Cleaning up neighbourhoods

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Environmental problems and service provision in deprived areas

Annette Hastings, John Flint, Carol McKenzie and Carl Mills

Annette Hastings is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Urban Studies University of Glasgow, **John Flint** is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, **Carol McKenzie** and **Carl Mills** were research assistants at the Department of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow, UK.

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Executive summary

There has been growing concern that the quality of public services can be affected by the nature and scale of problems in deprived neighbourhoods and that poor services can contribute to a widening 'gap' between deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods. There is also an increased emphasis within national policy on the quality of neighbourhood environments – the so-called 'liveability' agenda. This report explores the challenges of delivering 'street scene' environmental services – such as street sweeping and refuse collection – in deprived and less deprived areas and examines the gap in environmental amenity between these different neighbourhoods. It also contributes to our understanding of the interplay between poor services and neighbourhood decline.

The research involved a telephone survey of chief officers in local authority environmental service departments across the UK and detailed case studies of policy and practice in environmental service provision in four local authorities with significant levels of deprivation. Each case study involved work in three neighbourhoods within the authority – two deprived and one less deprived – as well as focus groups with residents and frontline environmental operatives, interviews with senior council staff and observation on the ground.

The 'environmental gap' between more and less deprived neighbourhoods

The study found that there was a gap between the environmental amenity of deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods involved in the research. The poor neighbourhoods had more environmental problems than the affluent neighbourhoods. They also had a greater range of problems and their problems were more severe, particularly regarding graffiti, litter, fly-tipping of bulky items of waste and poorly maintained public and open spaces.

There appeared to be a complex range of reasons for this. As well as higher rates of economic inactivity, the deprived neighbourhoods usually had higher population densities, particularly child densities. This meant that there was more use of the neighbourhood environment, leading to more rubbish and more wear and tear. Their built forms were also often more difficult to manage than those of other residential areas. For example, large open spaces, high housing densities and undefended front gardens were common in the deprived case studies, but largely absent from those that were not deprived. The presence of higher proportions of vulnerable households, less able to manage their neighbourhood environment, was also important. Thus it was clear that the distinctive features of deprived neighbourhoods interacted with each other – and also with wider social changes, such as diminishing social responsibility – with the result that residents of deprived neighbourhoods often found it difficult to control their local environment.

Living and working in problem environments

The study found that residents and frontline workers behave differently towards the environment in neighbourhoods with severe problems. In these neighbourhoods, sometimes even the most motivated and responsible residents took less care of their environment now than they used to. However, residents could be energised when problems

began to be addressed, potentially improving informal social control. An important finding was that residents of neighbourhoods with few problems could be fiercely protective of their environmental quality and were often willing and able complainants.

The standard and nature of services differed between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods. Gaps in amenity sometimes appeared to reflect poorer service standards in deprived areas. The volume and persistence of rubbish and litter in deprived neighbourhoods could make it difficult for environmental operatives to keep on top of problems, resulting in reduced standards. Standards of work could also be reduced because of fear, threats and violence directed at frontline workers. However, in neighbourhoods where problems were being tackled, operatives' motivations sometimes improved as they found their jobs easier and residents' expectations increased. Likewise, operatives working in neighbourhoods with few environmental challenges felt able to work effectively and sometimes were even willing to go beyond their remits. However, operatives' motivations were clearly affected as much by the knowledge that shoddy work could result in a complaint from the public, as by a drive to ensure the highest standards of cleanliness. Thus, the research revealed how residents' and service providers' ways of coping with different neighbourhood challenges can exacerbate the problems of some areas and potentially further polarise poor and affluent neighbourhoods.

Closing the environmental gap: the policy and practice response

The study also explored how councils were responding to local problems and delivering their core environmental services, such as street cleansing and refuse collection, in different kinds of areas. The telephone survey identified four different approaches to providing neighbourhood environmental services: standardised provision, hotspotting, tacit targeting and formal targeting. Each approach attempts to balance the needs of deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods in different ways, and emphasises seeking equality of service inputs or equality of outcomes to different degrees. About half of the local authorities interviewed were strategically enhancing – or targeting – services in order to address perceived environmental problems, but this targeting was not always focused on deprivation per se. In some cases, there was an unintentional systematic bias against deprived areas due to the failure to consider the differential needs of these areas at a strategic level.

The four case studies of local authority policy and practice – each exemplifying one of the approaches – revealed that each had different strengths and weaknesses and would be suitable in particular contexts:

- A standardised approach, in which universal levels of services are provided to all residential neighbourhoods, was only found to be appropriate for local authorities without a large gulf between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods and in a context where resource levels were sufficient to ensure that all places received high-quality services.
- The hotspotting approach, in which standardised services are augmented on a responsive basis with specific additional provision, such as roving clean-up squads, could become a form of 'firefighting' rather than a strategic means to resolve problems. However, it was found to be necessary in contexts where there were barriers to developing a more strategic targeting approach.
- The tacit targeting approach allowed services to be routinely programmed according to service needs – for example, more regular street cleansing in neighbourhoods prone to littering. It was found that it could be a means of targeting additional resources to deprived neighbourhoods by stealth and avoiding the political controversy that explicit, formal targeting of these areas could engender.

- A formal targeting approach explicitly recognises that deprived neighbourhoods will routinely require higher service levels, such as more frequent street cleansing or bulky waste collection, due to their greater propensity to face problems. Where there is political and community 'buy-in' to the idea, service providers can be empowered to attempt to reduce the environmental gap between more and less deprived neighbourhoods.

While targeting is important, other management approaches can also lead to better outcomes across localities. Some local authorities were improving service coordination and synchronisation, while regeneration efforts that focused on physical changes were also helping to improve deprived neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood management was being used to target environmental amenity in some areas and warden schemes were also popular. And, crucially, the case study local authorities also emphasised the importance of encouraging residents of all types of neighbourhood to develop a more socially responsible attitude towards their neighbourhood environments, and had developed high-profile information and education campaigns, alongside use of enforcement powers for this purpose.

Key messages

The report concludes that the environmental gap between deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods will only be reduced if local authorities are supported in this endeavour by central government, politically and financially. It emphasises that enhancing services in deprived neighbourhoods will only be politically acceptable when this does not jeopardise the amenity of more affluent neighbourhoods. The research therefore suggests that special regeneration funding, such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, can play an important role in kick-starting improvements in deprived neighbourhoods where it is available. But mainstreaming these funds will be important to ensure sustained benefits. It argues that significant, long-term compensation for the nature and intensity of deprivation at the local authority *and* neighbourhood level will be necessary for local services to make a positive contribution to overcoming the severe problems of many deprived places.

Introduction to the policy context and to the study

Introduction

This report explores why deprived residential neighbourhoods often have more environmental problems than other kinds of neighbourhoods. It is also concerned with what is being done and what should be done by local authorities and others in order to narrow this 'environmental gap'. The report provides new insight into the challenges involved in providing public services in both more and less deprived neighbourhoods. It also provides important evidence on why it is that poor neighbourhoods often appear to have poor public services, at least in the case of environmental service provision.

'Narrowing the gap' between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods

The government has set itself the goal of 'narrowing the gap' in life opportunities between the most deprived and average neighbourhoods (SEU, 2001). It has recognised that public service provision is part of the explanation for this gap. From within the Cabinet Office, the Office of Public Services Reform set out the goal that: "Wherever they live, citizens should be able to rely on good quality public services" (Office of Public Services Reform, 2002, p 11). Further, Jack McConnell MSP, Scotland's First Minister has argued that where public services are poor or inadequate they "can exaggerate inequality and devastate families by failing those who need (them) most" (Jack McConnell MSP, quoted in Scottish Executive, 2002, p 9). Thus, at both central and local government levels, agencies are called upon to examine how their policies, resource allocation and delivery mechanisms for mainstream programmes, including health, education, policing and environmental services, may be most effectively targeted towards the needs of deprived neighbourhoods (Audit Commission, 2003).

This so-called 'mainstreaming' approach recognises that mainstream services involve far greater resources than special initiative funding, and therefore that these services are 'the Government's main weapons against deprivation' (SEU, 2000). Local authorities and other providers are therefore encouraged to 'bend the spend' towards deprived neighbourhoods via a series of floor targets, local public service agreements and other incentives to help ensure that public services meet the needs of deprived areas. Further, local authorities are being encouraged to seek continuous improvement in their service delivery and to place a greater emphasis on service outcomes through frameworks such as the Best Value inspection and audit regime and Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

The 'liveability' of residential neighbourhoods

Never before in the UK has there been such a focus on the quality of neighbourhood environments. The 'liveability' of residential areas – the extent to which streets and public spaces are "clean, safe and green" – is central to the current government's policy agenda. This agenda responds to ever-growing evidence that such issues are "the number one priority" for local communities (DEFRA, 2004, p 3).

The government's desire to improve neighbourhood environments is evidenced in a plethora of legislation and initiatives. The most recent was the 2005 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act. This builds on the provisions of the earlier 1990 Environmental Protection Act, which introduced a Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse and placed a duty on local authorities to maintain local environments to required standards of cleanliness. The new Act enhances the powers available to local authorities to combat problems such as littering, abandoned vehicles and, notably, makes fly-tipping an arrestable offence with fines of up to £50,000 or up to five years imprisonment for perpetrators.

An element of the government's liveability agenda is the attempt to tackle 'antisocial behaviour'. This is based on the 'broken windows' thesis that persistent low-level environmental incivilities – such as graffiti, vandalism and noise nuisance – can have a corrosive impact on quality of life, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods (Millie et al, 2005). Indeed, such problems are regarded as contributing significantly to the unpopularity of neighbourhoods and to neighbourhood decline. Various measures have therefore been introduced to strengthen control mechanisms in local areas, such as neighbourhood wardens and increased police and community support officers. The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act and the 2003 Antisocial Behaviour Act (plus a similar Act in Scotland in 2004) gave new powers to the police, local authorities and social landlords to tackle both antisocial behaviour and environmental offences. These powers included the ability to issue fixed penalty notices for littering, graffiti, vandalism and noise nuisance and enabled the introduction of local bye-laws to combat dog fouling and other offences. The legislation also introduced a range of more controversial measures that could be utilised in relation to environmental offences such as Antisocial Behaviour Orders, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, Community Reparation Orders and Parenting Orders.

This document reports research on the challenges of delivering the government's liveability agenda in residential neighbourhoods in ways that contribute to narrowing the gap between poor and affluent neighbourhoods. The report contributes to our understanding of the interplay between poor services and neighbourhood decline and will therefore be of interest to those concerned with neighbourhood renewal as well as those interested in environmental service provision.

The research approach

The report draws on extensive research with people living and working in deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods. It is also based on detailed evidence from senior players in local authorities and other agencies on the policy and practice response to neighbourhood environmental problems.

The research focused on 'street-scene' environmental services, that is those which impact on the amenity of the street and which deal with litter and fly-tipping, refuse collection, landscape maintenance, estate caretaking and the removal of graffiti and dog dirt. The study did not explore wider issues of environmental amenity, for example air pollution or proximity to landfill sites or electric pylons. Those services that – in two-tier local authorities – are the remit of county rather than district councils, such as highway maintenance or

waste management, were not explored in detail. Rather the focus was on the district-level services that contribute to 'clean, safe and green' public streets and spaces.

Further information on the methodology of the research is provided in the appendices, so this chapter simply outlines how the study was conducted. There were two main elements to the project: a telephone survey with local authorities and in-depth case studies in four local authorities.

Telephone survey

A survey was conducted by telephone with chief officers in 49 local authority environmental service departments throughout the UK. The survey was designed to gain an overview of policy and delivery with respect to street-scene services in residential neighbourhoods, as well as a sense of the problems in deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods.

The 49 authorities selected included a spread of local authority types (for example, metropolitan districts, unitary authorities) and represented a spread of regional as well as urban and rural contexts within the UK. Authorities across the full spectrum of deprivation, from the very deprived to the very affluent, were included. This allowed the study to gauge whether deprived neighbourhoods faced distinctive challenges in different kinds of settings. The sample of 49 represents approximately 10% of all relevant local authorities in the UK. (See Appendix A for full details of the telephone survey.)

In-depth case studies

Detailed research was conducted in four of the local authorities that took part in the survey: Birmingham City Council, Durham District Council, Glasgow City Council and Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. Within each, there was a focus on three neighbourhoods: two of them deprived and one less deprived. The case studies focused on three main themes:

- the overall strategic approach to providing environmental services and how the approach responded to the needs of deprived and other types of neighbourhoods;
- differences between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods in terms of their environmental problems and residents' and workers' experiences of, and responses to, these problems; and
- practical ways of challenging environmental problems.

The case studies involved interviews with environmental service providers in local authorities and included senior strategists, councillors and local managers. Interviews were also conducted with key observers from other organisations including housing organisations, the police, community representatives and neighbourhood environmental wardens. In each neighbourhood, a focus group was convened with frontline street sweepers and refuse collectors. A focus group was also held with residents in each neighbourhood. In total, 196 people took part in this part of the research. In addition, the case studies also involved observation by the research team of environmental amenity in the research sites, usually accompanied by local workers or community representatives. This provided practical insights into local experiences and challenges. Finally, key strategy documents were also analysed for each case study.

The four local authorities were chosen according to a number of criteria, which are detailed in Appendix B. Two criteria were particularly important. First, given the focus of the research on deprived neighbourhoods, the four authorities all faced significant levels of

deprivation. In the cases of Birmingham, Glasgow and Knowsley these problems were severe.

Second, each authority had a different approach to delivering environmental services to residential neighbourhoods. In the cases of Durham and Knowsley, services were delivered in a generally standardised manner, irrespective of neighbourhood deprivation, although, in Knowsley, standard services were augmented significantly by teams which addressed problem 'hot spots'. Birmingham and Glasgow had developed distinctive ways to routinely provide enhanced services in deprived or environmentally problematic neighbourhoods. Further information on, and analysis of, the four approaches to service delivery is reserved for Chapter Four. However, the next section, which introduces the neighbourhood case studies, gives a practical sense of how these models play out at the neighbourhood level.

The case study neighbourhoods

Three neighbourhoods within each of the four authorities were researched in depth. In each set of three, two neighbourhoods suffered significant levels of deprivation and one did not. (See Appendix B for details on how these were chosen.) Neighbourhoods were characterised as deprived if their economic characteristics put them within the bottom fifth of neighbourhoods nationally. The four less deprived neighbourhoods were all above this threshold and included middle income as well as affluent populations. The four boxes that follow provide key characteristics of the neighbourhoods.[1] In each case the more deprived neighbourhoods are described first, with the less deprived neighbourhood last.

The Birmingham neighbourhood case studies

Aston is a very deprived inner-city area in Birmingham in the bottom 2% of deprived Lower-Level Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in England according to the 2004 Indices of Multiple Deprivation. 70% of the population is from minority ethnic groups, comprising several waves of different populations settling in the area (Birmingham average: 30%). The ward has a relatively young population compared to the average for Birmingham, with 30.5% aged under 16 (Birmingham: 22%). In the summer of 2004, around 57% of the working-age population were not employed (Birmingham: 35%). Over 50% of the housing is in the social rented sector. The area has suffered from a stigmatised reputation for criminality, gang culture and ethnic tension. The case study comprised the operational areas of the Aston Pride New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative, which covers approximately 4,500 properties of mixed traditional and non-traditional design.

The Aston ward receives some of the highest levels of environmental services in Birmingham. It receives more frequent road sweeping, more special collection days and has among the highest levels of devolved budget funding, which may be utilised for additional environmental service provision. In the NDC area, mainline services are further augmented by additional environmental operatives and equipment through a £1 million environmental improvement project.

Bandywood is situated in the relatively deprived Oscott ward, which is part of the outer metropolitan core of Birmingham. It falls just within the bottom fifth of deprived LSOAs nationally. The area has a long-standing, mainly white population, and at ward level there is a lower concentration of minority ethnic groups (9.4%) than the city average of 30%. The percentage of the population aged under 16 is close to the Birmingham average of 22% and the percentage of the working-age population who

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[1] Most statistics come from the neighbourhood statistics websites for England and Scotland (www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk; www.sns.gov.uk). Statistics on average house prices were supplied anecdotally.

are economically inactive is lower than the Birmingham average (Oscott: 28%; Birmingham: 35%). The neighbourhood is designed on traditional 'garden city' lines.

At the time of the research, there was no ongoing regeneration programme in Bandywood, although some environmental improvements including fencing, landscaping and alley-gating have recently been made, along with a £75,000 investment in street lighting. The Bandywood estate receives a weekly bin collection and weekly street cleansing. The Oscott ward has a dedicated environmental warden, and, in June 2004, a dedicated clean-up team targeted fly-tipping and vandalism in the area.

Mere Green is an affluent suburb located in the outer Sutton area of the city. With good transport links to the city, it is clearly part of Birmingham's commuter belt. In the Sutton Oaks Ward in which Mere Green is located, 5% of the population are from minority ethnic groups, considerably less than the (30%) city average. The area has very high levels of owner-occupation (86.2%), and some properties are bought and sold for more than £400,000. Concentrated deprivation is not a feature of the neighbourhood, and, although there are several streets that were built as social housing, the majority of houses there have been bought under the right to buy (RTB). The area has wide streets, deep verges and off-street parking.

Mere Green receives a weekly refuse collection and street cleansing is on a fortnightly basis. The area makes the greatest use of recycling collections and facilities of any ward in Birmingham. It also has a street warden.

The Durham neighbourhood case studies

Sherburn Road is a small, largely socially rented estate, with around 200 properties located on the outskirts of Durham city centre. It was built in the 1930s to house families affected by slum clearance and was formerly considered to be one of the district's more troubled neighbourhoods, with a reputation for social problems and crime. In 1996, ownership of the estate transferred from Durham City Council to Three Rivers Housing Association, which embarked on a £5 million housing and environmental programme, complemented by a £4 million Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) initiative. Demand for housing on the estate is now described as very high, with no void properties and an extensive waiting list. It remains, however, within the bottom 5% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England – over 56% of the population is economically inactive compared to a Durham average of 24%, with 11% of these 'permanently sick'. Over a quarter of the population is under 16 (Durham average: 16%), and 15% of households are headed by a lone parent (three times the Durham average of 4.5%).

The estate receives the standard environmental services provided by Durham City Council: weekly refuse collection and litter picking as well as programmed grounds maintenance. It also has an extra weekly litter-picking service and enhanced bulk refuse collection, financed from rents.

The Grove and Beechdale estates are both situated in Coxhoe, which is around four miles from Durham City Centre. Coxhoe is a former pit village, which is rapidly gentrifying and demand for properties in all tenures is high.

The Grove is a predominantly social housing estate, comprising 68 rented properties built between 1933-38. It is a small area ranked in the bottom 11% of deprived neighbourhoods nationally. Over 43% of residents are classified as economically inactive, with a third of these being 'permanently sick'. A fifth of residents are aged 16 or under and 8% of households are headed by a lone parent. There are pockets of owner-occupation on the estate facilitated by RTB. Homes were selling for around £70,000 in early 2005. All houses on the estate are semi-detached two-bedroom properties. The estate is quite spacious, with a lot of car parking space.

Beechdale is a new-build estate, which is home to middle-income households and young families. It consists of 239 two- to three-bedroom detached and semi-detached properties. All properties have extensive front and back gardens and driveways. Average house prices in 2004 were in the region of £170,000. The estate is situated close to the centre of Coxhoe. A fifth of residents are 16 and under and 3% of households are headed by a lone parent.

Both the Grove and Beechdale receive Durham City Council's standard level of environmental services: weekly refuse collection and litter picking as well as programmed grounds maintenance. Both neighbourhoods benefit from an environmental warden service.

The Glasgow neighbourhood case studies

Sighthill is an estate close to Glasgow city centre containing nearly 2,500 dwellings in multi-storey and deck-access blocks. It is extremely disadvantaged: the enumeration district in which it sits is within the most deprived 10% of wards in the city. Compared to Glasgow's high level of economic inactivity (27%), over 40% of Sighthill's residents are economically inactive, with over 80% of these being 'permanently sick'. A quarter of the population are aged 16 or under (Glasgow average: 18%). In 2002, 500 new households moved into the neighbourhood as part of the resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow. Ownership of the stock transferred to Glasgow Housing Association in 2004 and the neighbourhood is now managed by a local housing organisation. There was no ongoing regeneration in the estate at the time of writing. Fully 99% of the estate's properties fall within the bottom Council Tax band.

Refuse is collected on a weekly basis from the deck-access dwellings and twice weekly from the tower blocks (in common with most tower blocks in the city). Main roads in the area are swept three times a week, with minor roads swept on a weekly basis. The estate receives the standard programmed grounds maintenance service.

Reidvale is a largely traditional, tenemental area of nearly 1,000 homes in the city's East End and has been owned and managed by a community-based housing association since the early 1980s. Economic inactivity rates are in line with the Glasgow average (27%), as are proportions of people identified as 'permanently sick' (23%). 15% of the population are under 16 years old. An eighth of the properties fall within the bottom Council Tax band. As well as extensive physical redevelopment, the neighbourhood has been subject to a number of initiatives focused on environmental issues in recent years including a community policing initiative, intensive housing management and specific services provided by the housing association.

The neighbourhood has a dedicated street cleansing operative who attempts to clean the whole neighbourhood virtually on a daily basis. He operates a mechanical sweeper, the capital cost of which was met by the housing association's rent account. Reidvale receives the standard city-wide refuse collection service and the kerbside bulk collection service which operates for tenemental parts of the city. The association provides landscaping and close cleaning services, and funds its own graffiti removal service at a cost of approximately £10,000 per annum. In mid-2005, it was considering contracting the council to collect bulky items from backcourts like some other housing associations in the city.

Located in the city's East End, *North Dennistoun* is one of the few neighbourhoods of relative affluence within this intensely deprived part of Glasgow. In 2004, around 10% of residents were classified as 'permanently sick' (less than half the Glasgow average) but interestingly, there were no Jobseeker's Allowance claimants.[2] The area has experienced a house price boom in the past two to three years and two-bedroom flats currently sell for more than £100,000 (only 3% of properties are

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[2]   A data error is possible here.

within the bottom Council Tax band). The built form varies: there are streets of traditional, three- and four-storey tenements, with a secondary school in the centre and, separate streets of large villas, many of which are converted into two or more homes. The population is mixed. There are a few families, but more commonly the neighbourhood houses professional singles and couples, as well as an increasing number of students.

Service levels – particularly of street cleansing – vary within the neighbourhood. Tenemental streets are cleaned more frequently than those where villas predominate, in some cases three or more times more frequently. All homes receive a standard refuse collection. Tenemental areas have kerbside bulk collection; villa residents have a 'call-up' service where bulky items are collected from gardens.

The Knowsley neighbourhood case studies

The *Fincham* case study comprised 4,000 households living in traditional terraced dwellings built for social renting largely in the 1930s and 1950s. The neighbourhood straddles two electoral wards, which, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, are the 8th and 13th most deprived wards in the country. 58% of the population is economically inactive (Knowsley average: 43%) with a quarter of these 'permanently sick' (Knowsley average: 12%). An estimated 30% of residents are aged 16 or under and 26% of households are headed by a lone parent (Knowsley average: 12%). The neighbourhood is subject to a NDC initiative, which is scheduled to run until 2011. Some parts of the traditionally built estate have been refurbished, with specific attention paid to improving the defence of gardens and open space. The neighbourhood has a long-standing settled community and a number of properties have been bought under RTB provisions.

Fincham receives Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council's (KMBC) standard weekly refuse and street cleansing service and it has a neighbourhood warden. 'Hit squads' also address issues such as graffiti, fly-tipping and de-littering, particularly prior to the advent of the NDC. NDC-funded staff now provide these services and attempt to manage environmental problems associated with the regeneration process.

Tower Hill is a severely deprived neighbourhood of just over 3,000 dwellings. It is within a ward that is in the most deprived 7% of wards nationally. Over a third of the population are 16 and under. 28% of households are headed by a lone parent. Economic inactivity is at 61%, of which just under a third are 'permanently sick'. Large parts of the neighbourhood were built to the Bradbury design, with bedrooms rather than living spaces facing onto roads. Large, barely overlooked open spaces with densely planted shrub beds divide up the estate. At the time of writing, Tower Hill was subject to a range of physical and social regeneration measures. Demolition had produced a number of parcels of semi-derelict land awaiting redevelopment.

Tower Hill receives KMBC's standard weekly refuse, street cleansing, hit squad and warden service.

Shevington Park is a newly built, owner-occupied estate in North Kirby. It is home to middle-income families and to older, retired residents. Although it is the Knowsley example of a less deprived neighbourhood for the purposes of this research, it is still quite deprived – it is just within the bottom quarter of deprived neighbourhoods nationally. This is a reflection of the borough-wide deprivation problem in Knowsley. It is, however, above the bottom fifth threshold used in the study to distinguish less deprived neighbourhoods from deprived neighbourhoods. Economic inactivity rates are 24% – around half the Knowsley average; a third of these people are 'permanently sick'. Nearly a quarter of residents are 16 and under and 11% of households are headed by a lone parent. In early 2005, house prices on the estate were between £80,000 and £150,000 depending on property type – significantly higher than in the more disadvantaged parts of Knowsley. The estate has been built in phases by a range of developers in traditional street and cul-de-sac design. There are a few short terraces, but

most houses are semi-detached. The estate is bounded by farmland on one side and an arterial road on the other – this divides it from the Tower Hill estate.

KMBC provides standard services to the estate, which also benefits from the interventions of hit squads and community clean-up campaigns as well as a regular neighbourhood warden patrol.

Structure of the report

This chapter has given an introduction to the policy context for the study and to the methods of research and case study sites. The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 examines the extent and nature of environmental problems in deprived neighbourhoods and compares these to less deprived neighbourhoods. The chapter assesses why there is an 'environmental gap' between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods.

Chapter 3 explores the experiences of residents and frontline environmental operatives. It identifies how the local environment impacts on residents' quality of life and on environmental service operatives' work experiences. It reveals the interplay between environmental problems, residents' behaviour, and operatives' attitudes and working practices. It reflects on how this interaction can influence the management of local environments and contribute to the environmental gap between deprived and less deprived places.

Chapter 4 examines the approaches taken by local authorities to narrow the gap between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods. It considers both policy and practice issues and assesses the impact of targeted service enhancements to deprived neighbourhoods and strategies to encourage more responsibility from residents.

Chapter 5 sets out key messages arising from this research for central and local government policy makers, practitioners and residents. It suggests that the environmental needs of deprived neighbourhoods need to be taken into account more clearly in both policy and practice.

The nature and causes of environmental problems in different neighbourhoods

Introduction

This chapter explores the nature and causes of neighbourhood environmental problems. It begins by considering the features of local environmental problems and assessing whether deprived neighbourhoods face more problems than their less deprived counterparts. The second part of the chapter explores the factors that cause or exacerbate environmental problems and tries to account for any discrepancy between the levels of problems in deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods.

Environmental problems in deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods

Table 1 sets out the range of problems that affect the liveability of residential areas and identifies their prevalence and severity in the deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods. It shows that the deprived neighbourhoods in the study had both a greater range and extent of environmental problems than less deprived neighbourhoods.

Some serious environmental incivilities were largely confined to deprived neighbourhoods and included: fly-tipping; abandoned, burnt-out vehicles; advanced presentation of domestic refuse; littered and poorly maintained open spaces and gardens. Indeed, there were striking differences in garden maintenance between poor and less deprived neighbourhoods. In parts of some poorer neighbourhoods, every other garden appeared littered and unkempt. Such degradation was unusual in less deprived neighbourhoods. Perhaps surprisingly, graffiti was not a major problem in any of the neighbourhoods within the study, although, in some of the poor neighbourhoods, it was a persistent irritant. Service managers did, however, report that incidents of graffiti were generally significantly higher in deprived neighbourhoods than elsewhere.

The table also shows that issues such as littering and dog fouling were present in all neighbourhoods. Residents of less deprived neighbourhoods tended to suggest that these issues were significant in their neighbourhood. However, the evidence overall pointed to clear differences in the nature and scale of these problems in deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods.

In some neighbourhoods, environmental degradation was partially linked to antisocial behaviour. In the most extreme examples, gang rivalries, drug misuse, criminality and actual violence blighted whole parts of neighbourhoods. As is discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter 3, this could have an environmental impact as some residents withdrew from trying to manage their neighbourhood. More commonly, however, residents were

Table 1: Environmental problems in deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods: an outline comparison

Nature of environmental problem	Issue in deprived neighbourhoods	Serious problem in deprived neighbourhoods	Issue in less deprived neighbourhoods	Serious problem in less deprived neighbourhoods
Litter	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Dog fouling	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Advanced street presentation of domestic refuse	Yes	Yes	No	No
Graffiti	Yes	No	No	No
Vandalism to property	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Under-maintained green space	Yes	Yes	No	No
Under-maintained public space	Yes	Yes	No	No
Littered and unkempt gardens	Yes	Yes	No	No
Fly-tipping	Yes	Yes	No	No
Burnt-out vehicles	Yes	Sometimes	No	No
Young people 'hanging out'	Yes	Sometimes	Yes	No
Antisocial behaviour – drugs, gangs	Yes	Sometimes	No	No

Note: This table draws on the evidence of residents, environmental operatives and service providers, as well as on the observations of the research team during the conduct of the study. Problems are categorised as 'serious' if they were said to be both prevalent and persistent by a majority of research participants and where the research team witnessed this on the ground. The views of research participants were largely consistent, although residents of less deprived neighbourhoods sometimes considered that they had serious problems. This latter view was supported by only a minority of other participants in the research and was not supported by the observations of the research team.

concerned about the environmental problems caused by much lower levels of antisocial behaviour: young people drinking and causing minor damage to bus shelters, for example. In some cases, it was clear that the simple presence of young people 'hanging out' was considered an environmental problem in itself.

While Table 1 sets out the big picture in terms of the gap between poor and less deprived neighbourhoods, two caveats to this are important:

• The difference between the environment in deprived and less deprived areas was much less marked in Durham than in the other three authorities. Indeed, Durham's deprived neighbourhoods appear to enjoy a similar level of environmental amenity to the less deprived neighbourhoods in the three metropolitan authorities. Reasons for this are explored later in the chapter.
• One of the less deprived neighbourhoods – North Dennistoun in Glasgow – had more problems than the other three less deprived neighbourhoods. In Glasgow overall, there is often a significant gap between the amenity of deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods,

although some less deprived tenemental areas (like North Dennistoun) can have specific problems due to the nature of the built form. This issue is explored later.

Thus, a stark finding of the research is that there is a gulf in the environmental amenity of deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods, especially in the three large metropolitan authorities in the study. However, as Chapter 1 identified, deprived neighbourhoods in Birmingham, Glasgow and, to a lesser extent, Knowsley, actually get some additional service inputs over and above those provided in less deprived neighbourhoods. A key question therefore arises: why are the visible outcomes still worse than in less deprived neighbourhoods? The rest of the chapter explores the complex reasons for this.

Why is there an environmental gap between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods?

Deprived neighbourhoods are prone to environmental problems because they are different in key ways to less deprived neighbourhoods. This deceptively simple finding largely explains the environmental gap between poor and affluent neighbourhoods. A combination of factors can affect environmental amenity, including both structural factors and cultural issues:

• the demographic profile of the population;
• the nature of the built environment;
• the attitudes, actions and capacities of residents; and
• variations in service provision.

Demographic issues

The demographic profiles of deprived neighbourhoods are distinctive. The pen portraits of the case study neighbourhoods included in Chapter 1 highlight this. Overall, deprived neighbourhoods (including those considered here) often have:

• higher concentrations of economically disadvantaged households, with higher rates of economic inactivity overall;
• higher proportions of vulnerable residents for whom economic disadvantage is compounded by social problems;
• substantially higher than average child and youth densities, with children much more likely to live in households headed by one rather than two parents.

These demographic factors put the neighbourhood environment under pressure in different kinds of ways.

Concentrated economic disadvantage

> "There's whole families not working, and people around the whole time. It leads to heavy footfall.… Where I live it's empty by day when everyone leaves in their cars." (senior manager, local authority)

Neighbourhoods with relatively high levels of economic inactivity can find that their streets and public areas are busier. This feature puts pressure on the environment as there is more wear and tear and there is the potential for more littering. Refuse collectors and their managers also suggested that households with low incomes and/or unemployed members produced more rubbish than other sorts of households (see Box 1). This is partly, but not

only, because there is a relationship between low-income families and higher numbers of children.

Box 1: Why do economically disadvantaged households produce more rubbish?

Bulky items (furniture, appliances, toys)
- Low levels of car ownership mean that households are less likely to be able to dispose of their bulky items themselves.
- Low-income households are less likely to be able to afford high-quality, more durable household items and may therefore be compelled to renew items more frequently than other households.
- There will be more wear and tear on household items (leading to more frequent disposal) where there are more children in the home or where it is frequently occupied because of unemployment.

Daily household refuse
- More children equals more rubbish, for example nappies, food packaging.
- More rubbish will be produced in a residential area where houses are usually occupied, than in one where household members are at work during the daytime.
- Poorer households may buy less fresh and more pre-packaged foodstuffs leading to more bulky tins, jars, plastics and so on.
- Households may be less able to recycle household refuse (due to having less space for storage prior to collection and lower car ownership creating problems in transporting it to collection points).

At both a household and neighbourhood level, it can be difficult to contain high volumes of rubbish. Bins can quickly overflow, making it more likely that domestic refuse becomes litter as it is transported by wind or vermin. Refuse collectors suggested that bin bags were heavier in deprived areas than elsewhere, making it more likely for bags to split and spillage to occur during the collection process. Bulky refuse is an obvious blight on the street scene.

Concentrated vulnerability

The housing system tends to sort vulnerable people with social problems into deprived neighbourhoods. The evidence of the research is that such households contribute significantly to environmental problems. For example, an owner-occupier suffering domestic abuse had allowed her garden to become piled up with refuse. Other householders lacked the confidence or skills, or were simply too stressed, to call the local authority to have their bulky items collected or an infestation of vermin addressed. In a similar vein, drug misusers tended to cause environmental degradation to the private areas of neighbourhoods such as common stairs, alleyways and empty houses. Social and economic problems can put households under severe pressure and affect their priorities:

> "Some people in deprived neighbourhoods do value things, but they often have other things on their mind like how to survive to the end of the week." (senior manager, local authority)

Two of the most deprived case study neighbourhoods were home to another potentially vulnerable group: refugees and asylum seekers. Resettling large numbers of asylum seekers

in already troubled neighbourhoods had the potential to upset the balance between long-standing residents and more transient populations. There was evidence that incomers may not know about local rules and customs regarding, for example, the disposal of rubbish.

> "There is a constant arrival of new people who do not know the system."
> (environmental services manager, deprived neighbourhood)

Large-scale resettlement could also alter neighbourhood identities and lead to a loss of confidence among residents about their ability to solve local problems.

Concentrations of children and young people

> "I mean if you go to a property that was extremely run down, it's not kept tidy … there's always an underlying problem with people's ability to deal with a large amount of children." (housing manager, deprived neighbourhood)

High densities of children and young people in a household, and in a neighbourhood more generally, will, of necessity, produce environmental challenges. Children generate rubbish and high volumes of rubbish can be problematic. Young people are also disproportionately responsible for a range of problems, such as:

- litter: street sweepers continually witness young people dropping litter. One warden suggested that blatant litter throwing had become a 'rite of passage' for young people;
- graffiti: again this can be a 'rite of passage' for some young people. Environmental managers in Glasgow suggested that graffiti was a problem across the city, but much more prevalent in deprived neighbourhoods "because of high numbers of young people with nothing else to do"; and
- vandalism: like graffiti, minor damage to public property (bus shelters, play equipment, trees) is often a normal activity for many young people as they are growing up. More serious damage is less usual.

In deprived neighbourhoods where high youth densities are usually correlated with high numbers of lone-parent-headed households, adult to child ratios can be significantly lower than in other neighbourhoods. This demographic feature of deprived neighbourhoods can interact with a much broader social change discussed later: the reduced likelihood that adults will admonish other people's children for their behaviour. This can drastically reduce the extent to which children's damaging behaviour is informally policed and managed by the adult population.

Thus, the population profile of many deprived neighbourhoods creates challenges for the environment. This is a key part of the explanation for why poor neighbourhoods are often dirtier than average. As well as having direct effects on environmental amenity, a neighbourhood's demographic structure can also affect the capacity of residents to cope with problems that arise.

The nature of the built environment

Deprived neighbourhoods often differ from other kinds of neighbourhood in terms of their built form. Table 2 identifies a range of features of the built form that were reported by research participants, particularly service providers, to be related to environmental problems. It shows which of these features characterised the 12 case study neighbourhoods.

Table 2: Case study neighbourhoods by features of the built form associated with environmental problems

		Features of the built form that can lead to environmental challenges					
		High density housing	Large open spaces	Flatted dwellings	Unfenced gardens	On-street parking	Un-defended gulleys/alleys
Birmingham	Aston	Yes	Yes	Some	Mixed – some fences in disrepair	Mostly	Yes
	Bandywood	Yes	No, except wide roads and verges	No	Mixed – some fences in disrepair	Some	Yes
	Mere Green	No	No, except wide roads and verges	No	No	No	No
Durham	The Grove	No	Small open spaces	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Beechdale	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Sherburn Rd	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Glasgow	North Dennistoun	Yes	Small open spaces	Yes	Mixed	Yes	Yes
	Reidvale	Yes	Small open spaces	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Sighthill	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes
Knowsley	Fincham	Yes	Yes, especially post regeneration	No	Mixed	Mixed	Yes
	Shevington Park	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Tower Hill	Yes	Yes	No	Mixed	Yes	Yes

Note: Less deprived neighbourhoods are shaded.

The most striking aspect of Table 2 is that problematic features of the built form are mostly absent from less deprived neighbourhoods. This helps to explain why these neighbourhoods have fewer environmental problems. Interestingly, among the less deprived neighbourhoods, only North Dennistoun in Glasgow has any of the built form features associated with environmental problems. Further, the two deprived neighbourhoods in Durham have few of these features. It was noted earlier in the chapter that these three neighbourhoods did not fit with the overall pattern of there being a gulf between the amenity of deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods.

The problems caused by the prevalence of problematic aspects of the built form in deprived neighbourhoods, particularly housing form and a lack of defensible space, require further discussion.

Housing form and density

All of the poorer neighbourhoods, except those in Durham, had housing forms that lead to high population density: terraced housing; multi-storey blocks; low-rise and tenemental flats and, as was argued earlier, concentrations of people. These all put the environment under pressure. Refuse collectors and street sweepers working in Sighthill in Glasgow noted that their workload increased dramatically as a result of the sudden population increase following an asylum seeker resettlement programme.

Neighbourhoods with high proportions of flats rather than houses can have specific problems. For example, householders may not feel the same degree of responsibility towards common garden areas as they do towards private gardens, or graffiti may be tolerated on the side of a block of flats but not on an individual dwelling. The disposal of bulky items can be tricky from a flat where living space is limited and there is no access to a garage, garden or car. One housing official expressed sympathy for tenants who put their bulky items in the street in advance of collection days:

> "If they get a new couch on a Saturday, they can't spend the rest of the week with two couches in their living room."

A lack of defensible space

A lack of defensible space is usually associated with non-traditional housing and estate layouts. Such neighbourhoods can have narrow and secluded alleyways and dead ends, which often become rubbish traps and sites for accumulated waste. Glasgow's Sighthill has walkways that are difficult to look after, for example. The design of Tower Hill in Knowsley – 'back-to-front' houses, with bedrooms rather than living rooms looking out onto main roads, together with large open spaces with dense shrub beds not overlooked by houses – was believed to be at the root of both environmental crimes and wider antisocial behaviour:

> "It's the way the streets and the little cul-de-sacs have been laid out that's causing the problem.… It gives the children the ability to hide and do what they need to do." (housing official, deprived neighbourhood)

However, more traditionally designed neighbourhoods can also be difficult to defend. The Bandywood area of Birmingham was built with a 'garden city' layout, with wide arterial streets leading to small, child-friendly cul-de-sacs. It has deep pavements and verges and small fenced and planted open spaces. The sheer scale of the space beyond residents' gardens is difficult for residents to manage.

Defence of gardens was a major issue in many of the deprived neighbourhoods, particularly from windblown litter. In Durham, the front gardens of the social rented stock tend not to have fencing. In both Knowsley and Birmingham, many gardens in the deprived neighbourhoods were inadequately protected. Interestingly, in the deprived English neighbourhoods, owner-occupied dwellings were often distinguishable from rented homes by the fact that owners had invested in new fencing or walls to protect their gardens. Gardens in the less deprived neighbourhoods were well defended as a matter of course.

So far we have explored structural causes of environmental problems in deprived neighbourhoods; that is, their underlying characteristics, largely beyond the control of residents. The next section considers the active roles that residents play in maintaining the quality of their environments.

Residents' attitudes, actions and capacities

> "There are certain people who are just scruffy bastards – it doesn't matter what we do in the area to clean it up." (street sweeper, deprived neighbourhood)

> "It's self-inflicted. They don't help themselves. They either want to live in a slum or they want to live in a clean area. We can't determine that for them." (refuse collector, deprived neighbourhood)

The sentiments captured in the above quotations were widely shared by participants in the research study. In particular, environmental service providers (managers, supervisors and operatives) tended to argue that environmental problems could be substantially explained by the attitudes and behaviours of neighbourhood residents. Resident interviewees often blamed other residents, although they usually argued that those causing problems were in a minority.

This section discusses the role of residents in influencing the amenity of their neighbourhood environment. It brings the values, behaviours and capacities of residents into focus. The discussion should, however, be understood within the overall argument being put forward in this report – that there are often underlying reasons for what seems to be socially irresponsible behaviour towards the environment in deprived neighbourhoods. It begins by discussing the notion of social responsibility and to what extent poorer environments in deprived neighbourhoods are a consequence of a lower level of responsibility in those neighbourhoods. It then discusses the level of power and influence that residents of different kinds of neighbourhood have over local environmental conditions.

Social responsibility

The research was not designed to develop an objective measure of whether levels of social responsibility vary between deprived and affluent neighbourhoods. Rather, it was devised to investigate perceptions on this point from a range of stakeholders with different vantage points. It found that there was a widely held perception that, among the population at large, socially responsible behaviour towards the environment was in decline.

Social irresponsibility was argued to cut across age. Thus, although young people were usually identified as the perpetrators of environmental incivilities, a number of examples were offered of the misdemeanours of older, even elderly people: pensioners allowing their dogs to foul footpaths; residents in a sheltered housing complex failing to dispose of rubbish properly; elderly people indulging in blatant littering. As one neighbourhood resident asked in exasperation:

> "… a 70- year-old woman droppin' litter! What can ye do about that?"

Income was not a predictor of attitudes to the environment:

> "I was down in [affluent] Road the other day an' this guy – ye know he had on the thousand-pound suit, everything like that – he bought a magazine an' he was like lookin' through it. He obviously wanted somethin' out of it. Got the wrapper off, just threw it away, he just dropped it all in the street." (street sweeper)

People residing outside deprived neighbourhoods could clearly be involved in causing environmental problems. Indeed, as Box 2 describes, some residents from more affluent

neighbourhoods sometimes use deprived neighbourhoods quite literally as 'dumping grounds' for their rubbish.

Box 2: Deprived neighbourhoods – a dumping ground for other people's rubbish?

- The most common example was of fly-tipping on under-maintained open space in deprived neighbourhoods, particularly on land left semi-derelict post-demolition.
- Ejecting rubbish from cars was a frequent problem. Deprived neighbourhoods may seem 'fair game' to some car users. In one neighbourhood with a local train station, residents regularly witnessed commuters emptying ashtrays and rubbish from their cars onto the street. Others deposited bags of household refuse in neighbourhood litter bins on their way to the station, causing containment problems and spills.
- Residents of two of the deprived neighbourhoods alleged that dog walkers from nearby affluent areas exercised their dogs in their area, leading to an additional dog-fouling problem.
- There was evidence that residents of an affluent neighbourhood tipped their bulky rubbish down the embankment that divided their own from a disadvantaged neighbourhood. The rubbish is out of sight of the affluent neighbourhood but on full view, high on the hillside, behind the disadvantaged one.

The decline in levels of responsibility was largely explained as a consequence of social changes (Box 3).

Box 3: Declining social responsibility towards the environment?

Interviewees reported social responsibility diminishing due to:

- the increase in female participation in the labour force reducing the time available to women in particular to maintain their patch:
    "But things have changed, no one has the time to do their stairs now, that belongs in the past when women were at home more." (senior manager, housing organisation)

- the development of a consumer society*:*
    "When people didn't have so much [material goods] what mattered was the face you presented to the world ... so your windows would be clean, your curtains would be clean, your stair would be pristine. You might not have enough chairs to sit on inside." (manager, housing organisation)

- the development of a more privatised and insular 'me society':
    "Society has changed. When I was growing up it was expected that as well as cutting your own hedge, you'd cut your neighbour's if they weren't up to it." (senior manager, local authority)

- the development of a disposable society:
    "Across society ... it's a lot more throw away stuff, ye know." (street sweeper)

    "Even a home is disposable. If its problems get too much, people just want a new one." (environmental warden)

- the breakdown of place-based communities:

  "They started closin' everythin' down an' it went through a big sort o' depression ... an' it's like a dump basically an' I think it's because it doesn't have that kinda focus of like ... the shipyard ... but I think it's just the way society's changed that we don't have like a focus any more so basically that affects communities an' people don't have pride in their communities." (resident, deprived neighbourhood)

The environment of deprived neighbourhoods may be affected to a greater extent than that of more affluent neighbourhoods by the broader social changes identified in Box 3. Such changes will interact with those characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods that already make them more environmentally challenging. For example, in neighbourhoods with high population densities, difficult-to-manage built forms and demographics that lead to the production of more rubbish, the environmental effects of increased consumerism and insularity will be more pronounced.

Some research participants did argue, however, that they perceived levels of social responsibility to be lower in disadvantaged neighbourhoods than elsewhere:

> "We find that for bulk refuse the people in [less deprived neighbourhood] phone up and they put their rubbish out on the correct day, whereas people in [deprived neighbourhood] just dump." (refuse collector, deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods)

And others argued that some behaviours were simply part of the local culture:

> "It's a social thing, people just do it. It's a culture thing: it's not been educated out of them." (local manager, environmental services department)

For some, lower levels of home ownership in deprived neighbourhoods helped to explain differences. It was suggested, for example, that home-owners might be motivated to protect the local environment by a desire to protect the financial investment they had made in their property:

> "If they've spent money on their house, they'll look after the area more." (manager, environmental services department)

While the link between ownership and environmental stewardship was argued to be important by a number of interviewees, there was also evidence that in deprived, mixed-tenure neighbourhoods, owners often created specific problems. For example, an important challenge for environmental services in some neighbourhoods was persuading owners to keep their gardens free from litter and bulk refuse.

Residents' control and influence

Within the 12 case studies there was a major divide: neighbourhoods without major environmental problems, over which residents and workers retained a sense of control, and neighbourhoods with severe problems where a sense of powerlessness dominated the interviews and focus groups. There were two main dimensions to control and influence, which are key to understanding differences in the environmental amenity of deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods:

- Insularity and fear of crime had reduced residents' capacity to 'police' the behaviour of other residents. In parts of some deprived neighbourhoods, informal social control had almost broken down.
- Residents of less deprived neighbourhoods were better able to influence local services than residents of deprived places, on both an individual and collective basis.

Informal social control and environmental problems

Residents of all types of neighbourhoods, as well as other interviewees, argued that an important change had occurred in recent years: people are less likely to challenge others for irresponsible behaviour:

> "In my young days, my mum would ask her neighbour 'is your broom broke?' if she wasn't keeping her place clean. People don't do that nowadays." (environmental warden)

This change seems to be driven by some of the wider social changes identified in Box 3, particularly a more individualised, privatised society. However, a number of interviewees also suggested that relationships between young people and adults had changed. Young people are less likely to fear an adult's admonishment:

> "Society's changed. [In the past] if a boy dropped a bit of paper and you told him to pick it up, he'd pick it up. But now, he'll tell you to f…. off." (street sweeper)

One interviewee argued this was partly because adults feared litigation if they chastised a child: "in case they touched them in the wrong place". A youthful interviewee confirmed that young people feel a renewed sense of control:

> "My age and younger don't care what they are doing to the community … the youth think they are untouchable." (resident, deprived neighbourhood, in her early twenties)

However, parts of some deprived neighbourhoods seemed to be blighted by antisocial behaviour, drug misuse, drug dealing and other forms of criminality including violence, which were not features of life elsewhere. In such cases, informal social control had largely broken down:

> "The streets are empty. People have withdrawn to their houses.… [In the evening] the area has become a playground for the criminal gangs." (resident, deprived neighbourhood)

It was suggested that this withdrawal indoors gave licence to those not involved in serious criminality to indulge in other, more minor, forms of irresponsible behaviour – such as fly-tipping domestic refuse. In one neighbourhood, it was argued that young people's behaviour in general was more problematic as a consequence: quad biking had become a major nuisance and damage to property more prevalent. Interestingly, some of the residents of more disadvantaged neighbourhoods described how they had persevered with admonishing minor miscreants, but had suffered reprisals as a consequence. One man who routinely intervened when, for example, neighbours put their refuse out on the wrong day had been variously threatened, and told that his house would be set on fire. An elderly woman had faeces pushed under her gate after upbraiding someone for littering and had decided it was no longer worth the risk:

> "I'm getting too old. You don't know what they'll do to you." (resident, deprived neighbourhood, in her seventies)

It may be that in neighbourhoods with serious problems of criminality, a more general climate of fear and hostility can affect more mundane interpersonal relations and further weaken residents' control over 'normal' misdemeanours. Arguably – and this is a matter for further research – there was a divide between those deprived neighbourhoods where informal social control was effective and environmental problems were manageable, and those where residents struggled to assert control over a variety of behaviours including those impacting on the environment.

Resident influence over services

The evidence of the research is that residents of poor neighbourhoods have less influence over environmental services than residents of more affluent neighbourhoods. In particular, residents in less deprived neighbourhoods:

- have a higher propensity to report environmental problems, to complain about the quality of environmental services and to demand action be taken; and
- are more effective in using appropriate mechanisms and actions to lobby service providers. This includes being more likely 'to know the system': to be able to contact the relevant authorities and councillors and to organise public meetings, petitions and so on. "We know how to write a letter, which helps, we know how to get things done." (female resident, less deprived neighbourhood)

Crucially, there was evidence of services being provided to minimise complaints from less deprived areas. For example, in two of the case studies, local workers and their managers described how staff shortages occurred periodically, necessitating a reduced service in some places. Some interviewees suggested that services could be reduced in neighbourhoods where residents were disinclined to complain and protected in those where residents were inclined to complain, although this was strongly denied by others. Interviewees from other agencies, particularly housing organisations, confirmed that it was their perception that services could be sensitive to levels of complaints.

In addition, residents of less deprived neighbourhoods were better able to access local politicians and command their attention and effort. In a number of the case studies, ward councillors were clearly able to influence environmental services in their particular wards. Individuals working for environmental services identified a key role for councillors:

> "Everybody jumps. They'll tell you to do streets you've already done. If you get ten complaints and one's a councillor, that one gets done first." (street sweeper)

> "He who shouts the loudest gets most.… The councillor wields the big stick and we have to jump." (manager, environmental services department)

Overall, it was clear that services were not being deliberately engineered to reward less deprived neighbourhoods. But, at the margin and quite subtly, services were undoubtedly responsive to the demands of residents of more affluent neighbourhoods. Chapter 3 explores this in more detail. The potential impact that the relative power of residents can have on service provision, and therefore on environmental amenity, should be clear. As one manager bluntly said:

> "Those areas where there are higher expectations, coupled with the ability to communicate through a councillor, get more spent on them." (manager, environmental services department)

Variations in service provision

This section considers how the organisation and delivery of services can create or exacerbate problems, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods. Crucially, residents of deprived neighbourhoods, particularly the more problematic ones, were often intensely critical of aspects of service provision. Criticism tended to focus on two issues in particular: a lack of joined-up working and problems with the delivery of regeneration. The latter is dealt with in Chapter 3.

A lack of joined-up working

Environmental service provision rarely looked 'joined up' from the perspective of residents, whatever kind of neighbourhood they lived in, although this was much less of a problem in Durham than elsewhere. Residents (and, notably, wardens) identified the following problems:

- a lack of synchronisation between the core cleansing functions: refuse collection and street sweeping. Thus, street sweeping did not always seem to be coordinated with refuse collection, and spillages might not, therefore, be cleaned up;
- complaints being passed around services or departments;
- a lack of clarity over ownership of some land and responsibility for maintaining it, particularly in social housing estates;
- operatives clearly not willing or able to take a 'whole-job' approach. Thus, if a dumped sofa was reported, it would be removed. However, if the sofa had since attracted an (unreported) mattress, that would be ignored.

In fact, there was significant evidence that local authorities *are* trying to join up services more effectively at a strategic and operational level. However, residents' views are obviously critical here and their perceptions of a lack of joining up on the ground were occasionally corroborated by operatives themselves. Box 4 provides evidence of inter-service rivalries, which could clearly impact on performance.

Box 4: Inter-service rivalries

In the edited extract from a focus group presented below, street sweepers and refuse collectors are discussing the problems caused for them by other council employees responsible for open space maintenance ('grass cutters').

> Fred: "They've got one o' they big, em, blowers. They blow the grass out an' ... they just left it on the pavement an' they think it's us that has got to pick it up."

> James: "See the grass cutters ... ye get a lot o' them packin' [our] black bags an' they leave them in front o' the gardens. When they see the bin men comin' up, they think the bin men are meant to lift that. We're not meant to lift that."

> Chris: "We just sit there an' say, 'What? Are you no' liftin' that?' [We say] 'That's no ours'. [They say] 'How's it no yours? It's in your bags'. An' that's when it starts ... 'I'm talkin' to you!' We just keep workin' away. An' they go into the garden to get ye ... an' they try hard tae argue even there. An' ye're lookin' at each other ...."

> Interviewer: "What about [other] workers from the council, would you sort of help them out?"

> Chris: "No."
>
> Fred: "No."
>
> James: "They should expect to do it themselves."
>
> Chris: "Yep. 'Cos they've got ... they've got like the same brushes we use, on the back o' their van...."
>
> Interviewer: "But if they don't finish the job or leave bits of it for you to pick up, would you do it?"
>
> Chris: "Well, maybe sweep it up maybe kinda half-heartedly, ye know."

While a variety of neighbourhoods suffered from a lack of joined-up working, the consequences for deprived neighbourhoods are likely to be much more severe than for other neighbourhoods. Gaps between services are arguably much more damaging in neighbourhoods where more refuse and litter are produced, or where the built form makes the environment difficult for residents and service providers to manage. Unless services are coordinated and synchronised effectively so that neighbourhoods are regularly 'deep cleaned', no matter how conscientiously an individual service is provided, problems will remain somewhere in the neighbourhood, thus depressing local environmental amenity.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided evidence on how key differences in the characteristics of deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods explain the 'environmental gap' between them. The demographics, economy, built form and social make-up of deprived neighbourhoods mean that they are likely to have more environmental problems than other sorts of neighbourhoods. This means that those people who live in disadvantaged places have a more challenging job to keep their neighbourhood clean than people living elsewhere. They may also have less influence over service provision and, in some instances, over other residents. It also means that service providers will generally have more work to do in deprived than less deprived neighbourhoods. The next chapter looks at how residents and environmental workers are affected by neighbourhood environmental problems.

The view from the neighbourhoods: living and working in problem environments

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an insight into how people respond to environmental problems in residential neighbourhoods. It reveals how residents and frontline environmental workers behave differently, depending on the extent of environmental problems they face. What matters to how residents and workers respond to environmental challenges in their respective neighbourhoods is both the level of environmental problems and whether or not the situation is improving. Based on all the research evidence, the 12 case studies were classified as either problematic, problematic but improving, or non-problematic (Table 3).

Two neighbourhoods, Aston and Fincham, were classified as both problematic and problematic but improving. Both of these neighbourhoods are currently undergoing comprehensive regeneration and there are distinct improvements in environmental amenity in some, but not all, parts. Only one deprived neighbourhood was found to be non-problematic, Sherburn Road in Durham. As Chapter 1 indicated, deprived neighbourhoods

Table 3: The case study neighbourhoods: extent and trajectory of environmental problems

Extent of environmental problems	Deprived neighbourhoods	Less deprived neighbourhoods
Problematic	Aston (parts), Fincham (parts), Reidvale, Sighthill, Towerhill,	North Dennistoun
Problematic but improving	Aston (parts), Bandywood, Fincham (parts), The Grove	
Non-problematic	Sherburn Road	Beechdale, Mere Green, Shevington Park

Note: This is the research team's assessment of the 12 neighbourhoods. The assessment draws on the (generally consistent) evidence of research participants and on the observations of the research team during the conduct of the study. Neighbourhoods were identified as 'problematic' if they had a number of 'serious' problems (see Table 1). Where the majority of research participants identified that a neighbourhood's serious problems were diminishing, it was classified as 'problematic but improving'. Neighbourhoods with few apparent problems to the research team and to the majority of research participants were identified as 'non-problematic'.

in Durham are less environmentally challenging than deprived neighbourhoods in other areas. Sherburn Road had undergone extensive renewal in the late 1990s and had enjoyed intensive housing management since then. Its amenity was now on a par with that of some of the less deprived neighbourhoods researched in this study. North Dennistoun was the only less deprived neighbourhood found to be problematic. Chapter 2 provided some insight into how its location and built form partly explain this.

The level and trajectory of environmental problems affects:

- how residents and frontline workers feel about their neighbourhood;
- their behaviour towards the environment; in the case of residents, this was reflected in the level of care they take over their environment and for frontline workers, this was reflected in the nature and care they take in their working practices;
- residents' and workers' standards and expectations of environmental amenity; and
- the coping strategies residents and workers employ regarding environmental problems.

Table 4 details how neighbourhood residents are affected by a neighbourhood's problems and trajectory in the above ways. Table 5 provides the same detail for frontline environmental operatives such as refuse collectors or street sweepers.

Clearly, the level of a neighbourhood's environmental problems, together with a sense of whether it is improving or not has a major impact on both how residents and workers respond and behave. Problematic neighbourhoods are clearly depressing, both emotionally and because extensive problems depress levels of care, as well as standards and expectations. However, when problematic neighbourhoods begin to improve, this can be energising. Standards are raised and expectations increase when the environment is cared for both by operatives and residents. In non-problematic neighbourhoods, residents fight to safeguard the level of amenity they enjoy, and workers usually respond favourably to these high expectations and strong demands. The rest of this chapter considers in more detail than tables 4 and 5, the experiences of residents and workers in each different type of area.

Residents' experiences of living in neighbourhoods with different levels of environmental problems

Living in a problematic environment

"Litter makes ye depressed. I mean, it really does. The mess on the streets. Sometimes ye can hardly walk down [the street]. Ye're kickin' papers a' the way down … I mean, it's awful." (resident, deprived neighbourhood)

Residents of problematic neighbourhoods were clearly demoralised. They were overwhelmed by the scale of problems, confused about why they were so severe and crucially felt powerless to resolve them. Shame was also a common emotion: "The rubbish is embarrassing". Outsiders would presume that the people who lived in the area were "tat".

Focus group participants often blamed their neighbours for problems: some did not look after their gardens; parents failed to admonish their children or to set them a good example. However, there was agreement in all of the focus groups that problematic neighbours were a minority, usually a tiny minority, of the population. The quality of service provision was also to blame – some work was done poorly or not at all – or services were not tailored to local needs. Some neighbourhoods were thought to have deteriorated in recent years: "It used to be lovely in the summer, walking around, admiring all the lovely gardens".

Table 4: Living with neighbourhood environmental problems: residents' perspectives

Level and trajectory of environmental problems	Residents' emotional responses to the neighbourhood environment	Effect of problems on residents' level of care over the environment	Effect of problems on residents' expectations of acceptable environmental amenity	Residents' strategies for coping with or challenging environmental problems
Problematic environment	Depressed Demoralised Shamed Sense of injustice Powerlessness Anger (towards those causing problems) Anger (towards services) Fearful (of violence, abuse)	Only take care of own patch Stop cleaning up beyond own patch Apathy Loss of control	Expect the worst Reduce standards Believe area to be a 'lost cause'	*Coping:* Retreat indoors Ignore problems Normalise – 'not as bad as other places' Humour to diminish problems *Challenging:* Some complaining Some accost miscreants Community action
Problematic but improving environment	Anger Frustration Some optimism Continued fearfulness	Energy for improving own patch Some energy for improving neighbours' patch More attempts to tackle problems Beginnings of control	Increased expectations, but tentative Improved standards	*Coping:* Remain indoors Don't expect too much *Challenging:* More individual complaining Some accost miscreants Community action Contact with councillors and MPs
Non-problematic environment	Optimism Pride Protective Defensive Some sense of injustice	Considerable energy for own patch Energy for beyond one's own patch Determination to control public space	High expectations High standards Demand the best	*Coping:* Self-reliance – do it yourself Privatisation – pay for additional services *Challenging:* Lots of complaining Accost miscreants Accost service providers Community action Lots of contact with councillors and MPs

Table 5: Working with neighbourhood environmental problems: operatives' perspectives

Level and trajectory of environmental problems	Operatives' emotional responses to the neighbourhood environment	Effect of problems on the nature and carefulness of working practices	Effect of problems on operatives' expectations of acceptable environmental amenity	Operatives' strategies for coping with or challenging environmental problems
Problematic environment	Lack of job satisfaction Fearful (of abuse and aggression) Powerlessness Low morale	Major barriers to effective performance Work may be performed 'SAS style': in and out as quickly as possible Work left undone: • don't look back! • walk past litter Work done carelessly	Perceive real barriers to maintaining standards Expect the worst Don't expect complaints Reduce standards	*Coping:* Reduce standards and expectations Leave a mess Don't pick up rubbish they drop Get in and out of area as quick as possible Get revenge: eg empty bins noisily Bribe kids to avoid hassle *Challenging:* Ask for different patch
Problematic but improving environment	Frustration Fed up Stoical (job just has to be done) Neutral emotions Empathy for residents' problems	Some barriers to effective performance Usually do job as specified Occasionally jobs left undone Sometimes go beyond remit to contain problems Standard, regular service	Some barriers to maintaining standards Improving expectations Expect increasing complaints	*Coping:* Attempt to do job conscientiously Sometimes little to cope with – neither problems nor complaints Some avoidance of kids/problems *Challenging:* Extra effort on occasion
Non-problematic environment	Anxiety (about complaints) Made to feel inferior Put upon Job satisfaction Pride Relaxed	Few, if any, barriers to effective performance Conscientious Job as specified Go the extra 'mile' – sometimes bespoke service	No barriers to maintaining standards Expect complaints Standards readily identifiable Role clarity	*Coping:* Ignore arrogance Conscientiousness Do more to: • minimise complaints • keep area tidy • respond to requests *Challenging:* Refuse to do additional tasks Reject sub-serviant label

Chapter 2 highlighted how some of the deprived neighbourhoods suffered severe levels of antisocial behaviour; so much so that many residents had 'retreated indoors', particularly at night. Fearfulness is, in fact, an issue in many neighbourhoods, but it constrained the capacity of residents to take care of their environment in only a few. Despite this, even in the most problematic neighbourhoods there were individuals who continued stoically to admonish those causing problems:

> "I have tried. If a neighbour puts their rubbish out on the wrong day, I'll put it back into their garden. But people just ignore the rubbish, their garden looks a mess." (resident, deprived neighbourhood)

More usually, however, residents had gradually withdrawn from taking proper care of the environment, not through fear, but simply because the problems had worn them down:

> Mary: "I used to be out cleaning … sweeping up and doing this, doing that.… I used to go out an' lift up [rubbish] an' I thought … what the hell am I doin'? I'm cleanin' up somebody else's shit really, ye know. I'm far too old for this an' I don't touch it now."
>
> Interviewer: "Do other people sort of sympathise with that?"
>
> Jane: "It gets so you think 'there's no point'."
>
> John: "… basically if you've got a group o' people, they could be in a minority, but if they don't care, they just leave a' their trash everywhere … then eventually people, other people like us are gonna say … 'Well, why should I clean it up?'." (interchange in residents' focus group, deprived neighbourhood)

A number of focus group participants reported how they would look after their 'own patch' only and would do their best to ignore problems elsewhere in the neighbourhood. This was a cause of some personal disquiet, however:

> Alex: "… An' that's very frustratin'. It is. It's very frustratin'."
>
> Margaret: "… you're sort of … you think well it used to be nice, so I'm gonna try and do something about this … but more people are saying it's really, really hard and sometimes you give up." (interchange in residents' focus group, deprived neighbourhood)

The residents who participated in the focus groups were not a random cross-section of each neighbourhood's population. They were those who were willing to give up time to attend a focus group, with no other incentive than that they would have a chance to talk about environmental problems in their area. We might then expect them to be among the most careful and motivated people within a population. If this group reports that they struggle to care for the environment, clearly others will struggle even more. Indeed, focus group participants were often aware that, by reducing their own standards and levels of care, they exacerbated problems further – even reinforcing the spiral of decline.

Indeed, it was clear that residents of the most problematic neighbourhoods were unable to mount an effective challenge to environmental problems. They reported that they attempted to complain to service providers, but it never seemed to make a difference: "They say they'll do it, but it doesn't actually happen" (resident, deprived neighbourhood). Challenging someone causing a problem got residents nowhere, and sometimes got them into trouble. Residents reported that community action could be undermined, even in neighbourhoods with long traditions of community activity:

Interviewer: "How does stuff like the litter … how does that affect people's willingness to get involved and to, you know, do things for the community?"

Margaret: "I think there's still the willing ones that will always, eh, help out an' it's always been, I think, a real community spirit. But I think ye begin to get to the stage that ye're goin' down, down, down and you wonder what you can do to stop it.…" (interchange in residents' focus group, deprived neighbourhood)

Living in a problematic but improving environment

Residents in problematic but improving environments tended to have mixed emotions about their neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods in this category were generally those where physical interventions were taking place, ranging from comprehensive renewal to simple alley-gating, coupled perhaps with the introduction of a warden service. Some frustration clearly remained, and even anger that progress was not happening quickly enough, but overall these residents were more optimistic towards their local environment than those of neighbourhoods where amenity was not improving.

Increased optimism seemed to energise some residents. This renewed energy might be in relation to looking after their own patch. For example, in one street in the heart of an area that had undergone regeneration, open competition had broken out among neighbours over who could have the nicest garden. It might also be in relation to territory just beyond their own patch. One resident reported how he and his neighbours would "go out and clean up mess brought about by development across the road". There was also a suggestion that they complained more than previously, and were more demanding both of their political representatives and local workers.

It is important not to over-emphasise the transformation in residents' behaviour. Problems clearly remained in the improving neighbourhoods: not everyone became socially responsible overnight. However, the most highly motivated residents did seem to have their hope and their motivation reawakened. It was argued above that the spiral of decline is stimulated when responsible residents get so disheartened that they lose their sense of personal efficacy. Importantly, the converse is also true. Improvements to environmental quality can engender a virtuous circle whereby residents are more willing and more able to take care over the environment. Crucially, as Table 5 and the discussion later in the chapter show, local workers find that their jobs become easier. This not only directly enhances environmental quality, but also feeds the virtuous circle of improvement.

Although regeneration activity may bring significant improvements to local environments in the longer term, the physical impacts of the actual process may temporarily undermine residents' capacities to maintain their environment. Indeed, environmental problems can be exacerbated, at least in the short term. Some case studies were blighted by derelict land and by streets of void housing awaiting demolition or refurbishment. This clearly had an effect on residents' well-being, particularly where they were uncertain about what would replace the dereliction. They were also disheartened by the continual dirt associated with physical redevelopment: they felt "besieged" by the mess. One elderly, long-standing resident revealed to his neighbours during the focus group that he had applied to move out of the neighbourhood. He could no longer tolerate the mess created by the renewal process. Environmental degradation had reached new heights. He "just wanted out of it, away from here". Clearly, the environmental impact of the regeneration process needs to be managed. Otherwise, the additional problems the process engenders could be the last straw for some residents – crucially those for whom environmental quality is an important issue.

Although residents' expectations increased in improving neighbourhoods, people remained cautious. Environmental problems remained. In one case study, graffiti and vandalism was a persistent problem. This appeared to depress local residents who felt frustrated in their attempts to improve the area. Some residents of improving neighbourhoods still coped with environmental challenges by withdrawing indoors and ignoring problems. One resident in an area that had been subject to extensive intervention advised: "I just won't go out".

However, in improving neighbourhoods, community action did seem to be energised. It was not clear whether this enthusiasm was a result of improved environmental quality specifically, or a product of more general sense of optimism connected to a regeneration programme. Nonetheless, the account of invigorated community action in improving neighbourhoods contrasted dramatically with the account offered in problematic neighbourhoods of depleted community spirit. Community activists in at least two of the improving neighbourhoods were clearly inspired: not only to resolve their particular neighbourhood's problems, but to work with other deprived communities to resolve common problems.

> "You've got one community doing this and one community doing that. We need to get all the communities together from across the city to come together to discuss the problems." (community representative, deprived neighbourhood)

Living in a non-problematic environment

Residents living in non-problematic environments were clearly much prouder of their neighbourhood and more optimistic about its future than residents of other kinds of neighbourhoods. More crucially, they were determined to protect their environmental quality, and were skilled in achieving this.

Expectations were clearly high in these neighbourhoods, and residents demanded the highest standards from services. As Chapter 2 noted, they were willing and able complainants:

> "I think we have learned how to complain, and with some success. I know the system." (resident, less deprived neighbourhood)

> "I got fed up with rubbish, people were leaving it lying all over the place. I wrote and complained. I was told I was not the first person to complain." (resident, less deprived neighbourhood)

Residents were also more likely to adopt informal approaches to controlling their local environment. For instance, there were clear expectations on all residents to maintain gardens, to brush the street outside their home and to 'muck in' when snow needed to be cleared in the winter.

In some neighbourhoods, there was constant vigilance over controlling public space. Thus activities that in other kinds of neighbourhoods would seem to be fairly minor problems, such as young people hanging out causing low-level damage, were seen as intolerable and inspired concerted action. Here residents appeared more likely to contact a range of agencies, notably the police, to tackle their problems. Service providers noted that they were also more likely to contact MPs, councillors and other influential players and to maintain their complaints until a problem was resolved. In such neighbourhoods, collective action seemed often to be successful as well. In one case study, for example, a local group had successfully lobbied to have a 'cut through' from their neighbourhood to surrounding countryside fenced off. They had also overturned a decision to build a children's football

pitch on nearby land (even once excavation had begun!). In another case study, residents had campaigned to have a road between their area and an adjacent deprived neighbourhood blocked off, to prevent their neighbourhood being used as a 'race track'.

As indicated earlier, one deprived case study neighbourhood had few problems. The Sherburn Road estate in Durham had come through a major regeneration process and seemed to have largely resolved its environmental issues. This may be a reflection of the sense of control that residents seemed to have over their neighbourhood, despite the fact that all of its difficulties had clearly not been resolved:

> "We're a strong community and we all pull together. There's one or two troublemakers but they're not important enough to worry about." (resident, deprived neighbourhood)

> "Everyone watches everyone's back, we watch them [drug addicts] all the time. We support each other, but it isn't a problem, they [drug addicts] don't bother us at all." (resident, deprived neighbourhood)

The contrast with the loss of control evident in the most problematic neighbourhoods is notable.

However, it is important to note that residents of the less deprived, non-problematic neighbourhoods were not necessarily satisfied with either local environmental quality or with local service provision. They could even feel a sense of injustice that their problems were not prioritised. In one neighbourhood, for example, residents were irritated by cars parking on double yellow lines. They felt that this was because traffic wardens did not tend to be deployed in their area:

> "We are certainly not offered support from the council, for example, with traffic wardens. We are not considered a priority." (resident, less deprived neighbourhood)

Residents also had concerns about whether their complaints were being taken seriously:

> "It can help if you know how to write a letter. It will make sure you get a response, but whether you get any action is another matter." (resident, less deprived neighbourhood)

However, in addition to complaining, they had a number of other strategies for dealing with problems. For example, they might simply do the job themselves or pay someone else to do it; for example, engaging a tree surgeon to prune trees in public areas; or paying to have their recycling removed. Local operatives suggested that they were much more likely to be challenged by residents of less deprived neighbourhoods if, for instance, they had missed some litter.

Two issues are important here. First, improving environmental quality does not necessarily reduce the demands placed on service providers. Some residents of neighbourhoods with few problems will demand that action is taken to resolve what are clearly minor problems when seen from a larger perspective. Second, a sense of injustice can also pervade less deprived neighbourhoods, particularly in relation to local authority services. Service providers suggested that it was common for complainants to mention that they paid high Council Tax: "Do you know how much council tax we pay? We should get a better service than this".

Thus, residents behave differently in neighbourhoods with different levels of environmental problems. Clearly, environmental quality is not the only issue that is driving resident

behaviour; and there are obviously important differences in socioeconomic dynamics between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods underlying this. However, the potential for environmental and other improvements to energise the demoralised residents of problematic neighbourhoods should be apparent. Further, as the next section explores, the distinctive behaviours of residents in different types of neighbourhoods affect how frontline workers respond, again in distinctive ways, to the needs of these neighbourhoods.

Environmental operatives' experiences of working in neighbourhoods with different levels of environmental problems

Earlier, Table 5 revealed the dramatic differences in how environmental operatives work in neighbourhoods with distinctive levels of environmental problems. The table suggests that neighbourhoods with intense problems can receive lower service standards and different practices from neighbourhoods with few problems. And this differential seems to further polarise deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods.

Working in a problematic neighbourhood

Frontline operatives such as street sweepers and refuse collectors clearly face a number of challenges working in neighbourhoods with problematic environments. In some cases these challenges are very severe. A clear message from the research was that job satisfaction was difficult to achieve in such an environment. The persistent recurrence of the same problem was a major factor. Street cleansing operatives in particular often seemed overwhelmed by both the scale and nature of the environmental problems they faced on a routine, daily basis. This could lead them to ignore problems. One street sweeper described how his strategy was "don't look back!" for fear that areas which he had just cleaned were freshly littered. Another described how he and his colleagues would walk past litter:

> "In [deprived neighbourhood] there's that much rubbish we just tend to walk past it, we aren't discriminating, it's just that [picking it up] wouldn't make a difference." (street cleansing operative, deprived neighbourhood)

Refuse collectors also faced practical barriers, which affected their ability to deliver a good service. These could include excess refuse spilling from bins; bin bags so full, that as soon as they are lifted they break; bulky items blocking access to bin shelters; and rats jumping from refuse as it is removed. Refuse collectors are generally expected to clean up spills that result from the collection process but both their own and, more particularly, residents' testimony suggested that this was not always done. One refuse collector, for example, laughed in response to a question about whether he would clear up spills in a problematic neighbourhood.

Overall, a strong sense of powerlessness pervaded focus groups with operatives working in problematic neighbourhoods. They clearly felt little control over the environment: "(It) will stay a dump no matter what we do". They also suggested that residents of such neighbourhoods often had equally low expectations. They were aware, for instance, that in such neighbourhoods, managers and supervisors tended to receive fewer complaints from the public either about actual problems or about the quality of service provided.

Crucially, practical difficulties, combined with low expectations, meant that operatives would reduce the standard of their work, particularly in the most problematic areas. Some operatives denied that this might happen, although they admitted that it could be a

challenge to meet the required standard. Others said that, while they would not reduce the standard of *their* work, they thought that others might if they felt that residents didn't care:

> "[If they think] people don't care … their value in their work has went downhill as well. It's just the bare minimum. It's not job satisfaction any more." (street sweeper, deprived neighbourhood)

Standards of work were also affected by fear and even violence, particularly in the most troubled neighbourhoods. The level of abuse, intimidation and violence experienced by environmental workers was a surprising finding. While it is well known that frontline service providers such as firefighters or ambulance crews can sometimes be threatened, or even attacked, while on duty in some residential areas, the extent to which this could be an occupational hazard for street sweepers or refuse collectors is perhaps less well known. Operatives testified to a spectrum of problems; including:

- *Hassle from kids*, such as blatant litter throwing, verbal abuse and stoning of vehicles. Such problems could get in the way of work. One crew described how they resorted to bribery to 'fix' the problem, but also about how this 'fix' affected their self-esteem: "We get lads coming around asking for petrol. If you say no they come back with a gang. If we give them petrol there's no problem. But it makes you feel like an idiot. We feel powerless, there's no point in retaliating. We just have to walk away, feeling like a numbskull".
- *Intimidation* in the course of a street-sweeping round or being shouted at for making a noise when emptying bins. Some operatives responded with aggression. One refuse collector told how his retaliation was to deliberately empty bins as noisily as he could, or to miss emptying some. In some neighbourhoods, this intimidation had a racist element.
- *Threats of violence and actual violence.* Some operatives said actual violence was rare. Others said it was a 'weekly occurrence' that someone they knew was attacked. A number of incidents were mentioned during the course of the research including air-gun shootings, stabbings and being chased from a neighbourhood by a gang of youths. It should be emphasised that, in this regard, research participants did not confine themselves to describing violent incidents which took place in the actual case study neighbourhoods. However, it was clear that such incidents could and did occur in some of the case studies.

However, ways had been found to cope with such challenges, often with the approval of local managers. For example, there were some neighbourhoods – again not the case studies for this research – that were serviced on a 'mornings-only' basis. This might mean that work was left undone, as workers left before late-rising youths appeared on the streets. Another strategy was to provide services 'mob-handed' or 'SAS style'. There was an acknowledgement that such strategies could lead to work being left undone, or done to a poorer standard:

> "There are some bits where we know we don't do a good job. It's just in and out as quickly as possible." (local manager, environmental services department)

Fear and intimidation therefore had a direct effect on environmental quality.

Working in problematic but improving environments

Although problematic but improving neighbourhoods still present environmental operatives with serious challenges, these are fewer and slightly different in nature from those presented by the more problematic neighbourhoods. For example, intimidation from residents appeared much less frequent or serious than in some of the problematic

neighbourhoods, although problems with young people seemed to persist. There was also occasional gratitude from residents as well as occasional threats.

However, some frustrations clearly remained despite the neighbourhoods' upward trajectories. For example, some workers described themselves as 'fed up' with dealing with routine, persistent problems of littering, poor presentation of rubbish and so on. However, in comparison to the strong feelings that working in problematic neighbourhoods aroused, operatives were more likely to be fairly emotionally neutral about these neighbourhoods. There could even be a sense of empathy for residents: a recognition that residents, as well as operatives, faced challenges in their daily lives and in their neighbourhood more generally; and that often they did the best they could. This was in stark contrast to operatives' tendency to label the residents of some of the more difficult neighbourhoods as 'yobs', 'scum' or 'lazy people'.

Some barriers clearly remained to performing work effectively in order to meet required standards. Levels of litter, for example, were said to be a problem in many neighbourhoods, along with poorly presented waste and dog fouling. However, workers tended not to emphasise these barriers but rather how they simply 'got on with the job'. Indeed, it seems that in these neighbourhoods, more than in both problematic and non-problematic ones, environmental workers tended to provide a standard regular service.

The 'improving' trajectory of the neighbourhood clearly had some motivational impact on operatives' working practices and standards, although this should not be over-emphasised. For instance, there was an example in one neighbourhood of a street sweeper suggesting that he might do 'extras' for residents:

> "You know, out in [improving neighbourhood] if there are two people cutting a hedge I will give them a hand [to clear up] an' you get appreciated for it. Sometimes it pays to do a little more." (street sweeper, deprived neighbourhood)

Others suggested that they might, on occasion, go beyond the job specified to stop an improving neighbourhood declining again; for example, removing rubbish from land owned by another agency or council department "just to keep a lid on things". Thus, underlying operatives' improved motivation was the anticipation of gratitude and a desire to guard improvements. Crucially, however, they seemed to be aware that the climate had changed: expectations had increased and residents were more likely to complain. Local managers seemed much more aware of changed expectations in improving neighbourhoods:

> "Before the regeneration it used to be that maybe we could get away with things a bit. There's no chance now." (local manager, environmental services department)

Operatives tended to have less to say about this category of neighbourhood than about either of the other two. This partially reflects the fact that the neighbourhoods presented few challenges – although when parts of 'improving' neighbourhoods were undergoing extensive physical development, there could be extra work as a consequence of demolitions or fly-tipping. It may also, however, reflect a lack of certainty about how and why the neighbourhood was improving. Thus, when operatives were asked if they felt residents had responded to the interventions of regeneration programmes or of warden initiatives, for example, so that they now took more care of the environment, they tended to be unsure and even unwillingly to speculate.

Overall, an improving environment has the potential to energise operatives and transform their working practices. However, the predominant sense was simply that problems had been resolved to the extent that workers could now just get on with the job as specified.

Working in non-problematic environments

Like working in an area with environmental difficulties, working in a non-problematic neighbourhood could also be challenging and stressful. However, whereas workers in neighbourhoods with extensive and severe problems are confronted with real difficulties in maintaining adequate standards of cleanliness, workers in non-problematic neighbourhoods encounter significant pressure from residents to reach the highest of standards.

This was not to say that operatives could not be positive about working conditions in a non-problematic neighbourhood. Job satisfaction was clearly much easier to achieve, particularly for street sweepers who felt that the standard of cleanliness they achieved would have some longevity. Indeed, it was evident that some operatives took both pride and pleasure in their work. It was clear that satisfaction was derived from a feeling that effort produced rewards. This could be in the form of an occasional 'thank you' from residents. More importantly, however, it could simply be the knowledge that their effort made a difference. The street looked clean once it had been cleaned.

These positive emotions could affect working practices and standards. It was suggested, for example, that in non-problematic neighbourhoods, on occasion, operatives "don't mind doing that bit more".

> "I have even been into people's gardens in [less deprived neighbourhood], but wouldn't do that in [deprived neighbourhood]. What's the point? There's that much rubbish, it wouldn't make any difference. In [less deprived neighbourhood] they all have nice gardens." (street sweeper, deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods)

However, operatives were not only motivated to do more in non-problematic neighbourhoods because they felt they made a difference. They were also motivated by the desire to pre-empt complaints. Operatives were keenly aware that residents of less deprived and more affluent neighbourhoods were more likely to complain about substandard work than residents of deprived neighbourhoods: "Everyone in [affluent] neighbourhood seems to know their MP or play golf with the councillor". Some denied that this knowledge would spur them to work harder in such areas, some alleged that "others might" put extra effort in and some admitted that, yes, they would do more in neighbourhoods from which they could anticipate complaints. (Chapter 2 has already provided evidence that services can be sensitive to the levels of complaints received from different sorts of neighbourhoods.)

There was also a strong feeling that some residents of more affluent neighbourhoods "talked down" to environmental operatives, and that they might try to treat them in a subservient manner:

> "As far as they're concerned, you're just a servant picking it up." (street sweeper, less deprived neighbourhood)

One street sweeper described how he was regularly asked by people living in an affluent neighbourhood in which he also worked (not one of the case studies), if he could "just sweep my drive while you're at it". He was particularly annoyed when hailed as "laddie". It was clear that sometimes operatives agreed to requests like these, sometimes through fear that if they refused, a complaint would be made. Others refused to be treated like servants:

> "I think if somebody ordered you to do it, I think everyone around [this table] here would stick two fingers up." (refuse collector, less deprived neighbourhood)

Conclusion

There has been much conjecture in recent years about the additional pressures that deprived neighbourhoods can put on public services. This research provides important new evidence about, and understanding of, the challenges of frontline work in deprived neighbourhoods. The study also reveals that environmental operatives vary their practices in different kinds of neighbourhoods. This can lead to services being informally 'rationed' in deprived neighbourhoods. The evidence is that rationing occurs partly because of the scale and persistence of environmental problems in deprived neighbourhoods. This can lead operatives to ignore problems and reduce their standards. Rationing can also be an unintentional consequence of the high demands placed on services by residents of less deprived neighbourhoods: operatives and their managers can clearly be tempted to reduce services or standards in neighbourhoods with low expectations in order to spend more time in areas where both expectations and the propensity to complain are higher. Clearly, informal service rationing by frontline workers affects the behaviour and resilience of residents and can feed the process of neighbourhood decline.

Narrowing the environmental gap: local authority policy and practice

Introduction

This chapter explores how local authorities are responding to the environmental challenges of deprived neighbourhoods. Drawing on the evidence of the previous two chapters, it argues that if environmental problems are to be addressed effectively, both service providers and residents have key roles to play. The chapter focuses on the two major strategies adopted by the local authority case studies:

- targeting services to deprived neighbourhoods;
- measures to change the behaviour of residents.

A key aim of the analysis is to consider how these responses contribute to 'narrowing the gap' between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods.

Targeting services to deprived neighbourhoods

Service enhancements targeted at deprived neighbourhoods can take a number of forms, but most will require that budget levels are increased relative to other types of neighbourhood. This extra resource could be used to increase the frequency of services or to augment staffing levels within existing frequencies. It might be used to purchase more effective machinery or to enable specialist services to be provided such as neighbourhood wardens or free bulky waste removal. Targeting can also mean prioritising deprived neighbourhoods when new initiatives are being piloted or new service programmes are being phased in. Finally, area-based initiatives are, of course, a short-life form of targeting in which additional resource is invested in order to arrest decline in specific neighbourhoods, in the expectation that at the end of the initiative these neighbourhoods can be serviced and managed in a similar way to others.

The discussion that follows draws initially on the telephone survey of 49 local authorities to present an overview of how targeted approaches are developing across the UK and in different kinds of local authority context. It also draws on the more detailed evidence from the four local authority case studies to show how different approaches to targeting are being put into practice.

There were three main findings from the telephone survey in relation to targeting:

- Targeted approaches were more common for some street-scene services than for others. Street cleansing, graffiti removal and uplifting abandoned cars were often provided on a

differential basis. For example, only a third of authorities swept the streets of all residential neighbourhoods with the same frequency. However, refuse collection, open space and street lighting maintenance services tended to be provided on a standard basis. For example, only two of the 49 local authorities collected refuse with different frequencies in different residential neighbourhoods.

- Where services were provided in a targeted way, this was not necessarily viewed as a mechanism for addressing the needs of deprived neighbourhoods. Services were more often targeted based on built form and/or neighbourhood features such as schools, main roads and shopping centres. Only a minority of those authorities that provided differential services did so in order explicitly to target deprivation. Others simply perceived themselves to be responding to environmental problems wherever they occurred.

- There were different approaches to targeting. We have categorised these as 'hotspotting', 'tacit targeting' and 'formal targeting'. Table 6 identifies the main features of these approaches, alongside the characteristics of a 'standardised' approach. The table distinguishes the extent to which each approach centres on tackling the problems of deprived neighbourhoods as well as the emphasis within each on attempting to achieve either equal service inputs or outputs. The table also shows the number of surveyed local authorities adopting each approach.

Table 6: Local authority approaches to targeting services to deprived neighbourhoods

Approach service	Definition of provision	Focus on neighbourhood deprivation	Input or outcome focused	Number of local authorities (*n*=49)
'Standardisation'	No service variation between neighbourhood types	None	More emphasis on equality of inputs than in other approaches	16 (33%)
'Hotspotting'	Standardised service with reactive supplementary services to tackle specific problems as they arise	None, but deprived places likely to need services more frequently than elsewhere, so may benefit from hotspotting	Emphasis on inputs as well as outcomes	8 (16%)
'Tacit targeting'	Service levels vary according to need for service: dirty places routinely receive additional service levels in a proactive, strategic way	Focus on environmental problems, wherever they occur, but deprived neighbourhoods usually receive more services as a result of their higher needs	Outcome focused	17 (35%)
'Formal targeting'	Service levels vary according to deprivation: deprived neighbourhoods routinely receive additional service levels in a proactive, strategic way	Explicit focus – services are enhanced specifically to compensate for deprivation	Outcome focused	8 (16%)

As the table shows, about half the local authorities involved in the survey were carrying out some form of strategic targeting to address either perceived service need or deprivation. The discussion below explores each approach in more detail, drawing on both the evidence from the survey and from the case studies in the four local authorities – each of which was selected to exemplify and examine one of the four models.

The standardised approach

The standardised model provides a universal level of service to all residential neighbourhoods. Domestic refuse is consistently collected with the same frequency, for example. Street cleansing operates so that all neighbourhoods are checked and cleaned with the same regularity. Services such as environmental wardens are provided on a per capita or per ward basis. In one authority, for example, characterised by "two halves, a northern poorer area in need of regeneration and an affluent south", the authority consciously attempts to provide the same level of service input across the borough, despite the recognition of greater need in its less affluent part.

Durham City Council: standardisation in action

Durham's residential areas receive a universal level of environmental services including both statutory provision such as refuse collection and street cleansing and special initiatives such as environmental wardens who provide their services across the city. There is also a small 'hit squad': a team of six operatives who deal with problems such as fly-tipping and graffiti removal in the city centre, surrounding countryside and residential neighbourhoods.

Although Durham is one of the more deprived local authorities in England – the collapse of the traditional coalfield industry had a devastating effect – a buoyant tourist industry, fairly rapid gentrification and a succession of regeneration programmes have meant that the area does not have large estates with significant concentrations of severe deprivation. The norm is for small 'pockets' of both deprivation and environmental problems, although there can be wider problems of vandalism or graffiti by young people, particularly in the outlying villages. Chapter 2 revealed that there was not a significant gap between the environmental amenity of deprived and less deprived parts of Durham.

In the case of Durham, the standardised model of service delivery appears to deliver a high amenity local environment, irrespective of neighbourhood deprivation. The fact that deprived parts of the authority are relatively small and dispersed means that environmental problems remain at a manageable scale. Any additional challenges can be accommodated in normal workloads. However, one of the neighbourhoods researched as part of the case study – the recently regenerated Sherburn Road – did receive an additional litter-picking service. There was also evidence from frontline workers and supervisors that, on occasions, it could be challenging to maintain the amenity of some areas within the standard model: they might have to work a bit harder in some places at times. Arguably, therefore, in authorities where deprivation was more extensive or severe than in Durham's case, it would be difficult to meet the needs of deprived neighbourhoods via a standard approach.

The hotspotting approach

Authorities adopting a hotspotting model of services provide a standard service level for all residential neighbourhoods, but have also made significant provision to tackle particular problem 'hotspots' as they occur. For example, a number of authorities have 'hit squads' or roving teams of operatives who tackle problems as they arise. Crucially, the hotspotting approach provides additional services as a response to problems: it is not pre-emptive. Further, hit squads can also be deployed in response to a range of problems – littering

outside a school or fly-tipping in country lanes – and not just those associated with deprived neighbourhoods. Thus, within the hotspotting approach, the needs of deprived neighbourhoods may be in competition with other priorities. However, for some authorities, hotspotting was effectively an approach to targeting services by stealth to deprived neighbourhoods.

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC): hotspotting in action

Knowsley provides most environmental services on a standardised basis: refuse collection, street cleansing, grounds maintenance and neighbourhood wardens. It tackles specific problems such as graffiti and fly-tipping via hit squads and these are also deployed in response to 'out of the ordinary' problems more properly within the remit of other services. There is also a rolling programme of 'community clean-ups', which tackle residual problems in all neighbourhoods, deprived and less deprived.

Knowsley's hotspotting approach is designed to address three issues:

- Deprivation in Knowsley is both widespread and severe. According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2000), 18 of Knowsley's 21 wards are among the 10% most severely deprived in England. The fact that deprivation is endemic across the borough makes it difficult for service provision to be delivered on a targeted basis.
- Different neighbourhoods have varying levels of environmental challenges. There is not only a gap between deprived and less deprived parts of the borough, but also between more and less problematic deprived neighbourhoods. Thus, a standardised approach to service delivery would struggle to deliver similar levels of environmental amenity across the borough's neighbourhoods, and even appropriate cleanliness standards in some areas.
- There is a view among environmental service providers in Knowsley – from frontline workers to senior policy makers – that the environmental gap in Knowsley is due to low levels of social responsibility in the most problematic areas. Crucially, this analysis is enshrined in council policy. There is strong political and ethical opposition to developing routinely targeted forms of service delivery as it could be viewed as rewarding irresponsible behaviour.

However, there is evidence that some neighbourhoods use significantly more response-mode, hotspotting services than others. In this circumstance, hotspotting can be viewed as a form of targeting by stealth. It allows problems to be addressed, while avoiding political and ethical objections to targeting. However, the reactive hotspotting approach may avoid tackling the root causes of high levels of environmental problems. In Knowsley, however, hotspotting is accompanied by a range of measures to improve social responsibility – an approach which, in the council's view, tackles causes as well as symptoms. One manager did, however, suggest that in some neighbourhoods it would be more effective to use the resource currently expended on hotspotting activities – what he called "firefighting" – on augmenting routine services. He argued that using this resource to provide more frequent street cleansing would result in a higher cleanliness standard than the one currently achieved: "They should ask us to programme in the problems rather than react all the time".

The Knowsley case study reveals a key constraint on the development of targeted service provision: it can be difficult to achieve and indeed make little sense in authorities where everywhere seems to need extra service. There was a strong sense that environmental services operated under severe resource constraints in Knowsley. There certainly seemed to be little spare capacity in the system, with instances of managers doing the work of operatives when there were staff shortages. KMBC is currently reviewing the way it allocates resources at the neighbourhood level in order to ensure that it has the most effective

approach in place to tackle its severe and widespread level of need and is developing a neighbourhood management approach to service delivery and the identification of local needs and problems.

The tacit targeting approach

This approach to service delivery was adopted by a third of the local authorities surveyed. In the tacit targeting model, neighbourhood services are provided at levels that reflect the extent of environmental problems. Most authorities set a minimum service level for all residential areas – all streets to be swept fortnightly, for example – but provide higher service levels in problematic areas on a routine basis. In contrast with the hotspotting approach, service enhancements are proactive rather than reactive, reflecting a strategic decision to provide levels of service that are appropriate to local needs and which should prevent problem hot spots from occurring.

The tacit approach to targeting focuses on environmental problems rather than on deprivation per se. However, given that deprived neighbourhoods are often prone to environmental incivilities, in many instances a focus on environmental problems will imply a focus on deprivation. Indeed, the evidence from the survey was that deprived neighbourhoods were in large part the beneficiaries of this model of service provision, as one respondent commented: "In general, less affluent areas get more service and more affluent less". Like the hotspotting approach, tacit targeting can be a means of targeting services to deprived neighbourhoods by stealth. For example, in one authority – where it was estimated that around 70% of expenditure on street cleansing was spent on densely populated deprived areas – targeting resources to deprived neighbourhoods was a priority for the council, but it did not want to draw attention to this fact:

> "There is no map or chart which shows that deprived areas are getting more service." (senior environmental services manager, urban local authority)

Glasgow City Council: tacit targeting in action

Glasgow faces some similar challenges to those in Knowsley, but has taken a different approach to managing them. Thus, deprivation in Glasgow is both intense and widespread – large tracts of the city are among the most deprived in the UK. However, in comparison with Knowsley, Glasgow has more middle-income and affluent neighbourhoods. This greater variety means a greater potential for targeting, as there will be more places which need less services.

Glasgow City Council largely confines its service enhancements to street cleansing operations and, to an extent, to the removal of graffiti and fly-tipping (refuse collection and grounds maintenance are standardised). Street cleansing is provided on a 'need-for-service' basis and focuses on "how clean a street is rather than how often it's swept" or "if it isn't dirty, why clean it?" (GCC Land Services, 1999/2000). Practically, this means that there is wide variation in the frequency by which street cleansing is delivered to individual streets. Some streets are cleaned only once a fortnight, while others are always swept three or more times each week. The frequency with which individual streets are cleaned is determined by local managers, and is based on their local knowledge and experience, rather than on an underlying formula. Interviewees confirmed that the effect of this needs-based approach was that deprived neighbourhoods received enhanced services.

Removing graffiti and fly-tipping is also done on a need-for-service basis by 'response teams'. Although the response teams are available to tackle problems across the city, the majority of their work tends to be in deprived areas and they are therefore located in those depots that are closest to

deprived areas in order to minimise travel time and to maximise effectiveness. Arguably, locating the teams near deprived areas is another instance of service targeting.

Glasgow City Council's approach to street cleansing is clearly an attempt to narrow the environmental gap between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods, although this is an implied rather than explicit aspect of its approach. However, its endeavours are taking place in a challenging context. The council regards itself as insufficiently resourced to compensate for the scale of deprivation in the city. In addition, two thirds of the city's housing stock is in the form of flatted dwellings. This creates environmental challenges in less, as well as more, deprived areas. Managers described the difficulties of trying to direct more resources towards neighbourhoods in need, while at the same time safeguarding standards in less problematic neighbourhoods, particularly since (as we saw in Chapter 3) expectations and therefore demands on services tend to be higher in more affluent neighbourhoods.

Indeed, services can be put under severe pressure at times, such as when major sporting events coincide with high incidences of sick leave. In theory, there should be the capacity to deal with such contingencies, but the reality is that the service is always working at full capacity and, on such occasions, regular services have to be reduced in some places in order to cope. The view of senior managers is that when services are under pressure, the 'needs-based' philosophy should prevail. Thus, service levels should be maintained in the dirtiest places and reduced if necessary elsewhere. However, it was clear from some interviews that locally based staff could find this policy challenging to implement, as even reducing services on a short-term basis from more affluent areas could provoke high levels of complaints. In 2005 the council piloted a new street-cleansing initiative in six wards in the city's affluent West End and neighbouring less deprived areas. This involves a more generic and intensive working style and has had the effect of enhancing services in neighbourhoods which, in some cases, would otherwise receive infrequent cleansing. Although the initiative was piloted in these wards because of their role in supporting tourism, it is notable that the council chose to pilot it in some of its more affluent neighbourhoods. This is another indication of how difficult it can be to implement an approach that targets deprived neighbourhoods, particularly where resource levels are such that less problematic areas can receive relatively infrequent services.

The formal targeting approach

The formal targeting model of supplementary service provision involves routinely and deliberately providing additional services to neighbourhoods because they are deprived. This approach differs from tacit targeting in that the driver here is deprivation itself and the link between need for service and levels of deprivation is made transparent; relative deprivation is recognised as a factor that needs to be taken into account in resource allocation or service planning. This explicit focus on deprivation may make it less susceptible than other approaches to lobbying from less deprived neighbourhoods. It is clearly a proactive approach designed to narrow the environmental gap between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods. Of course, the capacity of the approach to deliver this will depend on whether the services are targeted sufficiently to compensate for deprivation and its related problems.

Birmingham City Council: formal targeting in action

Birmingham City Council is developing a targeted approach, which formally uses ward-level deprivation indicators to provide differential resources for a range of street-scene services. Its key elements are:

- increasing the provision of core services to deprived neighbourhoods. For example, the street-cleansing allocation in the most deprived wards is over twice that in the least deprived;
- allocating 'special' environmental services according to relative deprivation. For example, the most deprived wards get 35 days of 'special collections' – where any item will be lifted free of charge – while the least deprived wards receive four days;
- providing additional, devolved budgets (financed from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund) to be spent on locally defined priorities. Crucially, the size of the budget allocated depends on relative deprivation: in 2004/05 the most deprived areas received £18 million, while the least deprived received £8 million; and
- developing neighbourhood management – the 'Going Local' agenda – as a means to operationalise the various dimensions of targeting highlighted above and more generally to improve service coordination and increase its responsiveness to local people. Since April 2004, 11 devolved districts have been established, each with a director responsible for coordinating, prioritising, and managing core environmental services, as well as 'purchasing' additional services if it is felt that these are required via the devolved budget mentioned above. The directors are supported by ward-level committees and neighbourhood forums, which involve local councillors and residents in determining local priorities.

The Birmingham approach is still in its early stages, which makes evaluation difficult. The council has, however, succeeded in delivering additional resources and enhanced services to deprived neighbourhoods. And, although the deprived neighbourhoods that formed the case studies for this research still faced significant environmental problems – particularly in the case of South Aston – there was a general consensus among interviewees that conditions were improving.

Box 5 summarises some key lessons learned thus far in Birmingham on how to gain support for targeting environmental services to address deprivation.

Box 5: Formally targeting deprivation in Birmingham: some challenges and lessons

Councillor support

Achieving elected member support for this approach can be difficult. A key lesson is that 'doubters' have to be educated. As one council official explained, some councillors can be unaware of the differences in environmental amenity between neighbourhoods: "When this funding allocation was put to the new Cabinet member his first reaction was 'why are they [deprived neighbourhoods] getting more money?'. So we took him round to Aston and then he was convinced".

Public reaction

Over time the differing levels of service provision across the city are likely to become more apparent to the public and residents of more affluent areas may begin to challenge the model of resource distribution. However, the provision of additional devolved budgets to all parts of the city, deprived and less deprived, which can be allocated to address locally defined priorities, may mitigate a perception of services being reduced or a sense of injustice.

Funding formulas

Finding the right formula to distribute resources at varying levels is not straightforward. It might be tempting simply to use deprivation indices or similar readily available data. However, these data may not be the most appropriate for capturing the range of needs in particular contexts. Birmingham has carefully considered the range of indicators to be used (ie deprivation, population and ethnicity) and the weighting attached to these factors and has not been afraid to experiment until the formula feels right.

Dealing with different services

It may be easier to define and allocate some service budgets than others, and time and effort should be invested in this process. As a council official pointed out: "It was not so easy. It's the first time the council have had to come up with a formula for refuse collection. We can do this on a household basis, but with street cleansing it is more difficult."

Raised expectations

Finally, the extent to which localisation and targeting can raise expectations and create additional demands on services should not be under-estimated. The system needs to be able to cope operationally if – as does seem to be the case in Birmingham (and elsewhere) – "additional environmental services [are] at the top of the agenda [in most wards]".

Targeting deprived neighbourhoods: conclusion

In authorities where concentrated deprivation is not severe, those environmental problems associated with neighbourhood disadvantage may be manageable within a standardised approach to service delivery. However, in authorities with problematic deprivation, standardised service provision would clearly not be a 'neutral' policy position, but would, perhaps inadvertently, discriminate against poor neighbourhoods through focusing on equal inputs rather than similar outcomes. In such cases, some form of service targeting to deprived neighbourhoods will be necessary to compensate for their tendency to have greater environmental problems and in order to close the environmental gap.

However, key questions remain about the scale of service targeting required to fundamentally address the environmental needs of deprived neighbourhoods. Chapter 2 identified that deprived neighbourhoods – for a wide range of reasons – are likely to be more susceptible than other areas to environmental problems. And Chapter 3 suggested that an environmental gap between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods remained in the three local authorities in this research that were deploying targeted approaches (although in Birmingham there were signs of improvement). Indeed, frontline workers continued to face severe challenges in some deprived neighbourhoods, leading to forms of informal service rationing in working practices. Arguably, the persistence of the environmental gap points to the possibility of another form of service rationing – 'institutional rationing'. This captures the idea that there may be a mismatch between the service needs of deprived neighbourhoods and the service levels provided to them. Thus, resource and service planning may take insufficient account of the fact that deprived neighbourhoods often have inbuilt challenges – such as high housing densities, or high proportions of young people. The notion of 'institutional rationing' therefore draws attention to the systemic, unintentional biases within policy and practice in which the specific needs of deprived neighbourhoods fail to be recognised.

Targeting services in some form is becoming increasingly common. Of the three approaches to targeting discussed in this chapter, the evidence suggests that formally and explicitly

delivering services on a differentiated basis in line with *deprivation* rather than environmental problems is likely to be the most effective in closing the gap in service outcomes in more and less deprived areas. Although hotspotting and tacit targeting distribute resources according to service needs, formal targeting draws attention to the existence of a necessary link between concentrations of deprivation and environmental problems. It may therefore be less likely to stigmatise neighbourhoods with environmental problems than other approaches, particularly among environmental service providers, who would be helped to understand more about why their work could be harder in certain kinds of neighbourhoods. For the same reason, it should also be an easier model to defend against challenge from the public, although it would be naive to under-estimate the potential challenge from affluent neighbourhoods if they believe their environmental amenity is threatened. Finally, formal targeting also assumes that environmental problems will always be worse in deprived neighbourhoods and is thus orientated firmly towards achieving social equity rather than about service needs per se.

However, the evidence of the study is that targeting is difficult to achieve and will necessarily be implemented in the context of practical and political constraints. Authorities developing and implementing such approaches will need to decide what suits their local context. To help in this, Table 7 summarises the advantages and disadvantages of the three approaches to targeting identified in the course of this research.

Changing the behaviour of residents

The second major way in which local authorities are attempting to narrow the environmental gap is by means of strategies designed to promote a more responsible attitude to the local environment among residents. Chapter 2 reported that service providers detected a widespread reduction in social responsibility towards the environment. In the case studies, the focus on changing behaviour therefore extended beyond the residents of deprived neighbourhoods, but, in some cases, extra effort was made with these groups.

As Chapter 3 showed, the behaviour of residents and the quality of environmental services are inextricably linked: poor quality or inadequate services can undermine residents' sense of responsibility; and low levels of care from residents can undermine the capacity of service providers to work effectively. The extent to which this was a mutually reinforcing relationship was also clear. This interplay between poor services and low levels of responsibility was argued to be key in explaining why such a large gap could open up between the amenity of deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods.

Crucially, however, Chapter 3 also provided evidence of how positive change could occur. Figure 1 captures the idea that improvements to service delivery and increased levels of resident responsibility can each achieve an improved neighbourhood environment. It shows that while the two are mutually reinforcing, there are also two alternative starting points: either with residents' behaviour or with services.

Among the four case studies, two favoured service-led approaches to encourage more responsible behaviour and two favoured resident-led mechanisms. However, it should be emphasised that these were tendencies rather than hard and fast policy positions.

A service–led approach to improved social responsibility

Birmingham City Council argues that improved service delivery sets the backdrop for encouraging resident responsibility. Its localised, targeted approach has already been highlighted and this is a key part of its approach to service enhancement. Its service-led

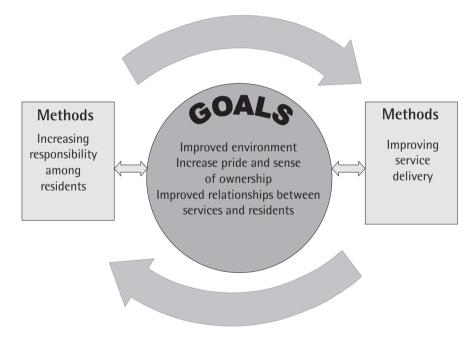**Table 7: Advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to targeting**

	Formal targeting	Tacit targeting	Hotspotting
Advantages	• Based on social need • Focus on equality of outcomes • Ensures additional resources to areas of greatest need • Degree of transparency for residents and operatives • Based on formally agreed structures, so less likely to be affected by lobbying etc • Increases opportunities for resident involvement (because of its transparency)	• Based on environmental needs • Focus on equality of outcomes • Enables additional resources to be targeted to areas of greatest service need • Reduces some of the political tensions of a formal approach – does not obviously favour deprived neighbourhoods • Likely to be responsive to changing environmental conditions	• Based on environmental needs • Emphasis on equality of inputs as well as outcomes • Enables rapid response to emerging problems • Ensures flexibility • Links additional resources directly to greatest environmental problems • Provides opportunities for residents to access additional services directly and for a responsive approach
Disadvantages	• Requires considerable political negotiation and management of tensions • Requires adequate/more resources • Relies upon adequate data sources to target effectively • Requires complex allocation and delivery • Limited responsiveness to changing conditions	• Less transparent to residents and operatives • May be affected by lobbying activity • Requires adequate/more resources • May limit awareness of extent of different inputs and outcomes between neighbourhoods	• Largely reactive, so may not address underlying problems • Focus on short-term, rather than longer-term solutions • May not be as economically persuasive as more strategic targeting mechanisms

approach is also demonstrated in other ways, notably a major programme of clean-ups of 3,000 sites of environmental degradation throughout the city (with those in deprived neighbourhoods carried out first). As a council official argued:

> "We were demonstrating our willingness to recognise problems and our need, as an authority, to improve these areas. We are now saying to residents it is up to you to help us maintain them from now on."

In Durham, significant time and effort has been devoted to service reorganisation in order to promote its effectiveness. For example, all street-scene services were brought together within a single department and then re-engineered to be delivered zonally. This was designed to facilitate service integration: multi-skilled environmental operatives were introduced, along with a synchronised service delivery system in which the various services were timetabled to follow on from each other to increase effectiveness. For example, street-cleansing operatives literally follow refuse collection vehicles in order that any spills can be dealt with as part of the street sweeping service. Reorganisation was also designed so that a more proactive approach could be taken to the environmental problems caused by young people: both leisure and environmental services are now in the one department and improving the leisure and other facilities available to young people is seen as a key way of discouraging environmental incivilities.

Figure 1: The relationship between resident responsibility, improved environmental services and overall outcomes

A resident–led approach to improved social responsibility

Knowsley and Glasgow have tended to encourage social responsibility in ways that are less obviously based on improved services. Indeed, in Knowsley there is a quite explicit focus on encouraging social responsibility. This is reflected in its Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and is one of the three priorities of the Local Strategic Partnership. The development of neighbourhood management in Knowsley is geared, for example, to promoting social responsibility through encouraging self-help and citizen participation. As one service manager explained, enhanced social responsibility will be necessary for enhanced services to be delivered:

"Rather than saying no matter how much litter residents drop, we will clean up after them through increasing the budget – rather we have to move away from the dependency culture which has created many of the social problems society is currently experiencing."

However, although initiatives aimed at changing attitudes to the environment have been priorities in Glasgow and Knowsley (see below for more detail on, for example, 'Clean Glasgow' and 'Knowsley Pride'), both authorities have also sought ways to improve services. Knowsley, for example, is developing service synchronisation and generic working. Glasgow has concentrated its efforts on more effective mechanisation and is currently experimenting with forms of generic working. Both authorities have also developed major regeneration initiatives to address the range of physical, economic and social disadvantages of their most problematic neighbourhoods.

So it should be clear that the two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive. However, the discussion does signal that there are differing perspectives on how to best promote social responsibility. The key elements of more fully realised service-led and resident-led approaches are summarised in Table 8, together with their potential advantages and disadvantages.

Table 8: Comparing approaches to fostering social responsibility towards the local environment

A service improvement–focused approach	A resident behaviour–focused approach
Key elements	*Key elements*
Improving service delivery	Improving residents' behaviour
Emphasis on residents' expectations of service providers	Emphasis on service providers' expectations of residents
Providing information on, for example, service levels and standards and how to complain	Providing information on residents' responsibilities
Supporting vulnerable individuals	Linking improved service provision to improved behaviour
Advantages	*Advantages*
Provides positive context for residents' behaviour	Sets out clear expectations of behaviour
Demonstrates agencies' commitment and willingness to 'do their bit'	Emphasises central active role for residents
Recognises difficult circumstances of frontline operatives	Recognises intimidation may be an issue for individuals and deprived neighbourhoods
Enables flexible and targeted support	May enhance sustainability and reduce dependence on service provision
	Less resource intensive
Disadvantages	*Disadvantages*
May 'reward' irresponsible behaviour	Risks penalising the most vulnerable households
Reduces incentives to change behaviour	Reduces focus on improved service delivery
Increases dependence on agencies	If unsuccessful, may widen the environmental gap between deprived and less deprived areas
Disillusions 'responsible' residents	
Resource intensive	

Box 6 brings together the range of ways in which all the areas have approached changing resident behaviour towards the local environment. The box starts by highlighting the role of quality service provision in promoting responsibility. While there are differences of opinion over whether the starting point to improving residential environments is with services or with residents, the evidence of the research reported here is that increased levels of resident responsibility will occur only where environmental service provision is provided at appropriate levels and to a high standard.

Box 6: Fostering residents' social responsibility

Providing appropriate routine services
- Effective basic services and consistent service standards between areas.
- Appropriate levels and standards of service to deal with local needs.
- Rapid responses to abandoned cars, fly-tipping, graffiti and vandalism.
- Maintenance and management of public space.

Providing information on services and involving residents
- Informing residents of refuse collection days and collection points, for example, via Directories of Council Services, newsletters, leaflets, signs. In Birmingham, local radio has also been used in addition to written materials.
- Informing residents of special services such as bulky waste collection services and special collection days.
- Involving residents: in Knowsley, neighbourhood wardens ensure that all residents are aware of community clean-up days and they coordinate residents' input into them.

Supporting vulnerable individuals with flexible services
- Providing gardening services – Glasgow and Knowsley provide free targeted services to pensioners and sick and disabled people.
- Arranging individual refuse collection arrangements – in a number of case study neighbourhoods, refuse collection crews have made special arrangements for individual residents, for example 'back-door' rather than 'on-street' collections.
- Providing publicity materials and signs in a range of languages: in Birmingham, leaflets are provided in a range of formats and languages and street signs about refuse collection times are colour coded to help those with literacy problems.

Helping to reduce antisocial behaviour
- Providing designated sites/boards for leafleting and fly-posting.
- Tackling graffiti with easy-clean paint etc.
- Providing sites for young people to graffiti and treating this as a positive activity.
- Working with community volunteers on clean-up days.
- Appropriate use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Antisocial Behaviour Orders for extreme cases.

Education
- Publicity campaigns designed to:
  - improve residents' awareness of environmental issues and of actions they could take to improve amenity levels;
  - clarify required standards of behaviour;
  - provide information on how to access and utilise environmental services.
- Measures to increase the capacity of residents to contribute towards environmental amenity such as:
  - sessions with young people in schools and youth projects;
  - neighbourhood wardens to foster an increased sense of local control;
  - reward schemes, gardening competitions etc, to incentivise 'good behaviour'.

Enforcement
- Prioritising by environmental health officers, police officers, housing officers and neighbourhood wardens of environmental incivilities.
- Issuing of fixed penalty notices and follow-through prosecutions for littering, fly-tipping, graffiti and vandalism.
- Effective enforcement of tenancy conditions in relation to the neighbourhood environment.

Education versus enforcement approaches to fostering social responsibility

The case study authorities were involved in a variety of activities that sought to promote cultural change: specifically about the costs of environmental incivilities and about the benefits of residents behaving more responsibly to upkeep their local area. In many of the case study neighbourhoods there had clearly been a recent increase in the presence of 'authority figures' as a consequence of the introduction of neighbourhood wardens and, in some, additional policing. As one environmental supervisor argued, this would "demonstrate to local people that their concerns are being taken seriously". The case studies tended to employ both education and enforcement approaches in their attempts to change behaviour, as the examples in Box 7 demonstrate.

Box 7: Education and enforcement in the case study areas

Birmingham City Council has developed a number of campaigns designed to change the attitudes of the city's residents and to promote pride, both in local neighbourhoods and the city as a whole. The title of the most extensive city-wide campaign 'You Are Your City, Clean and Safe' emphasises the key themes of social responsibility and the liveability agenda. This campaign sought to link an extensive clean-up campaign by the city council with calls for residents to take responsibility and ownership for the maintenance of local neighbourhoods and communal areas in particular. A number of smaller-scale education initiatives have also been undertaken, including developing 'litter charters' in local schools. This education approach is combined with enhanced enforcement strategies, including the use of fixed penalty notices for littering. Birmingham has several warden schemes, including street, environmental and community wardens. Environmental wardens have some enforcement powers, and spend relatively more time in inner-city and city-centre wards. The environmental wardens interviewed in the course of the research emphasised the prioritisation of their education, community capacity building and service coordination activities, but also argued that enforcement activity was a necessary element of an effective environmental stewardship strategy.

Durham's efforts on promoting social responsibility have been channelled through the environmental wardens which serve the whole city. The wardens have focused more on educational rather than enforcement activities, although in 2005 they issued 21 fixed penalty notices for offences such as dog fouling, littering and fly-tipping (compared to one in 2003). In the summer of 2005 there were 50 investigations for fly-tipping offences underway and wardens were receiving training to help them prepare cases for court. Despite this, the wardens retain a strong community development remit. They work closely with community groups and parish councils interested in environmental issues, assisting them with funding applications for example, and have worked closely with young people, through school visits and on projects such as the provision of a skate park.

In **Glasgow**, a city-wide educational campaign – 'Clean Glasgow' – involves public relations activities and education officers touring city schools to sell a positive, anti-litter message. In mid-2005, a programme of public education was being implemented involving, for example, 'no dumping' signs in residential areas and leaflets and posters in a variety languages advising residents of requirements on waste disposal. Glasgow has also attempted to promote responsibility via enforcement measures. In 2004/05, two police constables were seconded to the environmental services department to support the department's own enforcement officers in tackling domestic and commercial offences, particularly fly-tipping. The housing association in the Reidvale area has funded an additional police patrol presence in the neighbourhood, with police officers undertaking extra patrolling duties on two nights each week. The main focus of the scheme was to reduce street-level antisocial behaviour and incivilities including graffiti and vandalism. An evaluation of the first 12-month period of the scheme indicated that complaints about antisocial behaviour had fallen by 40%, and that acts of vandalism in the area had fallen by a third. Glasgow City Council introduced community wardens in 10 deprived wards in late 2004. A consultation process decided against giving them enforcement powers.

> In **Knowsley**, a range of measures has been developed to encourage more social responsibility on the part of residents. The high-profile 'Knowsley Pride' initiative combines marketing approaches with week-long environmental clean-up events in a rolling programme in which each neighbourhood is visited in turn. Knowsley has 108 neighbourhood wardens including lead wardens, of which 92 work in pairs providing high-visibility patrols throughout the entire borough. Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council decided against giving wardens enforcement powers, seeing these as a potential barrier to the development of trusting relationships with the community. While their prime objective is to assist in reducing crime and fear of crime, the wardens work extensively in local schools, working on road and community safety as well as environmental issues and there is a 'mini-warden' programme in which school children are involved in litter picking, recycling and environmental education. The neighbourhood wardens work with other agencies – such as housing organisations – on enforcement actions, providing evidence in support of antisocial behaviour orders and acceptable behaviour contracts. In the summer of 2005, they were involved with police on the 'Cube it' campaign in which nuisance quad bikes were impounded and crushed into cubes.

Combining education and enforcement: the role of neighbourhood wardens

Wardens appear to have had a significant impact on a number of the neighbourhood case studies. Their presence is generally welcomed by other service providers and by residents. As well as educational and enforcement roles, they often play an important coordination role: connecting residents to service users, and connecting different services agencies to each other. One warden described herself as "a sort of personal one-stop shop": she was able to identify the service needs of residents and put them in touch with the correct services.

In some case studies, there was an indication that wardens were filling the gap left by the withdrawal of ordinary, 'responsible' citizens from some streets and neighbourhoods, as well as the gap left by a growing reluctance among the public to admonish incivilities such as littering. There was a view that as authority figures, often armed with enforcement powers, wardens could confront irresponsible behaviour in ways most people are no longer comfortable with. There was evidence in the case studies that as wardens became more familiar presences locally, the number of residents reporting offences and incidents to them increased. In this way, warden schemes can indirectly allow citizens to assert more control over their neighbourhoods. There were, however, differing views on whether this was a positive development or not. One view was that residents would become increasingly reliant on wardens to resolve all environmental problems and would reduce the capacity and propensity of residents to take action themselves. An alternative view was that if environmental conditions improved, partly as a consequence of the interventions of wardens, citizens would be encouraged to build on this and do more for themselves.

Finally, there is clearly the potential for tension between the different roles that wardens may play in any one neighbourhood. It may be difficult for a warden to develop educational projects with a youth group for example, when they have already issued fixed penalty notices to some members. In Knowsley, wardens have not been given enforcement powers for this very reason. Within the case study areas, there were mixed views on this point among wardens. Some argued that their enforcement role gave them authority and status and was helpful to their educative role. Others were concerned about undermining goodwill and trust and felt it could be unhelpful, particularly if their managers saw effective performance as linked to, for example, the numbers of fixed penalty notices issued. Box 8 summarises the advantages and disadvantages of warden schemes.

Box 8: The advantages and disadvantages of neighbourhood wardens

Advantages
- May increase the responsiveness of local services by being responsible for identifying problems and acting as a contact point and advocate for residents.
- Can improve coordination of services and facilitate a multi-agency approach and may, therefore, improve relationships between residents and local agencies.
- Can play key educational role by, for example, acting as conduits of information, working in schools to prevent littering, encouraging local 'clean-up' days etc.
- Via their visible authority presence, may promote residents' confidence and sense of social control.
- Can deter irresponsible behaviour and facilitate punishment by reporting offences and offenders, issuing warnings, providing evidence and acting as witnesses.

Disadvantages
- May reduce responsibility of local residents – the public may be less likely to admonish irresponsible behaviour.
- Can be tensions between educational/advocacy roles and enforcement.
- May substitute, rather than complement, other service providers. For example, resources might be better spent on more environmental operatives.
- May lead to reliance on short-term resources, leading to additional pressures once funding ends.

Conclusion

Changing the behaviour of residents and increasing levels of social responsibility may be regarded as part of a wider strategy to enhance the capacity of deprived neighbourhoods to manage their local environment and influence service delivery to achieve better outcomes. Without social responsibility, the impacts of improving or even targeted enhancements to services will be limited. However, the link between social responsibility and service delivery is a two-way process. Simply calling for greater levels of social responsibility will be ineffective. Rather, increased social responsibility is likely to be fostered in a context where the physical environment and services in deprived neighbourhoods have been, or are being, improved. Within attempts to increase social responsibility, a balance needs to be struck between enhanced education and support to vulnerable households and effective enforcement action, when the behaviour of individuals is clearly detrimental to the local environment. Enforcement action on its own will not address the underlying problems resulting in irresponsible behaviour.

Targeting services to deprived areas and changing the behaviour of residents are not mutually exclusive approaches, but rather elements of both approaches are often combined and utilised simultaneously. It is also important to note that targeting resources and changing the behaviour of residents are part of a wider range of strategies that impact on the environment of deprived neighbourhoods.

In many of the neighbourhoods, for example, additional interventions were also underway to challenge some of the features that make deprived neighbourhoods prone to environmental problems in the first place. Thus, regeneration initiatives were underway, focused on redesigning the built environment and addressing high levels of economic inactivity. Various forms of neighbourhood management were beginning to be developed in attempts to improve the responsiveness of services to local needs. This suggests a

continued role for comprehensive, area-based regeneration programmes in places that require more radical change as they can kick-start an upward cycle of improvement.

There was also a recognition among the case study local authorities and those involved in the telephone survey of the importance of developing good management practices in order to improve outcomes in all types of neighbourhoods. This involved reorganising environmental services to develop a more strategic, joined-up approach – in the majority of cases, this meant bringing a range of formerly disparate services within a single department. As a complement to this, a number of authorities were moving away from employing specialist operatives to more generic modes of working. Thus, refuse collectors and street sweepers are increasingly being replaced by 'environmental operatives' who are trained and empowered to address a range of problems on the ground. Some authorities – including Durham and Knowsley – are also investing in improving the sequencing of services: for instance, ensuring that street cleansing follows on from refuse collection, so that spills can be dealt with quickly. More generally, in all local authorities, it was clear that performance management and meeting, for example, Best Value performance targets was driving innovation and improvement.

5

Key messages for policy and practice

Deprived neighbourhoods often have specific characteristics, which make them prone to environmental problems. Their physical design, housing density and population profile can create specific challenges for service providers. Crucially, these features can affect the capacity of residents to control the neighbourhood and protect its amenity. Our research suggests that an environmental gap between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods will persist unless services and other interventions are designed specifically in order to compensate.

The research provides evidence of the potential for environmental services to be underprovided – or rationed – to deprived neighbourhoods. Two forms of rationing were identified: 'institutional rationing' or an unintentional, systemic bias against fully addressing the needs of deprived neighbourhoods in resource and service planning; and 'informal rationing' where workers and their managers work in ways that lead to reduced standards and less effective environmental maintenance in deprived neighbourhoods.

However, a key finding of the research is that there is shared responsibility for the environmental gap: the role of central government as well as local government is important. Local operatives and residents also have key parts to play. The report therefore concludes with some key messages for all those responsible for narrowing the gap.

Key messages for government

Unresolved environmental problems can tip struggling neighbourhoods into severe decline

The nature and level of environmental problems can significantly affect a neighbourhood's fortunes. Severe problems, or an accumulation of unresolved more minor problems, can make services difficult to deliver. Workers become demotivated and service quality can be undermined. Residents who are normally motivated become disillusioned, withdraw from policing the behaviour of others and even from taking proper care of their own patch. In this way, the spiral of decline develops and becomes self-perpetuating.

Addressing environmental problems can energise neighbourhood regeneration

The quality of the neighbourhood environment is critical in resident perceptions of prospects for change in regeneration areas. Significant reductions in environmental incivilities can provide a platform for residents to take action to improve things and maintain improvements. Local workers will feel energised too, and may provide a better service as a result. Environmental services are therefore very important to other public

policy aims, including reducing social exclusion, tackling crime and antisocial behaviour, and fostering community cohesion and active citizenship.

Resources to tackle deprivation are important

Authorities with large-scale neighbourhood deprivation and severe neighbourhood environmental problems can find it difficult to deliver equitable service outcomes across all their residential neighbourhoods. There is a continuing debate about whether central government recognises sufficiently the needs of local authorities with extensive and intensive levels of deprivation in resource allocations. Regeneration funding can kickstart change, but needs to be sustained. There was evidence in this research that environmental services can be severely stretched in deprived authorities and that environmental quality in deprived neighbourhoods was often a casualty where resources were constrained.

Key messages for local authority councillors and heads of service

Action on a range of fronts is needed to address environmental problems

A significant cause of environmental incivilities is deprivation itself, and deprivation is clearly difficult to resolve. Deprivation interplays with a range of other factors: housing and neighbourhood design; higher than usual levels of irresponsible and antisocial behaviour; disheartened and relatively powerless communities; inadequate or inappropriate service provision. Concerted action on a range of fronts will be required, including proactive efforts to change the social dynamics of local neighbourhoods, rather than simply reacting to localised problems in the short term.

Resources matter and they can make a difference

It is apparent that resources are fundamental and that limited resources reduce service capacity. However, given that local environments are regularly the number one concern of residents, and that comprehensive programmes to keep neighbourhoods clean are likely to be less expensive than interventions in more complex areas like health or economic development, focusing small-scale additional expenditure on the street scene may be both justified and achievable. Such investment may help reconnect citizens to council services and to the democratic process, as well as serving to galvanise local resident action and foster improved informal social control.

Targeting services is difficult but may assist deprived areas

Targeting is difficult for at least two reasons. First, when core budgets are stretched it becomes more difficult to flexibly target resources and services to particular neighbourhoods, given the need to deliver services to all neighbourhoods to certain standards. Second, the explicit decision to formally target additional resources and services to neighbourhoods on the basis of their deprivation levels is politically controversial. Such an approach requires transparency and a degree of consensus among council members. It also requires careful management of the representatives and residents from neighbourhoods perceived to lose out in this process. This may be particularly difficult given that these neighbourhoods are likely to comprise those who are more articulate and influential. The Birmingham example suggests that where consensus is achieved and fears addressed, it provides a firmer basis for targeting to be formalised in council policies.

Key messages for local managers and frontline staff

Providing information on services can help residents to understand their responsibilities

In deprived neighbourhoods with problematic environments, many people will be confused about standards, about the different roles and functions of agencies and about the causes of problems. Providing coherent and succinct information to residents about services, what they may expect in terms of standards, who is responsible for doing what, how to contact providers and how they can influence services helps to cut through this confusion. Responsibilities and planned actions should also be clarified between local agencies, from frontline staff to strategic officers.

Workers will get disheartened – but moves to improve areas may help motivate staff

Frontline operatives do get disheartened when they are working in poor local environments facing apparently insurmountable problems. Recognising their efforts to improve conditions in these neighbourhoods helps to keep staff motivated, but ultimately, intervention that suggests a neighbourhood is improving, even if it still has severe problems, is the most effective way of ensuring satisfaction among street-level operatives.

Not everyone living in deprived neighbourhoods is socially irresponsible

While some of the environmental challenges of deprived neighbourhoods are caused by residents behaving badly, such people are usually a small minority. In severely problematic neighbourhoods, however, the majority of people may be struggling to cope with environmental problems. While a few may continue to challenge those who cause problems, others may have become disillusioned and may have stopped trying to improve things. It can look like no one cares. However, significant improvements to conditions can re-energise and motivate many responsible residents.

Key messages for residents and neighbourhood groups in problematic environments

Communicating with service providers can help to raise the profile of environmental services

Feelings of inadequacy and despondency are natural when the local environment is not improving, particularly if services appear unresponsive. Residents need to remember, however, that local agencies do have a responsibility to keep all neighbourhoods clean. It is important that residents stay involved and keep communicating with service providers. In situations where resources are seriously constrained this will be vital in order to ensure that addressing the needs of problematic neighbourhoods remains a priority for agencies.

It is possible to influence services

While it is easy to believe that nothing makes any difference, our research suggests that this is not the case. Residents, often in more affluent areas, can be very effective at influencing services. This can include speaking to frontline operatives, reporting problems and phoning or writing letters. It also may involve attending meetings and responding to consultation exercises. These activities do make a difference to the actions of environmental services departments, and neighbourhoods can make their voices heard here.

Working with local operatives can increase pressure for improvement

Environmental services workers often share residents' concerns and frustrations about the condition of the local environment. Often they are working to strict targets and deadlines and wish to do more than is possible. It is important that residents recognise this and seek to work with local operatives. Often they can help in reporting problems and demanding action.

Resident action can also help to improve neighbourhood environments

Local residents are not alone in seeking to regain control of the local environment. Support from the police, local authorities, social landlords and others will be important. However, residents can contribute to the work of these organisations, for example by organising the maintenance of common areas, or reporting problems and incidents to the relevant authorities. Residents can also play a role in the upkeep of play areas and open spaces, and contribute towards the supervision of children playing in local neighbourhoods. Simple acts of neighbourliness such as helping an elderly person to put out their rubbish for collection, or informing a new resident of waste recycling collection times, all add up and make a significant positive contribution to local environments.

Final conclusion

This report set out to examine the environmental gap between deprived and less deprived neighbourhoods. Its findings suggest that deprived neighbourhoods often have characteristics that make them prone to environmental challenges. More targeting of resources towards these environmental problems, together with resident action, is therefore necessary and could lead to substantially better outcomes in deprived neighbourhoods. Clearly, action is required on a range of fronts to make sure that the maxim 'where there's muck there's no brass' no longer rings true.

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A

Appendix A:
Telephone survey methodology

Telephone interviews were conducted with chief environmental service officers (or their deputies) in 49 local authorities across the UK. Interviews lasted between half an hour to an hour and discussed a range of issues including:

- the organisation of street-scene environmental services;
- the changing prioritisation of environmental services at a corporate level and the priority afforded to deprived neighbourhoods, within this context;
- the kinds of environmental problems faced in deprived neighbourhoods relative to other kinds of neighbourhoods;
- whether there was any service targeting towards deprived neighbourhoods;
- the existence of any special environmental issues; and
- discussion of general contextual factors such as the nature of deprivation at the local authority level, the discretion allowed by the local government finance system and the relevance of the government's mainstreaming approach.

The 49 authorities represent approximately 10% of all relevant local authorities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, county councils were excluded from the sample, as they do not have responsibility for the majority of street-scene environmental services. Four authorities were chosen from each of the nine English regions designated by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Four authorities were also selected in both Wales and Northern Ireland and five in Scotland (to reflect population size and diversity).

The sample was selected to ensure a spread of local authority types, regional contexts, and to achieve a balance of urban, suburban and rural areas. In addition, the sample aimed to achieve a spectrum of party political control, and a mix of core-city and suburban metropolitan authorities. Crucially, the sample ensured that different intensities of deprivation at the local authority level were covered. Thus in each region, a local authority was selected from each national ranking quartile of the latest relevant index of deprivation. Thus, one authority was selected from the most deprived 25% at a national level, one from the 25-50% most deprived etc. This ensured a spectrum of deprivation from very deprived to very affluent local authorities within each region. For the four parts of the UK, local authorities were selected using the most recent indices of multiple deprivation developed by Oxford University (see below).

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Appendix B:
Case study methodology

Selecting the case studies

Four of the 49 local authorities included in the telephone survey were selected as in-depth case studies. The selection was made once the findings from the telephone survey were clear. Two main criteria were used to guide the selection: approach to service provision and local authority context and characteristics.

Approach to service provision

Findings from the telephone survey suggested that environmental services were being provided to residential neighbourhoods in four distinctive ways to take account of different levels of neighbourhood deprivation. These approaches were classified as standardised, hotspotting, tacit targeting and formal targeting. It was important that each approach was studied in depth and so it was decided that there should be one case study of each approach.

Context and characteristics of the local authority

The study aimed to take account of the different contexts within which local authorities provide neighbourhood environmental services, while recognising that four case studies would be unable fully to reflect the diversity. It was decided to focus only on local authorities with significant problems of deprivation and so only those authorities in the bottom half of the deprivation profile were included. It was also decided to exclude rural authorities and the four authorities included in the telephone survey from Northern Ireland as these were quite different contexts from the one under focus. This left 15 authorities in contention: three operating a standardised approach; two a hotspotting approach; six tacit targeting; and four formal targeting. The final four were selected by a range of criteria – regional spread, local authority type and other factors to capture diversity such as ethnic mix and whether large housing stock transfer had taken place.

Conducting the case studies

The case studies were conducted in two phases.

Phase 1: Local authority–wide case studies

This phase of the case studies focused on local authority-level strategic policy, planning and resource distribution in relation to neighbourhood environmental services. Research methods included:

- approximately eight face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with elected members, senior officers from the range of relevant local authority departments and other relevant public agencies;
- detailed analysis of relevant operational plans, performance audits, budgetary information, committee minutes etc;
- initial observation of environmental amenity in a range of neighbourhoods.

Phase 2: Neighbourhood case studies

The second phase of the case studies involved detailed research of practice on the ground in three neighbourhoods within each of the three local authorities.

The three neighbourhoods were selected in conjunction with the Project Advisory Group and key informants in each local authority according to the following criteria:

- Within the trio of neighbourhoods in each authority, two should be deprived and one non-deprived (either affluent or less deprived).
- Of the two deprived neighbourhoods in each authority, one should be subject to an initiative focused on street-scene environmental services and one should not.

Research methods in each neighbourhood included:

- around six face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with locally based managers of a range of services (eg different environmental services, registered social landlords, the police etc);
- a focus group with frontline service providers. In practice, some focus groups included operatives from more than one neighbourhood;
- informal 'walking-audits' with frontline service providers to deepen understanding of their perspectives;
- a focus group with local residents to understand their perceptions and experience of services;
- informal 'walking audits' with community activists to deepen understanding of residents' perspectives on environmental problems and services.