in Bradford, overseen by elected members, was producing improved and tailored services for neighbourhood improvement and working to encourage more active citizenship. There was a desire among practitioners engaged in neighbourhood working to promote devolved decision-making, stronger accountability, shared responsibility with citizens and improved democratic accountability, as well as to generate and strengthen civic activity. Bradford comes under detailed scrutiny in this report and offers a wealth of positive examples and lessons for others, as well as usefully opening up some ongoing debates around challenging issues. This is testament to the courage and openness of the local authority, its elected members, officers, residents, community groups, voluntary organisations and public services in engaging in the WIN project.

As the evidence in this report shows, none of the issues raised in this report were unique to Bradford, or even the UK alone. The learning from this project was designed to be of interest and use, to other local authorities facing similar issues in working in neighbourhoods. This chapter draws together some broader conclusions from the WIN research that have wider applicability beyond Bradford, while Chapter 8 sketches out some policy implications and ways forward.

The policy context

The local government financial settlement announced in April 2011 – partway through the WIN project – brought home the scale of the cuts to be made to central government support for local government in England and public services it supports. Some fear the cuts will bite deepest in northern local authorities, like Bradford and for the most disadvantaged places and people (Tunstall, 2009; Johnson, 2011). Members of the ALN felt that reductions in public spending could damage their ability to engage in partnership working, as well as diminishing capacity for neighbourhood work and co-ordination and leaving gaps in infrastructure and support for volunteering and active citizenship. They pointed to lack of appropriate and affordable educational and vocational training opportunities for young people, combined with limited employment prospects, as something that undermined the viability of communities and neighbourhoods. Work to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour was also felt to be suffering as a result of cuts to police budgets and participants worried that NHS reforms, such as GP commissioning, would not place sufficient emphasis on public health and preventative community work. However, there were also some signs that Bradford's communities' long traditions of active citizenship remained resilient. For example, in response to the announcement of the closure of five libraries in 2011, volunteers from four of the city's five areas mobilised other local people to keep them open (Lachman, 2011).

Despite the relevance of working in neighbourhoods to national governments' policies – past, present and future – the WIN research suggests that national policy is often largely irrelevant to those working, living and practising in neighbourhoods. This is not to say that people working locally are uninterested in 'big ideas' like devolution and active citizenship. Indeed, respondents in the WIN research from Bradford and elsewhere expressed clear views about policies such as the Big Society, reflecting wider public scepticism about them (Ipsos MORI, 2010b; YouGov, 2011). But, aside from dealing with reductions in public spending, life went on at neighbourhood level,

relatively untouched by the dilemmas of central government policy direction and implementation. Indeed, one of the great ironies of a centrally directed programme for decentralisation is that it is up to each locality and each neighbourhood to decide individually how it will respond to any opportunities opened up by national policy. This presents neighbourhood practitioners across the UK with the challenge of how to regain a feeling of control over their own destinies after so much time spent responding to national directives, funding streams and regulation. Some neighbourhood practitioners in the UK have expressed the desire for more guidance from central government on how to respond to the Big Society and localism, but it appears that the days of such guidance and prescription are gone.

Some neighbourhood practitioners in the UK have expressed the desire for more guidance from central government on how to respond to the Big Society or localism, but the days of guidance and prescription are gone

One part of the localism agenda is to introduce new rights for communities, including a Community Right to Buy public assets, a Community Right to Challenge who delivers public services, options for local referendums and rights to approve or reject local council tax increases. The Localism Act 2011 also abolishes regional planning guidance and gives neighbourhoods decision-making over planning, as well as a Community Right to Build. Much of the success of these policies will depend on local interpretation of these rights and the level of commitment of local authority elected members and officers to devolve decision-making, services and assets. Begrudging implementation of any initiative to transfer power to communities and neighbourhoods will clearly undermine its success. Previous experience of the introduction of such community rights suggests that when communities are forced to invoke them formally, as a last-ditch move to wrestle power from the hands of an unwilling local authority, this strains the very relationships that are necessary for the effective devolution of decision-making and imposes additional transaction costs on both parties (Tunstall, *et al.*, 2011). Local government needs to respond constructively to all forms of citizen mobilisation. It could therefore be said that one key measure of the success of the new community rights will be the rarity with which they are formally invoked, so that communities and public authorities will, instead, work together to find creative solutions to the challenges they face.

History teaches us that there is a tradition of radicalism in community and neighbourhood work in the UK which can make public bodies deeply wary of devolving power and this presents a challenge for neighbourhood workers (Marris and Rein, 1967; Moynihan, 1969; Loney, 1983; all cited in Taylor, 2011). Not much space has been given in this report to the role for dissent. The current emphasis in policy and practice on partnership and consensus tends to view dissenters as subversive. The rediscovery of Alinsky's community organising model has reignited a debate (Durose, *et al.*, 2011) about how far there should be creative problem-solving, or "creative disruption" (Taylor, 2011). Models of "adaptive leadership" (Heifetz, 1994) show the need to be "comfortable with the uncomfortable". During the period of the WIN project, Bradford saw protest marches by far-right groups, while elsewhere in the country there were demonstrations and strikes against public sector cuts, as well as riots in several cities. With mobilisation, however positive, comes the potential for challenge, which needs to be recognised. But, how can these conflicting approaches be reconciled?

Institutions, accountability and risk

As illustrated by the case of Bradford, working in neighbourhoods is often a mixed and loose bag of activities, largely outside institutional control. But it remains the case that institutions – such as local authorities – play a

crucial role in mobilising and responding to citizens and harnessing citizen contributions (Taylor, *et al.*, 2007). Where local authorities and public bodies are not responsive or open to communities, this can have a knock-on effect causing citizens to become less likely to participate. A key finding from the WIN project is that there were barriers to institutions sharing or handing over more control to communities and neighbourhoods, as well as becoming more responsive to citizens. One Bradford councillor said: "Any bureaucracy resists devolution, whether knowingly or not." (EM8)

There are two big issues affecting the transfer of greater control to communities: accountability and risk. Generally, many people agree that where any group does something that affects the wider neighbourhood, then there should be some way for that group to be held accountable to the neighbourhood. In neighbourhood working – in Bradford and in other local authority areas – the form of accountability that dominates discussion is democratic accountability. This is often taken to mean that elected representatives must be in charge of neighbourhood working, or involved to an extent where they have some influence over decisions and can therefore be held to account for them. Based on this perspective, transferring control or power to citizens, or community and voluntary groups often lacks sufficient democratic accountability. This view was expressed in the WIN research in relation to the Bradford case and by respondents in other local authority areas. The question of democratic accountability also partly explains why there can be tensions on occasion between elected members of principal authorities and of 'local' (parish and town) councils.

A lesson from the WIN research with wider resonance is that the debate is only just beginning about different ways to guarantee or strengthen accountability to facilitate a transfer of power to neighbourhoods. There are problems with how democratic accountability works in practice and it is, in any case, only one form of accountability (Meijer and Bovens, 2005; Hupe and Hill, 2007). Other examples include members of professions, who are accountable to their professional bodies and organisations that are accountable to users, shareholders and other stakeholders. Charities are legally and financially accountable to the Charities Commission and to funders. Small community groups can be accountable to the people in their neighbourhoods by publicising their work and having open meetings where they can be challenged. Some writers now understand accountability in very broad terms; one definition offered is of accountability as a "social relationship in which an actor feels an obligation to explain and to justify his conduct to some significant other" (Bovens 1998, p. 172). Seeing accountability in this much wider sense opens up the possibilities that non-elected community and voluntary groups, as well as private sector bodies, could be held accountable.

One conclusion the Bradford ALN group drew was: "No single body can hope to represent the full range of interests in a neighbourhood, so you can't devolve to one single body. We need other forms of representation, particularly for powerless groups." (ALN10) But in order for this to happen, elected politicians need to stop seeing power as a zero-sum game and embrace a 'positive sum' concept of power (Clegg, 1989). One respondent summed this idea up neatly: "You get more power by giving it away." (VS2) Another formulation was to "give away power but not influence" (PS34). Not everyone agreed; some saw power as necessarily either/or, in which case, the best that could be achieved was that power was visible, rather than hidden or manipulative (VS12) (Lukes, 2005). What are ways through these opposing views?

Having a wider spread of forms of accountability does not take away from the need for democratic accountability, however. It is understandable

that local councils like Bradford MDC are cautious about transferring power to communities and neighbourhoods where they feel this would present a high level of risk. The local authority has overall responsibility for what goes on in its neighbourhoods and acts as a catalyst for community participation. Nationally, evidence shows that citizens do want their local authority to be answerable for things that happen in their area (Standards for England, 2009) and are often unsure about which services and decisions local authorities are responsible for (Kotecha, *et al.*, 2008). In Bradford and other local authority areas, local councillors are creating new mechanisms that allow them to remain in charge, even when they are not directly involved. Across local authorities, current ways of assessing risk levels are too often biased towards the worse-case scenario and often do not take account of all of the costs, benefits and true risks to neighbourhoods. This is partly because of a problem called 'moral hazard' – the situation that arises when people are less careful about taking certain actions because they feel someone else will bear the responsibility should anything go wrong. This can then lead the body that does have the responsibility to be overly cautious. In terms of working in neighbourhoods, this implies that councils might be persuaded to accept more risks if they had more information that demonstrated that communities or neighbourhood groups would behave in careful ways. It also means that councils would feel safer transferring power to communities if the communities shared some of the risks and rewards. What does this suggest about potential ways forward in the future for devolution to flourish?

Creative problem-solving in the messy world of neighbourhoods

Despite attempts at reform, it can be very hard to change institutions such as public sector bodies. The reluctance to transfer control to communities discussed above is not evenly spread within institutions. For example, in previous neighbourhood programmes it was found that senior managers, frontline staff and residents were most likely to support neighbourhood working, but could be blocked by middle managers. Implementation of neighbourhood working and community engagement policies in the UK in the past few decades has been shown to depend on the engagement of committed individual officers. Lipsky's work on street-level bureaucrats, published in 1976, showed how frontline workers make a critical difference to whether and how policy is implemented. As has been found in research on other areas, neighbourhood workers in Bradford can act as intermediaries between their institutions and communities and negotiate within their own institutions as creative problem-solvers. The Bradford ALN brainstormed other terms: mover and shaker; troubleshooter; enabler; innovator; someone who gets things done (ALN10). Whatever this role is called, it is about brokering between different interests, advocating for communities within organisations and removing blockages.

Across the UK, many neighbourhood workers find it hard neatly to sum up what it is that they do and therefore what their value is. Neighbourhood working is not as easy to grasp, or as immediately tangible, as services such as refuse collection, libraries, or doctors' surgeries. It becomes easier to understand when seen in the context of the reality of neighbourhoods, which is often one of "muddle and mess" (Goss, 2001) rather than a controlled and ordered environment. Neighbourhood issues are often complex and rarely routine, so dealing with them requires flexibility and creativity at a very localised level. Neighbourhoods also have complicated patchworks of

players – organisations, individuals, different bodies – all with a stake in what happens. Any group of people rubbing up against each other will generate challenges. Neighbourhood issues need to be dealt with 'in the round' because their causes are often multiple and interrelated. Collective problem-solving in the fragmented environment of neighbourhoods necessitates someone to co-ordinate action across stakeholders and to 'hold the ring'. Scaling back of central government regulation and targets for public sector organisations also generates exciting new opportunities for those organisations to determine what direction to take for themselves, based on residents' needs and priorities. Neighbourhood working in Bradford was attempting to do all of this and on many occasions it succeeded.

Experiences of neighbourhood working across different neighbourhoods and councils shows that neighbourhood structures created by public bodies can seem bizarre and labyrinthine to outsiders, with new accretions overlaying, but not overriding, those generated by old approaches, initiatives and projects. This suggests that public bodies should work more sympathetically with what already exists and stop changing tack so readily, to ensure that structures are comprehensible to laypeople and as parsimonious a solution as possible to the purpose they are intended to fulfil. It also would suggest that there is a role for rigour, strategy and co-ordination from the centre.

There are four key sets of questions for the future. First, how to protect this creative problem-solving role within public sector bodies when services are increasingly under financial strain. Bradford MDC has been progressive in this regard, making a political decision to retain the core elements of its universal neighbourhood service and continuing to fund neighbourhood wardens after the end of ringfenced funding. Even so, the service has experienced some losses and restructuring, albeit that these changes may arguably strengthen the sustainability and effectiveness of its work. In some other local authority areas, substantial parts of neighbourhood working have been lost to what has been called a 'service-led' or 'public services' approach, which neglects the efficiencies generated by more flexible, responsive and engaged ways of working between services, citizens and other partners (VS12; VS13; VS14).

Second, where neighbourhood workers are employed by public sector organisations, their roles as brokers and intermediaries between their organisations and communities and between different departments within their own organisations, can place them in a delicate position. Previous neighbourhood working schemes (for example, in England and Wales from the 1970s onwards) came unstuck when the main sections of the employing organisations felt that their neighbourhood workers were leaning too far towards the community, were too challenging to their own employers or political leaders or were operating too much at arms-length. Public sector organisations generally also worry that giving their personnel more space to be creative could backfire if staff take too many risks or simply do not perform to the required standard. So the questions here are how to ensure an appropriate balance between allowing frontline staff to act as neighbourhood problem-solvers and making sure they promote the strategic interests of their organisations. How do organisations manage flexible ways of working? What latitude is there? How can managers know what is going on to prevent extreme risks?

Third, performing these roles requires an ability to operate in the fast-moving and lively world of communities, get things done, manage expectations and influence senior managers, elected members, residents' leaders and communities, as well as occasionally doing unusual things. For public sector workers more used to orderly systems and procedures this can be an unfamiliar and uncomfortable way of doing things. And as was seen in Bradford, spaces

for sharing and environments that welcome honest reflection are sometimes needed to help public sector professionals to look critically at their own practice and organisations and to see how things could be improved. Some Bradford neighbourhood workers showed real flair for lateral thinking and entrepreneurial problem-solving. Can these skills be taught to existing staff or do they need to be recruited for? Could they be captured in a set of guidelines? How can public sector workers be encouraged to be more confident to act flexibly and to be critically reflective?

Fourth, the emphasis here has been largely on neighbourhood workers employed by local authorities and other public sector bodies. There is also scope for a wider range of bodies to play these problem-solving roles, including housing associations, development trusts, social enterprises and others. How can the public sector work together with other partners to bring in more capacity? What new organisations could help deliver mobilisation? Exciting new arms-length options were being explored in different places (PS34; VS15). This task is made even more urgent given reductions to funding for the voluntary and community sectors and increased competition for charitable funding.

Devolution and fairness

'One size does not fit all' has been a popular rebuttal of centrally determined policy. The desire for local determination runs deep in UK local government and in the community and voluntary sectors. But there were widespread concerns in Bradford and across the UK about the risks of devolution. These risks need to be balanced against the potential gains and opportunities, such as in Bradford, where devolution offered a way for governance and delivery structures to deal with local complexity and diversity between localities across the district, based on neighbourhood need and priorities.

While the potential negative outcomes of devolution – increased inequality and community divisions, as well as political manipulation – would be widely accepted as things to be avoided, the argument that they are caused by devolution, or their likelihood is mitigated by centralisation, is somewhat misplaced and not entirely supported by empirical evidence, such as that from the Bradford experience. There will always be difficult choices to make and devolution is just one way of approaching them. Concerns about its possible weaknesses can cause us to overlook the opportunity that devolved decision-making presents to deliberate with citizens on some basic principles. In the spirit of active citizenship, it would be a positive move if there were more spaces to have an open debate about what is fair. Understandings of what is meant by fairness are at the crux of this issue. What is needed, but extremely hard to achieve, is a more transparent debate over who gets what and what citizens accept as being fair between places with different needs. Some, but not all, elected members in Bradford were willing to take on a community leadership role in these complex, controversial and potentially vote-losing debates. Is it possible for these debates to take place more widely?

8 WHERE NEXT? IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL POLICY- MAKERS IN THE UK

This chapter sets out the messages and lessons from the WIN project that suggest possible ways forward for working in neighbourhoods in local authorities across the UK

Where the implication refers to a specific chapter of the report, this is referenced in brackets. Implications without references to a chapter are based on the WIN research findings as a whole.

Working in neighbourhoods and neighbourhood working

- Local practitioners, especially those in the public sector, need to set their own prescriptions and guidelines for how to develop and implement policy on active communities and devolution. (Chapter 7)
- Local authorities need to create or maintain a neighbourhoods agenda as a key strategic approach, recognising that neighbourhood working generates added value for citizens and services. Managers of public services should consider the evidence that a purely service-led or public services approach neglects the efficiencies generated by more flexible, responsive and engaged ways of working between services, citizens and other partners. (Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7)

Working in neighbourhoods and partnership working

- Neighbourhood-working structures need to be flexible, proactive, relationship-based and grounded in local knowledge. (Chapters 3 and 7)
- Organisations should nurture civic entrepreneurs at the front line and create spaces for more creative problem-solving. This may include moves such as: not punishing apparent failure and allowing flexibility, risk-taking and

experimentation; conferring enhanced roles and responsibilities on frontline staff; checking that performance targets are aligned with organisational goals and desired outcomes; and considering bringing in new organisations and capacity from different sectors. (Chapters 3 and 7)

- In addition to brokering and mediation skills, effective neighbourhood working requires skills development to broaden the community-outreach capacity and creative problem-solving abilities of practitioners. This work is also enhanced by a capacity on the part of practitioners to engage in critical reflection about their own practice, that of their organisations and the practices of others, as well as the possibility for individuals to make constructive challenges to approaches taken within their own and other sectors. This may benefit from independent facilitation and/or skilled management, as well as network- and relationship-building and safe spaces for reflection and sharing. (Chapters 3, 4 and 7)

Working in neighbourhoods, active citizenship and the Big Society

- Public bodies should look at the opportunities for system redesign, including: whole-system redesign to increase responsiveness; reconfiguration of delivery models to enhance community responsibility and pro-social behaviours; and transformation of neighbourhood-working structures into new models of joint problem-solving.
- Active citizenship could be further enhanced by focusing on a broad range of ways that citizens get involved in neighbourhoods – what this report calls ‘working in neighbourhoods’ – alongside the more formal structures and processes entailed in ‘neighbourhood working’. (Chapter 4)
- Formal or official neighbourhood-working structures could generate additional community contributions by moving from traditional consultative approaches to joint problem-solving. Deliberative techniques are one way to achieve the common ground required for joint action. (Chapter 4)
- The community and voluntary sectors could develop a clearer case for their unique strengths in providing services and facilities to communities. They should also be open to reviewing their own practice to ensure strong connections with other residents in the wider community. (Chapter 4)
- The pool of active citizens could be expanded by tapping into ‘willing localists’ – people who are not currently involved in their neighbourhoods but who express an interest in becoming more active. Community engagement and development needs to be based on more sophisticated intelligence as well as what is already known about levels of participation across different groups and drivers for participation. Existing intelligence should also be used to inform specific intervention, particularly those targeted at areas with lower community activity and capacity, with different needs, with different cultural mixes and with different histories of intervention and engagement. (Chapter 4)
- Both the transfer of control to communities and greater community action could be facilitated by a more courageous approach to risk by the public sector. Possible ways forward include: stronger and more tailored relationships with neighbourhood groups that better inform risk-management strategies; more tailored ways to demonstrate the care that communities or neighbourhood groups will take in their activities; and communities sharing risk and accountability as well as rewards. (Chapters 4 and 7)
- Responsible citizenship could be strengthened through the exploration of a broad range of complementary approaches to citizen behavioural change.

including those based on the concept of 'nudge'. Nudge tools need to be used within a wider redesign of systems for co-production of outcomes that benefit society as a whole, and other ideas for reconfiguring relationships between citizens and the public sector. (Chapter 4)

- Public sector organisations need to respond constructively to citizen mobilisation, whether this is invited or not and whether it presents a challenge or not. These organisations also need to start conversations about the possibility of transferring decision-making to citizens long before the need to make such transfers becomes urgent, or has to be enforced by communities. (Chapters 4, 5 and 7)

Working in neighbourhoods, devolution and localism

- The perceived risks of devolution need to be balanced against the significant opportunities it offers for identifying localised and tailored responses to neighbourhood issues, building on local assets of identity and heritage and organising collaborative debates with communities and others about balancing the needs of specific neighbourhoods with the needs of the local authority areas as a whole. (Chapters 5 and 7)
- Appropriate facilitation, deliberation, careful brokering and greater transparency could produce more inclusionary outcomes from devolved decision-making and mitigate some of the potential risks of exclusionary pressures such as nimbysism. (Chapters 5 and 7)
- There are opportunities to debate and deliberate with citizens on different definitions of fairness in resource allocation. The risks of unhealthy competition between localities, which are carried within devolution, could be mitigated by a more transparent debate over who gets what and what citizens accept as being fair between places with different capacities and needs. (Chapters 5 and 7)
- Neighbourhood-working structures should be designed with greater clarity about their goals and devolution should be tailored to appropriate spatial scales for different goals. Any new structures should work more sympathetically with what already exists while the structures for neighbourhood working as a whole should be as parsimonious as possible and simple enough to be comprehensible to laypeople. (Chapters 5 and 7)
- Devolution must allow for representation of the full range of interests, including those of powerless groups. This strongly suggests the need for other forms of accountability to complement democratic accountability and for devolution to multiple bodies and/or stakeholders, or to single bodies representing multiple interests. (Chapters 5 and 7)

Working in neighbourhoods and roles for local councillors

- A debate is needed with elected members of each local authority on how power can best be shared or transferred, while retaining accountability. Councillors could be better supported in their community leadership roles. These roles include arbitrating between conflicting interests and providing leadership on difficult issues of resource-allocation between places and groups. (Chapters 5, 6 and 7)
- Relationships between members of local authorities, community groups and the public could be strengthened by greater transparency and visibility in local democracy at a neighbourhood level, more control for elected members at a neighbourhood level and more effective back-up systems

and information flows from officers to elected members. Local councils' neighbourhood workers could play a key role in making this happen. (Chapter 6)

Messages for national policy-makers

- Central government could offer support, guidance and leadership for action at the local level on the tough and shared challenges facing local public sector organisations and local government. This should be delivered through the most appropriate bodies.
- In particular, there could be more help on: sharing practice on how best to encourage creative problem-solving on the front line; data and analysis to improve understanding of differences in levels of participation between groups, as well as the drivers of participation for those groups; intelligence on effective interventions to stimulate citizen participation; ideas and examples of successful mechanisms for risk-sharing between community-based organisations and local government; support for organisations attempting whole-system redesign; clarification of different forms of accountability; trials of approaches to broker and mediate debates within devolution; and exemplar activity to deliberate ideas of fairness with citizens.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was conducted as part of the wider WIN project with John Low and Jenny Lynn and their work and intellectual contributions were a key input for this report. John Low conducted interviews and visits for the research. The author would also like to thank those who gave detailed comments on this report: Mick Charlton, Catherine Durose, Jonathan France, Micah Gold, John Low, Jenny Lynn, Robert Rutherford, Dale Smith. The Project Advisory Group offered a constructive steer throughout the project. The participants in the Action Learning Network offered comments on the draft findings as a group and material for the research. Sue Szekely gave invaluable administrative support. Bana Gora helped situate this work in the JRF Bradford Programme as a whole.

REFERENCES

- Barnes, M., Skelcher, C., Beirens, H., Dalziel, R., Jeffares, S. and Wilson, L. (2008) *Designing citizen-centred governance*. York: JRF
- Beveridge, W. (1948) *Voluntary Action: A Report on Methods of Social Advance*. London: Allen & Unwin
- Big Society Network and Micah Gold Associates (2011) *Somerset County Council Community Engagement Model*. London: Big Society Network
- Bovaird, T. (2011) 'Who is really creating neighbourhood level outcomes – self organising communities, co-production, local government or public agencies?' Presentation to ESRC/AHRC DCLG Workshop on Neighbourhood and Community Involvement in Public Services, London, December 2011
- Bovens, M. (1998) *The Quest for Responsibility: Accountability and Citizenship in Complex Organisations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Bramley, G., Bailey, N., Hastings, A., Watkins, D. and Croudace, R. (2012, forthcoming) 'Environment justice in the city? Needs and outcomes for street cleaning across urban England and some challenges for policy and resource allocation', *Environment and Planning A*
- Cabinet Office (2010) *Giving Green Paper*. London: Cabinet Office
- Cameron, D (2009) 'The Big Society'. Hugo Young Lecture, 10 November 2009
- Carr-West, J., Lucas, L. and Thraves, L. (2011) *Risk and Reward: Local government and risk in the new public realm*. London: Local Government Information Unit
- Clegg, S. (1989) *Frameworks of Power*. London: Sage
- CLG (2008) *Communities in Control: real people, real power*. Cm 7427. Norwich: TSO
- Co-operative Council Citizens' Commission (2011) *The Co-operative Council – Sharing power: A new settlement between citizens and the state*. London: London Borough of Lambeth
- Coppard, P. (2011) 'Challenging Society?' Speech to Yorkshire and Humberside Empowerment Partnership, Bradford, 23 September, 2011
- Cotterill, S. and Richardson, L. (2011) *Inspiring Democracy: Community anchors and councillors - Research Report*. Manchester: University of Manchester
- DCLG (2010) *Decentralisation and the Localism Bill: An Essential Guide*. London: DCLG
- Dennis, N. (1961) 'Changes in Function and Leadership Renewal', *Sociological Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 55–84
- Development Trusts Association (DTA) (2008) *Fit for Purpose*. London: Locality
- Dolan, P., Hallsworth, M., Halpern, D., King, D., and Vlaev, I. (2010) *MINDSPACE: Influencing behaviour through public policy*. London: Cabinet Office/Institute for Government
- Duncan, P. and Thomas, S. (2000) *Neighbourhood regeneration: Resourcing community involvement*. Bristol: The Policy Press
- Durose, C. (2009) 'Front-line workers and "local knowledge": Neighbourhood stories in contemporary UK local governance', *Public Administration*, Vol. 87, No. 1, pp. 35–49

- Durose, C. (2011) 'Revisiting Lipsky: Front-Line Work in UK Local Governance', *Political Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 4, pp. 978–995
- Durose, C. and Richardson, L. (2009) "'Neighbourhood": A site for policy action, governance ... and empowerment?', in Durose, C., Greasley, S. and Richardson, L. (eds) *Changing Local Governance, Changing Citizens*. Bristol: The Policy Press
- Durose, C., Greasley, S. and Richardson, L. (eds) (2009) *Changing Local Governance, Changing Citizens*. Bristol: The Policy Press
- Durose, C., France, J., Richardson, L. and Lupton, R. (2011) *Towards the 'Big Society': What role for neighbourhood working? Evidence from a comparative European study*, CASEpaper 154. London: LSE
- Durose, C. and Rees, J. (2012, forthcoming) 'The rise and fall of neighbourhood in the New Labour era', *Policy and Politics*
- Falk, N. and Carley, M. (2012) *How can local government build sustainable urban neighbourhoods?* York: JRF
- Fisher, R. and Ury, W. (1991) *Getting to Yes: negotiating agreement without giving in*. 2nd edition, New York: Penguin Books.
- Foot, J. (2009) *Citizen involvement in local governance*. York: JRF
- Gains, F. and Stoker, G. (2011) 'Special advisers and the transmission of ideas from the policy primeval soup', *Policy and Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 485–498
- Garner, S. (2009) 'Home Truths: The White Working Class and the Racialization of Social Housing', in Sveinsson, K.P. (ed) *Who Cares about the White Working Class?* London: Runnymede Trust
- Goodlad, R., Burton, P. and Croft, J. (2005) 'Effectiveness at what? The processes and impact of community involvement in area-based initiatives', *Environment and Planning C Government and Policy*, Vol. 23, No. 6, pp. 923–938
- Goodwin, M. and Richardson, L. (2007) *Changing Behaviours: Smart Solutions to the 'Wicked' Issues, Intelligence Gathering Project on Mechanisms to Change Individuals' Behaviours*. Manchester: University of Manchester
- Governance International (2011) *The Governance International Co-production Roadshows: transforming communities, creating outcomes, improving efficiency*. Birmingham: Governance International
- Hansard Society (2011), *Audit of political engagement 8: The 2011 report*. London: Hansard Society
- Hastings, A. (2009) 'Poor Neighbourhoods and Poor Services: Evidence on the "Rationing" of Environmental Service Provision to Deprived Neighbourhoods', *Urban Studies*, No. 46, Vol. 13, pp. 2907–2927
- Hastings, A. and Matthews, P. (2011) "Sharp Elbows": *Do the Middle-Classes have Advantages in Public Service Provision and if so how?* Project Report. Glasgow: University Of Glasgow
- Heifetz, R. (1994) *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press
- Hooge, M. and Marien, S. (2011) *The perceived effectiveness of non-electoral forms of participation: a comparison between the assessment of citizens and Members of Parliament*. Paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions, St. Gallen, Switzerland, 12–17 April, 2011
- Hudson, M., Phillips, J., Ray, K. and Barnes, H. (2007) *Social Cohesion in Diverse Communities*. York: JRF
- Hupe, P. and Hill, M. (2007) 'Street-level bureaucracy and public accountability', *Public Administration*, Vol. 85, No. 2, pp. 279–299
- iMPower Consulting Ltd. (2012) *Changing the game*. London: iMPower Consulting Ltd
- Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) (2007) *The political skills framework: a councillor's toolkit*. London: IDeA
- International Centre for Participation Studies (ICPS) (undated) *Braithwaite and Guardhouse: having your say*. Bradford: University of Bradford
- IPEG (2010) *An evaluation of the community contracts pilot programme*. London: DCLG

- IPEG and NANM (2011) *The guide to neighbourhood agreements*. London: NANM
- Ipsos MORI (2010a) *Do the public want to join the government of Britain?* London: Ipsos MORI
- Ipsos MORI (2010b) 'Majority of voters still do not know what the "Big Society" means'. Available at: www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oltemId=2675
- John, P., Cotterill, S., Liu, H., Richardson, L., Moseley, A., Nomura, H., Smith, G., Stoker, G., and Wales, C. (2011) *Nudge nudge think think: experimenting with ways to change civic behaviour*. London: Bloomsbury Academic
- John, P. with Richardson, L. (2012) *Nudging Citizens Towards Localism? How Policies to Encourage Behavioural change by Citizens Link to Decentralisation and the 'Big Society'*. London: British Academy
- Johnson, N. (2011) *The effects of global, national and local change on people and places in Bradford*. York: JRF
- Kendall, J. (2009) *The Value of Volunteering in Europe in the Noughties*. Birmingham: Third Sector Research Centre
- Keohane, N. (2011) *Changing behaviours opening a new conversation with the citizen*. London: New Local Government Network
- Kotecha, M., Graham, J. and Cebulla, A. (2008) *Feeling able to influence local decision making: understanding, barriers, facilitators and strategies for increasing empowerment*. London: DCLG
- Lachman, R. (2011) 'What Does The Big Society Mean To Me: A Bradford Perspective'. Speech to DCLG Strategic Partners event Mainstreaming Equalities: Rhetoric or Reality?, Windsor Castle, December 2011
- Local Government Association (2008) *The reputation of local government*. London: LGA
- Loney, M. (1983) *Community Against Government*. London: Heinemann
- Low, J. (1999) *Developing effective community involvement strategies*. York: JRF
- Lowndes, V. and Sullivan, H. (2008) 'How low can you go? Rationales and challenges for neighbourhood governance', *Public Administration*, Vol. 86, No. 1, pp. 53–74.
- Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker, G. (2001). 'Trends in Public Participation: Part 1 – Government Perspectives.' *Public Administration*, Vol. 79, No. 1, pp. 205–222
- Lukes, S. (2005) *Power: A Radical View*. 2nd edition, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lupton, R. (2003) *Poverty Street*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Lynn, J. (2008) *Community Leadership Approaches to Tackling Street Crime*. York: JRF
- Manton Community Alliance (2011), *Manton Community Alliance (MCA) Delivery of Localism: Outcome Summary*. Available at: www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/documents/110919%20Summary%20of%20Impact%20-%20MCA%20Localism%20Model.pdf
- Martin, S. (2008) *Meta-evaluation of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda. The State of Local Services: Performance Improvement in Local Government*. London: DCLG
- Marris, P. and Rein, M. (1967) *Dilemmas of Social Reform*. New York: Atherton Press
- McArthur, A., McGregor, A. and Hastings, A. (1996) *Community involvement in estate regeneration partnerships*. York: JRF
- Moynihan, D. (1969) *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: community action in the War on Poverty*. New York: Free Press
- Neville, S. (2011) 'Big Society is "damaged" brand, says charity leader'. *Financial Times*, 16 December, 2011
- North West Together We Can (NWTWC) (2010) *NWTWC Community Empowerment Awards September 2010*. Stockport: NWTWC
- NWTWC (2011) *Community Empowerment Awards March 2011*. Stockport: NWTWC

-
- Pattie, C., Seyd, P. and Whiteley, P. (2005) *Citizenship in Britain: Values, participation and democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Pearce, J. and Milne, E. J. (2010) *Participation and community on Bradford's traditionally white estates: a community research project*. York: JRF
- Power, A. and Tunstall, R. (1995) *Swimming against the tide: Progress and polarisation in twenty "unpopular" council estates 1980–95*. York: JRF
- NWEO (2010a) *Using Disaggregated Equality Data to Improve Services*. Manchester: NWEO
- NWEO (2010b) *Unpublished verification report on North West Member Development Charter Level 2*. Manchester: NWEO
- Richardson, L. (2011a) *Working in neighbourhoods in Bradford*. York: JRF
- Richardson, L. (2011b) 'Cross-fertilisation of governance and governmentality in practical policy making on behavioural change', *Policy and Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 533–546
- Richardson, L. (2012, forthcoming) 'Can we "nudge" citizens towards more civic action?', in Ishkanian, A., Szreter, S. and Seckinelgin, H. (eds) *Big Society?* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing
- Rutter, J., Marshall, E. and Sims, S. (2012) *The 'S' Factors: lessons from IFG's policy success reunions*. London: Institute for Government
- SQW Consulting (2008) *Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders: Final Evaluation Report*. London: DCLG
- Standards for England (2009) *Public Perceptions of Ethics*. London: Standards for England
- Stewart, M. and Taylor, M. (1995) *Empowerment and Estate Regeneration: a critical review*. Bristol: The Policy Press
- Stoker, G. (2006) *Why Politics Matters: Making Democracy Work*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Taylor, M., Wilson, M., Purdue, D. and Wilde, P. (2007) *Changing neighbourhoods: lessons from the JRF Neighbourhood Programme*. Bristol: The Policy Press
- Taylor, M. (2011) *Public Policy in the Community*. 2nd edition, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Thaler, R. H., and Sunstein, C. R. (2008) *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press
- The Bolton News* (2011) 'Tory leader wants council cash spread equally across borough', 21 August 2011
- Travers, T. (2011) *Engaging London's communities: The Big Society and Localism*. London: London Councils
- Tunstall, R. (2009) *Communities in recession: the impact on deprived neighbourhoods*. York: JRF
- Tunstall, R., Lupton, R., Power, A. and Richardson, L. (2011) *Building the Big Society*. CASEreport 67. London: LSE
- White, G., Dickinson, S., Miles, N., Richardson, L., Russell, H., Taylor, M. (2006a) *Exemplars of Neighbourhood Governance*. London: DCLG
- White, G., Dickinson, S., Miles, N., Richardson, L., Russell, H., Taylor, M. (2006b) *Exemplars of Neighbourhood Governance: Annex Two*. London: DCLG
- YouGov (2011) 'Doubt for "Big Society"'. Available at: labs.yougov.co.uk/news/2011/02/15/doubt-big-society/
- Young Foundation (2010) *Public services and civil society working together: Promising ideas for effective local partnerships between state and citizen*. London: Young Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has supported this project as part of its programme of research and innovative development projects, which it hopes will be of value to policy-makers, practitioners and service users. The facts presented and views expressed in this report are, however, those of the author and not necessarily those of JRF, nor of Bradford Metropolitan Council.

A pdf version of this publication is available from the JRF website (www.jrf.org.uk). Further copies of this report, or any other JRF publication, can be obtained from the JRF website (www.jrf.org.uk/publications) or by emailing publications@jrf.org.uk.

A CIP catalogue record for this report is available from the British Library.

All rights reserved. Reproduction of this report by photocopying or electronic means for non-commercial purposes is permitted. Otherwise, no part of this report may be reproduced, adapted, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

© University of Manchester 2012
First published in 2012 by the
Joseph Rowntree Foundation
ISBN: 9781859359044 (pdf)
Typeset by Soapbox

Joseph Rowntree Foundation
The Homestead
40 Water End
York YO30 6WP
www.jrf.org.uk