INVESTORS IN COMMUNITIES – LESSONS SO FAR

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The Chartered Institute of Housing

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1 Investors in Communities (IiC) is a recognition scheme for residents, housing associations and local authorities working together to build safe, stable and sustainable communities in cities, towns and villages. There are separate standards for housing associations/local authorities and community groups. Through the scheme organisations gain recognition for how well they reflect the culture of, and achieve the capacities needed, to help create and maintain sustainable communities, and then work successfully in this way with an increasing number of communities. The part of the scheme relating to community groups is for developing, or having developed, the capacity to solve local problems with help from others and for tackling those problems.

The report and its methodology

2 This report evaluates the pilot phase of IiC. Its methodology has three main components. First, to consider the context for IiC nationally and locally. Second, to look at the role played by IiC and views of participants as to whether and how it has been productive. Third, to look at outcomes – the extent to which any changes locally can be ascribed to IiC.

National context

3 The context for the IiC initiative is a broad one. Housing associations have a recent history of recognising the community basis of their work, embracing 'Housing Plus' and setting up the organisation, People for Action. Community investment issues have some relevance both to the regulatory regime for associations and to housing inspections. The development of government policy on neighbourhood renewal and the changing role of local authorities are also important. Some of the government's rural agenda is also relevant. Finally, other accreditation initiatives like Investors in People have been important in providing ideas about the shape that IiC should take.

Development of IiC and the pilot process

4 IiC developed from a national meeting of some 65 interested housing associations. An advisory group was established, mainly consisting of representatives of national bodies. The pilot process was funded by government and by other organisations in order to explore and develop the idea more fully. Various steps were taken to publicise it and attract interest. As a result, there were 43 pilots, involving residents' organisations, housing associations and local authorities. A panel was established to accredit schemes and award IiC status. It met four times and has already recognised many of the organisations which were carrying out pilots.

IiC and housing associations

5 Twelve associations took part in the IiC pilots, geographically spread but all medium to large in size. One was a Black Minority Ethnic (BME)-led association. Eleven achieved IiC recognition.

6 IiC was mainly steered by senior managers below chief executive level. In most cases boards were not actively involved, but more than half of the chief executives appeared to be involved. All had steering groups – some with resident involvement, although this did not generally last throughout the process. The groups were generally temporary as the intention was to 'mainstream' the IiC work after achieving recognition.

7 IiC action plans proved to be of limited value, but the attachment of an IiC adviser to each association was generally perceived to be very useful. National discussion forums for the pilots were useful but there was no on-going forum to exchange experience with other pilots. The assessment and accreditation process was generally viewed as positive and worthwhile.

8 Asked to judge the value of IiC, the consensus was that it had 'added significant value' to associations' work, but fell short of a 'complete cultural change'. A key gain was improved communication within associations about community investment – in particular the IiC process brought together community investment and housing management staff. Many felt IiC was a valuable 'badge of honour' for the association. Some associations interviewed were able to produce extensive lists of benefits and changes achieved through IiC. There was a mixed response however to the question of whether changes brought about by IiC are sustainable.

9 Two associations had costed the IiC process in terms of staff time at, respectively, £12-15,000 and £25-30,000. Both felt this was significant but also worthwhile.

IiC and local authorities

10 Only one small rural authority went through the IiC process to recognition (another which started as a pilot did not really engage with IiC). Their commitment was driven by their previous chief executive but had been followed through by an IiC working group. Those interviewed did not feel that changes in community investment had been directly attributable to IiC. It had not made a fundamental change but had been a useful process which staff felt had led to recognition of their work in this field.

IiC and community groups

11 Thirty six community groups were initially put forward for the pilot process but this fell to 22 that actually took part and then 14 which achieved recognition. A variety of different groups were involved, although around half were tenants' or residents' associations. All were put forward by the housing associations and local authority involved in the pilot process.

12 IiC worked best with established groups. In some cases it was seen as a catalyst to get groups started, but in this respect it was not generally successful although there were two exceptions where it did work.

13 Most groups dealt with IiC through their main committee although in some cases there were other mechanisms such as a special steering group. Surveys were not much used but most groups produced an action plan and this was generally seen as a successful tool, helping the groups to work more systematically. Residents' advisers appointed to assist groups received a mixed response.

14 The overall impact of IiC on the groups was much more mixed than with the housing associations, ranging from a few where it was perceived as creating a culture change, to others where it gave significant benefits, to others – about half – where recognition was achieved but it was felt to have added little value to the groups' work.

IiC standards

15 Views were collected on the IiC standards. The main criticism was that they were based on an assumption that organisations would have done little community investment work beforehand, whereas generally this was not the case. This meant that the balance of the standards was wrong – there was too much emphasis on process and not enough on action on the ground. Other standards appeared to duplicate each other. There were many more detailed points on the standards which should be taken into account in any further evolution of IiC.

Conclusions

16 Assessment of the pilots suggests that IiC acts in three main ways: as an *incentive to change*, as a *change agent*, and as an *external standard* against which bodies are assessed.

17 For *housing associations*, IiC generally worked through four main mechanisms – *reinforcing existing commitment, providing a top-down tool for promoting a bottom-up approach, giving a clear process for operationalising commitment*, and *legitimising community investment and improving internal communication.*

18 All agreed that closer working of community investment and housing management staff was a positive benefit. For some associations the *badging* element was important and involvement in IiC had been to the association's advantage.

Is there is a case for offering IiC as a national scheme for all associations?

19 On the evidence of the pilots the authors conclude that there is, but with certain caveats. Possibly 100 associations are interested in IiC (based on expressions of interest in IiC and similar initiatives); these might form a core group to pay for the service and allow a central team to be established. However, it is less clear if there is a wider interest group beyond this. Market research should therefore be carried

out with medium-sized associations to test interest. Different approaches may be needed for associations already involved in community investment compared with those who are not.

20 Conclusions on IiC and *local authorities* are more difficult given that only two were involved. If IiC is to have any role then more detailed thought will need to be given as to how it might fit with other processes to which local government is subject. Organisations such as the Local Government Association, the Audit Commission, IDeA and the Countryside Agency should be involved.

21 It is less clear whether IiC worked for *communities*. Some lessons are:
- *selection criteria were unclear as they depended on each housing association;*
- *it was a change management tool for some and a badge for others;*
- *it was generally more effective with established groups not facing major issues.*

22 For *residents' groups* IiC can therefore be useful in one of two situations:
- *for established groups wishing to review their activities – especially the idea of action planning;*
- *for community development staff looking for a template for working with new groups and as a tool for newly-formed groups to decide what they want to do and then evaluating the process.*

23 Two possible scenarios are suggested for IiC with community groups. First, IiC could be limited to groups that have some connection with housing associations. Second, IiC could be available to all community groups, irrespective of any connection with housing associations, but this would mean considerably more work and pursuing wider contacts.

24 Experience with the advisers was mixed, and suggestions are made as to how this element could be changed. However, the associations and community groups found the assessment process to be a good one and to have helped in reflecting on their experience.

Changing context – looking to the future

25 A number of important developments will have an impact on the ability of housing associations to get involved in community investment:
- fewer, bigger housing associations often controlling (former) local authority stock, with more urban transfers and also ALMOs;
- housing being linked to regeneration;
- the growing business case for community investment – for example, in tackling anti-social behaviour;
- redefinition of the role of social landlords, for example through the iN business for neighbourhoods campaign;
- changed regulation and inspection regimes.

26   For *housing associations*, three scenarios seem the most feasible:

- community investment could be tested as part of regulation/inspection and IiC seen as evidence of housing associations' compliance with standards;

- IiC could be recognised and promoted as a way in which associations could commit themselves to the values of the iN campaign;

- IiC could continue to develop as a self standing recognition process.

27   There are other standards-based approaches for use with *community groups* but they do not cover the same territory as IiC. The pilot suggests that IiC is likely to be of use mainly with smaller groups. However, it can also be used to validate the activities of more formal groups, with paid staff and only a tenuous partnership with the dominant landlord. As with housing associations the debate about the future potential of IiC needs to involve a wider range of stakeholders than has been the case to date.

Chapter One

Introduction

What is Investors in Communities?

Investors in Communities (IiC) is a recognition scheme (or quality mark) for residents, housing associations and local authorities working together to build safe, stable and sustainable communities in cities, towns and villages. There are separate standards for housing associations/local authorities and community groups. Through the scheme, organisations gain recognition for how well they reflect the culture of, and achieve the capacities needed, to help create and maintain sustainable communities, and then work successfully in this way with an increasing number of communities. The part of the scheme relating to community groups is for developing, or having developed, the capacity to solve local problems with help from others and for tackling those problems.

The approach is based on other 'quality models', principally 'Investors in People'. It emphasises:

- making a commitment to achieve and maintain IiC accreditation;
- developing the capacities to achieve the IiC standard;
- taking and supporting action in communities; and,
- regularly reviewing progress.

According to the *Introduction and Guide for Housing Associations* written by Andrew Williamson and Charlie Legg in 2001:[1]

> *IiC is a catalyst…IiC aims to support a change in culture. It will help build local social capital that will be invested by organisations and communities seeking to create good places for people to come home to. IiC is a means to an end – and the end is more successful communities and satisfied residents.*

IiC sets standards. If the standards are not already met, it takes communities and organisations through a process of change to the point where they meet the criteria of two parallel standards. The twenty criteria are reproduced in Appendix One – the first six criteria are for community residents and the last fourteen for organisations.

In the *Introduction and Guide* seven main stages are outlined for organisations using the IiC process:

- engaging with residents;
- making the commitment;

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1. Williamson, A. and Legg, A. (2001) *IiC Introduction and Guide for Housing Associations*, Hastoe Housing Association.

- drawing up a capacity building plan;

- implementing the plan;

- working with residents on projects;

- evaluation; and,

- going for assessment.

Similarly for residents' groups there are six stages:

- committing yourselves to achieving improvements;

- agreeing a plan of action;

- gaining support, resources and knowledge;

- implementing the plan of action;

- reviewing progress; and,

- gaining accreditation.

The pilot phase has been established to test these ideas.

The research

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the pilot phase of Investors in Communities.[2] This report presents the results. In December 2002 the Evaluation Team produced an interim report which followed initial visits to all the pilot housing associations, local authorities and community groups. This first report set the scene for the project, described the bodies that took part in the pilot, the initial steps they had taken and raised some preliminary issues. Following second visits to all those involved, this final report evaluates the changes that have taken place in the pilots and the contribution that the Investors in Communities process has made to those changes.

Scope of the report

This Introduction is followed by Chapters 2-10 of the report which cover the following:

– **Chapter Two** outlines the evaluation methodology;

– **Chapter Three** describes the wider national context within which IiC has been developed;

– **Chapter Four** outlines the development of IiC and the pilot process;

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2. The Public Policy Research Unit at Queen Mary, University of London, was appointed to do the evaluation. The contract was subsequently transferred to the Centre for Urban and Community Research at Goldsmiths University of London, but the evaluation team has stayed the same.

- **Chapters Five, Six and Seven** respectively review progress with IiC within the housing associations, local authorities and community groups in the pilot;

- **Chapter Eight** discusses issues concerning the standards;

- **Chapter Nine** considers general issues and sets out conclusions; and,

- **Chapter Ten** looks at future possible scenarios for IiC.

Chapter Two

Evaluation methodology

We have adopted an approach to evaluating IiC which is called 'realistic evaluation'.[3] This focuses upon:

- **The context** – this includes the changing social, political, economic and institutional environment in which IiC takes place. This includes the national policy context as well as the different local contexts for each participating organisation.

- **The mechanism** – the role played by IiC, and the theories and explanations given by participants and stakeholders as to why IiC has or has not been productive.

- **The outcomes** – the extent to which changes can reasonably be attributed to the activities that have taken place through IiC.

This approach recognises, first, that there may be a number of factors at play in any given situation that affect the outcome and, second, that it is important to concentrate on the processes or mechanisms that relate to the introduction of the IiC pilot into selected areas.

The research methods we have adopted include:

- A review of initial documentation and interviews with the IiC central team.
- Interviews with key stakeholders, e.g. the Housing Corporation, the Countryside Agency, the assessors and the advisers.
- First visits in the spring and summer of 2002 and second visits in late 2003 to each pilot.
- Some of these visits were supplemented by telephone interviews.
- Monitoring progress in each pilot through documentation they provided.
- Attendance at organisation and residents' conferences.
- Preparation of an interim, draft final and final evaluation report.

During the visits to the pilots, meetings were held (as appropriate) with board members or councillors, chief executives, directors, staff (including those responsible for IiC) and representatives of community groups. The draft interim and final reports were discussed by an advisory group of academics and interested parties, and changes were made in response to their comments.

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3. The method is described in Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1997) *Realistic Evaluation*, Sage.

Chapter Three

National context

Investors in Communities is not an isolated initiative but one that sits within a context of both wider and narrower programmes and initiatives, many stemming from national policy developments, to which organisations such as housing associations and local authorities are responding. Community groups also operate within a national context either because they respond to the priorities of the housing associations and local authorities to which they relate, or because there are national initiatives which affect them directly. This section explains this part of the background to IiC.

Housing associations

Housing associations and community investment

The Housing Act 1988 saw a major change in the role of housing associations. As is now well established, they were given the role of main provider of new social rented housing and were to use a mixture of private loans and public grants. Their rents were freed from rent officer control and new tenancies were to be 'assured' tenancies, albeit with additional contractual rights. Finance could be raised on the private market but associations were to bear considerably more development risk, which previously had been covered by public grant.

While local authority house building dwindled, housing associations' developments expanded. However, homelessness was rising rapidly and reduced council lettings, through right to buy and the lack of new homes, meant housing associations were required to take an increasing number of nominations from local authorities. This led to a concentration of very poor people, often with other disadvantages, housed on new estates which were larger than most housing associations had managed before. The effect of this, documented by David Page,[4] was a rapid physical deterioration of many of these homes. Page estimated that new housing association estates were reaching a state of dilapidation in two to three years which it had taken the equivalent council estates 20 years to reach. He put this down to the concentration of multiple deprivation, a child density more than double the national average, intensive use of the home and its fixtures and fittings and a total lack of the tools for building a community. As well as the social costs for tenants, these developments also threatened the economic assets of many housing associations, particularly those working in areas of low demand. Page took these themes further in *Developing Communities*,[5] which set out recommendations for assisting a community to develop as new properties were let.

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4. Page, D. (1993) in *Building for Communities*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
5. Page, D. (1994) *Developing Communities*, Hastoe Housing Association.

People for Action and Investors in Communities

The mid to late 1990s saw the development of the idea of Housing Plus which came from the realisation that wider social, economic and environmental factors had sometimes been neglected in developing social housing. A number of housing associations developed activities to address the wider needs of tenants – however this was in a piecemeal and unco-ordinated way. In 1998 a group of 65 housing association officers stated a need for further change in the publication *From Exclusion to Inclusion*. This had been commissioned by Hastoe HA and a group of other members of People for Action, a support and networking body for housing association and regeneration agencies. *From Exclusion to Inclusion* was followed by *Community Investment: the growing role for housing associations*, supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The Foundation also supported a People for Action publication *Making It All Add Up* which was a critique of community investment approaches and the values behind them.

People for Action has now developed a programme of action called O2 which helps housing associations make sustainable changes in the way they work. This is seen as a learning network to bring about cultural change which involves tenants and community groups. People for Action has produced a report reviewing O2 which came to three broad conclusions:[6]

- There is still a battle to win the hearts and minds of staff, board members and residents who are not convinced of the value of community investment. This is the case even within some of the best community investment organisations. O2's successor needs to champion community investment to a wider audience within member organisations, and arm those individuals who are trying to lead change.

- There is also a need to use the experience of O2 to reach outside the O2 network to housing and regeneration organisations that are not yet 'in the loop' of community investment.

- Cultural change is needed among other agencies that community investors work with: government departments, local government, other statutory agencies, and funders. O2's successor needs to lobby for this change.

Investors in Communities was developed by many of the same people involved in these earlier processes and is seen as a logical next step – a way to promote greater involvement of housing associations in the wider community. Many of the housing associations involved in the pilot also have community investment or community development departments or associated bodies.

Housing associations – the regulatory and inspection framework

The Housing Corporation provides investment resources for housing associations, is responsible for their overall regulation and carries out regulatory visits. The Audit Commission is now responsible for inspection and carries out inspection

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6. People for Action (2001) *O2: A Catalyst for Change*.

visits. The results of these inspections are taken into account by the Corporation in their regulatory judgements.

The Housing Corporation regulatory code covers areas of viability, governance and management, some of which are relevant to community investment. On governance issues, it emphasises the need to foster positive relations with stakeholders and to seek and be responsive to residents' views and priorities.

Under 'proper management' the code says that:

> …housing associations must demonstrate that their strategies and policies are responsive to their economic and social environment and link into regional and local housing strategies.

Part of the guidance to this section of the code states that,

> …associations will be able to demonstrate their contribution to the objectives of neighbourhood renewal and regeneration either directly or through partnership, particularly when working in deprived areas and the association demonstrates a commitment to sustainable development and works towards incorporating economic, social and environmental objectives in its activities.

The Audit Commission has produced a draft framework for housing inspection and assessment which covers the inspection of both local authorities and housing associations.[7] In this document they see key priorities across all their work in housing to:

- Assess and report on how policy and resources are being used locally to implement the Sustainable Communities Plan and to support Market Renewal Pathfinders, to balance supply and demand for housing.

- Challenge those charged with neighbourhood renewal to deliver economically viable, safer, cleaner, greener sustainable environments for the local community.

- Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of local authorities and housing associations in their responses to the needs of vulnerable people and the creation of inclusive and sustainable communities.

In the same draft framework the Audit Commission provides an outline of inspection and assessment activity. These fall under the following headings:

For all organisations:
- Investment strategies to meet the Decent Homes Standard.
- Landlord services.

Housing association specific:
- Homelessness.
- Organisational issues at a regional level.

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7. Audit Commission (2003) *A Framework for the Review of Housing Inspection and Assessment: Draft for Consultation*, Audit Commission.

Not organisation specific:

- Area based inspection looking at the impact and co-ordination of policies to deliver housing services in an area – to be used as part of a neighbourhood management approach.

- Market renewal work.

It is clear from these headings, and from feedback we had from the associations we visited where there had been inspections, that Audit Commission inspectors are not likely to look in any depth at community investment activities even though they are clearly linked to market area renewal work and are integral to a neighbourhood management approach. They are more likely to concentrate on matters of new housing investment and service delivery. The Housing Corporation regulatory code appears to offer more in terms of covering community investment activity but, in practice, it is also unclear how far regulation will cover this area in any depth.

The regeneration agenda, sustainable communities and the new localism

Since it came to power in 1997 the Labour government has been developing policies aimed at tackling social exclusion and achieving neighbourhood renewal. According to the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit[8] the strategy can be summarised as follows:

- attacking the core problems of deprived areas, like weak economies and poor schools;

- harnessing the support of all sectors to work in partnership, co-ordinated through Local Strategic Partnerships at a local authority wide level;

- focusing existing mainstream services and resources explicitly on deprived areas, and moving away from short term initiatives;

- giving local residents and community groups the power to make a difference;

This approach has been supported by a number of initiatives – the setting of floor targets in key areas such as schooling, housing and crime; setting up the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund; establishing Local Strategic Partnerships; creating the Community Empowerment Fund and Community Chests; piloting neighbourhood management and street wardens' schemes and supporting the New Deal for Communities programme. However, much of the neighbourhood renewal agenda is focused on urban areas, and can be marginal to rural areas, where deprivation is far less concentrated but no less acute.

Many of these initiatives have provided funding sources for housing association community investment initiatives. The Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) which the Labour government inherited in 1997 brought significant amounts of money into area-based programmes. It is being replaced by two main elements – economic

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8. Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (accessed September 04) *Changing neighbourhoods, changing lives*, www.neighbourhood.gov.uk

development activity run by the regional development agencies (responsible to the Department of Trade and Industry) and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (and Community Empowerment Fund) run by government offices (responsible to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) through Local Strategic Partnerships. This division of responsibility has made it more difficult to fund comprehensive, area-based neighbourhood renewal programmes (apart from where there are New Deal for Communities programmes).

The IiC initiative can be seen as a way of encouraging and supporting housing associations and local community groups to be part of these processes, thereby playing their full part in local regeneration initiatives and local partnerships. However, since the initiative was first put together there has been a reduction in the total amount of money going into comprehensive area-based programmes which may make the funding of community investment by housing associations more difficult.

Also of importance to developing regeneration strategies is the ODPM's Communities Plan.[9] This is primarily about the government's housing policies but, as it says,

> …if the actions in this document are to succeed, they must be placed firmly in the context of sustainable communities, and integrated with the wider public services and sustainability agenda that is being pursued across government. We are applying these lessons in our approach to the most deprived communities. We must ensure we apply them to all communities.

In particular, the report refers to environmental improvement and to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, e.g. through the neighbourhood wardens' programmes. It also discusses the problem of low demand and abandonment in some areas, mainly in the north of the country, and the creation of the Market Renewal Fund and Market Renewal Pathfinder areas. These initiatives will need to involve housing associations not just in the provision or management of housing stock but also in the wider issues affecting the nature of whole communities and neighbourhoods.

Government regeneration policies encompass two separate views about how regeneration might happen. One approach is a community approach and is seen in both the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme and in the Sure Start Programme. There are 39 NDC partnerships with a combined spend of £2 billion. Among the key characteristics of NDCs, according to the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit,[10] are:

- communities at the heart of a *long term* commitment to deliver real change in *partnership* with key agencies; and

- *community involvement* and ownership.

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9. ODPM (2003) *Sustainable communities: building for the future*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
10. Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (accessed Sept 2004) *New Deal for Communities*, www.neighbourhood.gov.uk

There are 520 Sure Start programmes costing over £500 million a year. In the 2004 Spending Review an expansion by a further £670 million over the next four years was announced. Sure Start depends on local partnerships involving local parents and carers.

However, in other regeneration areas the government has adopted a more *managerial* approach. The nine regional development agencies in England are accountable to the Department of Trade and Industry and work closely with the regional government offices. It is expected that major regeneration programmes such as the Thames Gateway will be overseen by urban development corporations similar to those that operated in London's Docklands and Merseyside. Market Renewal Area Pathfinders are another example of a more managerial approach.

These different approaches – community and managerial – can also be seen in the wider debate about 'new localism'. This approach has been promoted by the New Local Government Network and argues for less central control by national government over the delivery of local services and increasing input from regional and local players. Most of this debate is about increasing the powers of local government as the authentic voice of local communities. However, the debate about local government is also cast in a more general debate about local 'governance' where decision-making and influence is seen to be exercised by a network of agencies which include greater direct involvement of local people. As they develop, these debates about new localism and local governance may have a profound effect on the role of bodies such as housing associations.

The rural agenda

Our countryside: the future, the rural white paper,[11] outlined a number of government policies towards the countryside. It included a section on *local power for country towns and villages*. This section contained proposals for people living in rural areas to become fully involved in developing their community, safeguarding its valued features and shaping the decisions that affect them. Key to the approach was the promotion of flourishing local councils acting as the voice of the local community and strong partnerships between county, district, town and parish councils. Specific proposals included the idea of quality town and parish councils with councils meeting a quality test and taking a greater part in the delivery of services locally, often through the development of partnerships. Also suggested was the production of town and village plans.

In the summer of 2001 the Countryside Agency published *People Make the Difference – a good practice guide for involving residents in rural regeneration*.[12] Following this, conversations took place between the Countryside Agency and Andrew

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11. HMSO November 2000.
12. Countryside Agency (2001) *People Make the Difference – a good practice guide for involving residents in rural regeneration*, Countryside Agency and Housing Corporation.

Williamson of Hastoe Housing Association about the ideas informing IiC and whether IiC might be used to test the relationship between rural communities and district councils. At the same time the Countryside Agency was supporting the development of rural compacts – a negotiated agreement between a local authority and the community about how they should work together and deliver an agreed action plan. Rural compacts are now being piloted in two district councils (Rother in Sussex and South Holland in Lincolnshire) and IiC in two councils (South Holland and Purbeck in Dorset).

Quality improvement through accreditation

Over the last ten years there has been an increasing emphasis in a number of areas on the idea of improving quality through accreditation of organisations – measuring performance against an agreed set of standards. The two best known examples are Investors in People with over 26,000 organisations registered, and the government's Charter Mark scheme for all public sector organisations – currently over 900 organisations have a Charter Mark. There are also a number of other schemes, e.g. the Business Excellence model and PQASSO, both of which have been promoted for voluntary sector organisations. We are also aware of a quality scheme developed in the Netherlands specifically for housing associations which has recently been introduced in the United Kingdom and is to be piloted by about 30 associations. It is also known as 'the Quality Rental' Award Initiative and is supported by the ODPM and Housing Corporation.

Chapter Four

Development of Investors in Communities and the pilot process

The IiC idea emerged from discussions between Hastoe Housing Association and a group of 65 housing associations which concluded that Investors in People could be adapted to tackle social exclusion. An advisory group was set up to develop an accreditation scheme. It consisted of DETR, the Housing Corporation, the Chartered Institute of Housing, the Local Government Association, the Social Exclusion Unit, PEP, People for Action, one of the national tenants' bodies (HARTOE) and two housing associations. A working party was also set up with representatives from 14 housing associations and two local authorities. The working party developed the draft scheme and reported back to the advisory group which recommended that a pilot took place. The pilot was managed by an IiC team based at Hastoe Housing Association. The pilot was funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Housing Corporation, the Countryside Agency, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Hastoe Housing Association and the housing associations participating in it. The total cost of the pilot is in the order of £490,000.

Following agreement to the establishment of the pilot process by the ODPM, advertisements were placed in May 2001 asking for expressions of interest from housing associations and local authorities, and from consultants to act as advisers. Altogether 47 associations and councils submitted proposals and twelve associations and two councils were selected (of these only one changed subsequently – one of the local authorities withdrew and another one was substituted). At this stage some of the community groups had been identified, but not all.

The IiC team (Andrew Williamson, Charlie Legg and Bill Randall) then produced a number of core documents for use by the pilot bodies – the *IiC standard*, notes for advisers, *The Journey* (an advisory briefing paper for senior managers outlining actions needed to navigate their organisation through the IiC process), terms of reference for steering groups and a draft staff questionnaire.

As part of the pilot process it was agreed that there should be advisers for each of the organisations taking part as well as residents' advisers.

During the second half of 2001 Andrew Williamson visited all of the participating bodies and followed these up with further visits in early 2002 to introduce the advisers.

By June 2002 agreement had been reached on the residents' groups that would be involved – 29 in all. The final selection of 12 residents' advisers was made and the advisers introduced to their groups.

In June 2002 a seminar took place in Leicester of representatives of all participating housing associations and local authorities. Information was exchanged and key issues identified. A further seminar for residents was held in October 2002 and a joint seminar in July 2003. While these seminars did not develop policy as such, they were seen as very important by those attending, who gained considerably from interaction and discussion with others in similar positions.

In early 2003 three assessors were appointed. All had Investors in People experience.

Three editions of a newsletter were produced.

In May 2003 there was the first meeting of the Investors in Communities Panel, chaired by Tim Melville-Ross, Chairman of Investors in People. It included individuals who were, or had been, associated with the Housing Corporation, the Chartered Institute of Housing and housing associations. Representatives from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Countryside Agency or the Housing Federation were not involved as members or observers. The Panel was seen as having two purposes:

- To consider reports written by the assessors and to agree IiC recognition where it was agreed that the standards had been met.

- To consider methods of securing government support for a roll-out of IiC on a permanent national basis.

The Panel met four times and agreed recognition for all housing associations apart from one, for one local authority and for a number of community groups.

Chapter Five

Investors in Communities and housing associations

Who were the housing associations?

There were 12 housing association pilots. (Appendix Two provides summary details of all the housing associations, local authorities and communities involved.) The housing associations were geographically well spread throughout England, ranging from Newcastle and Liverpool in the north to Portsmouth in the south. Although some of the associations worked in rural areas the bulk of their properties were in urban areas – these varied significantly, e.g. from areas with low demand (mainly in the north of England) to isolated estates on city fringes to estates and street properties in inner cities.

The associations in the pilot were mainly medium to large size associations. The following table compares the pilot associations with the national breakdown of associations by size.

Table 5.1: Comparative size of pilot and national housing associations

	National	Pilots
Large **(5,000+ properties)**	77	4
Medium large **(2,500-5,000 properties)**	106	6
Medium **(500-2,499 properties)**	188	2
Small **(Under 500 properties)**	1,000	0

(Source: National Housing Federation)

It should be noted that during the period of the pilot a stock transfer was agreed for one of the two medium sized associations which will turn it into a medium large sized association.

It can be seen that larger housing associations were over-represented in the pilots.

There was one black-led association in the pilot. The majority of tenants were nominated through local authorities which led to a mix of tenants serving a wide range of disadvantaged communities.

In our discussions with the pilot associations eight indicated that they were members of People for Action or had been involved in previous discussions or research about IiC.

10 of the 12 associations had Investors in People accreditation.

All the associations had in place some sort of structure for working with local communities and regeneration issues before taking part in IiC – in some cases these involved substantial units headed up by directors at second tier level. The different arrangements were:

- Resident involvement manager (this in the smallest association which was tenant controlled).
- Regeneration and Business Development Department (with a Head of Regeneration reporting to the Director).
- Separate community involvement arm with charitable status.
- Community development worker supporting Area Customer Liaison Panels.
- Head of Regeneration and Community Development reporting to Director of Operations.
- Director of Regeneration.
- Director of Neighbourhoods.
- Regeneration and Community Development Department.
- Community Development Department.
- Community development subsidiary company.
- Director of Regeneration.
- Community Development Team.

It can be seen, therefore, that the pilot housing associations were mainly mainstream medium large and large associations with a previous history of being involved in discussions about community regeneration and investment, and with developed staffing structures that indicate a commitment to housing associations taking a wider role than simply providing housing.

Becoming recognised

All 12 housing associations involved in the pilot had been agreed by the beginning of January 2002. The first recognitions took place in August 2003. The following associations have been recognised:

August 2003   Castle Vale Housing Association
Leicester Housing Association
North British Housing
Oxford Citizens Housing Association
Portsmouth Housing Association
Threshold Housing and Support

October 2003   Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association
                      Notting Hill Housing Group
                      Tees Valley Housing Group

January 2004   Maritime Housing Association
                      Presentation Housing Association

By February 2004, 11 of the 12 associations in the pilot had received recognition. It took between 18 months and 2 years from starting the process to receiving recognition.

Given that all but one of the associations received recognition it is not possible to draw conclusions about significant factors leading to recognition by comparisons between those that did, and did not, receive recognition. The one association that has not received recognition did not put itself forward for the assessment process. In any case it would not be possible to draw any conclusions about not receiving recognition based on a sample of one association. However, it is possible to identify the common factors in the way that the associations approached the IiC process and to summarise their views about the process itself and its contribution to change within the associations.

How did the housing associations implement IiC?

The board

All the boards of the associations involved in the pilot had formally agreed to take part in the pilot, received regular progress reports and were informed of recognition when this had been agreed. However, some boards were more supportive and involved than others. In two cases the board was seen as very important in driving the process – in one case the housing association was a small community driven association, and in the other, the board had been instrumental in creating a neighbourhood initiatives policy for the association. In this latter case the chair said that getting recognition was a 'badge of honour' and that if they had not got recognition 'heads would have rolled'. At least two associations had specific sub committees concerned with community investment – one was a regeneration committee and one a regeneration and development advisory panel.

However, in the majority of cases the board was not as active and, while being supportive of the process, was not the key driver behind its implementation.

The chief executive

Just over half the chief executives of the pilot associations were described to us as being an important driving force and champion for IiC within their associations. Two chief executives chaired their IiC working groups while another saw IiC as

part of the association's corporate change strategy. In only one of the associations were we told that the chief executive could have been more supportive. It is also important to note that chief executives (and boards) can be driven by external events, e.g. merger discussions or adverse inspection reports which may mean that they have less time for something like IiC.

The management team

In all the pilot associations the management team was kept informed about IiC with regular reports but in none of the associations did the management team (corporately as opposed to individual champions) appear to be the driving force behind the process.

Communicating with staff

Communicating with staff about IiC was done in two main ways. Firstly associations used a variety of methods of communicating through written material – an initial letter from the chief executive, the staff magazine, bulletins, the intranet, briefings, posters and quizzes. Secondly, and often stated to be more effective, were a number of face to face meetings. These included:

• presentations and compulsory workshops at annual conferences;

• workshops with front line staff;

• the lead worker or members of the IiC working group attending all team meetings (in some cases twice); and

• having project champions in teams.

Most of the associations carried out staff surveys with some repeating the survey towards the end of the process. The surveys, when repeated, showed a greater understanding and awareness by staff of issues concerning community investment and Investors in Communities. It did not appear that surveys were used to direct policy development. Rather they were a way of ascertaining if things had changed in terms of staff understanding of community investment.

The steering group

All associations established a steering or working group to guide and control the IiC process within their association. In one large association working in a number of parts of the country there was a two tier system with a project group meeting quarterly and involving the four regional managers where there were pilots and a steering group meeting monthly and involving the pilot project leaders.

In most cases the steering group was made up of representatives from every department – usually people who put themselves forward to take part. Particular comments were made to us about the need to have all departments represented – and to have people from all levels and grades within the association. This was seen as a key tool in the management of changes in organisational culture. In at least

two cases sub groups were established and this was felt to enable everyone to speak and be involved in the process (sometimes there was seen to be a tendency for meetings to be dominated by senior managers).

In just over half the pilots the steering group was chaired by the chief executive or a second tier director. In the other associations it was usually chaired by the project manager or by someone from resident involvement or community investment.

None of the steering groups had resident involvement throughout – in the one or two cases where residents were involved at the beginning they dropped out, not seeing this work as a priority claim on their valuable volunteer time.

At the time of our second visits it was not clear in all cases if the steering group would continue to meet. Most had at least one meeting to consider the assessment report and any recommendations made by the assessor. In one case it agreed to meet three monthly to monitor the post recognition action plan – in addition questions based around IiC were added to tenants' and staff surveys to try and give an on-going measure of change and awareness. In another case the steering group evolved into a Sustainable Communities Involvement Group to monitor community investment work within the association. A common theme was the desire to mainstream community investment work and to ensure that community investment was a key part of corporate and business planning.

Action plans

Seven associations produced IiC action plans but these were more to do with collecting evidence about meeting the standards than looking at changes that needed to be made within associations. The words used to us about the action plans, or lack of them, included:

- *assessment uncomplicated*;
- *reaffirming but not making radical changes*;
- *not as such – no major issues*;
- *yes but did not lead to changes*;
- *no serious issues*;
- *nothing big that needed to be changed*;
- *no great new issues thrown up*.

Action plans were operational rather than aspirational. These comments reconfirmed the points made earlier about the pilot associations already being committed to community investment.

Advisors

As part of the pilot process each association was allocated an adviser who was an experienced housing professional. All the associations found their adviser to be

useful, particularly at the beginning of the process when they were trying to come to grips with the concept and the standards and at the end when they were putting together the evidence. About half the associations were very enthusiastic about their advisers:

- *very very good*;
- *makes you think*;
- *kick up arse when needed*;
- *fantastic – kept them on track – gave a warm fuzzy feeling*;
- *very helpful*;
- *very useful*.

There were mixed views about whether having an adviser was essential, with individuals in only four associations feeling that advisers were essential. Again this may reflect the fact that associations were, in the main, already very involved in community investment. Whether essential or not it was clear that advisors added significant value. This will have cost implications if the process is to be rolled-out to further associations and possibly other bodies.

It is also worth noting that a number of associations spoke highly of the conferences held in Leicester which allowed them to meet people from other associations in similar positions and to understand that the issues they faced were being faced by others. However, the lack of any on-going forum to exchange information with other pilot associations was highlighted by some as a disappointment with the process. Several chief executives expressed surprise that they had never been brought together to discuss the pilot.

The recognition process

The recognition process was carried out by three assessors, all of whom had experience of Investors in People. In general they spent an initial day with each association meeting key people and touring the area. At this meeting substantial documentary evidence was provided – usually in the form of a story board in ring binders. (One association put part of their story board on a CD.) The assessors then decided who they wished to see, and in a return visit covering three days, a selection of staff, residents and partners were interviewed. Typically between 30 and 40 people were seen, some individually and some in groups.

At the end of the visit some immediate feedback was given. A report was then prepared for the Investors in Communities Panel. This gave background information about the association, summarised evidence against each of the standards, noted areas of good practice and provided suggestions for further development before making a recommendation about recognition.

In one case, accreditation was delayed because the information provided to the panel was thought to be inadequate and this caused some concern. In another

case, there was delay in notification that the HA had been accredited but otherwise assessment and accreditation were viewed very positively, e.g. in the comments:

- *A thorough and good experience with helpful feedback.*

- *Open, accessible, fair, helpful, thorough, rigorous.*

- *Very good process. Professional and astute. Lighthearted but methodical.*

- *One of the better experiences we have been through.*

- *Assessor clear – a smooth process.*

- *Process very good – not too paper bound. Very time consuming. Assessor sharp – homed in on critical areas.*

- *Talked about outcomes, not just process.*

- *Very thorough and professional.*

- *Assessor intelligent and reflective.*

People in nine of the associations specifically mentioned the feedback that assessors had given and its usefulness to them. One said that it was *like having a business adviser for two days* while another saw the assessor as providing *a contribution to learning*.

Did Investors in Communities add value?

In looking at the process of IiC assessment and recognition we developed a four-fold typology for the associations in the pilot. This was as follows:

1. IiC was the stimulus for a complete change in culture and practice within the association.

2. IiC did not lead to a complete change in culture and practice but added significant value to the process of community investment in the association.

3. IiC recognition was achieved but there was little or no added value.

4. IiC recognition was not achieved.

In order to apply this typology we asked a number of people – the evaluation team, the advisers, the assessors and the IiC central team – to allocate associations to each of the categories. As we have seen earlier all the associations apart from one got recognition. No associations were put into the first category of a 'complete change in culture and practice' as might have been expected given the information that all pilot associations had already shown a considerable commitment to community investment.

The majority of associations fell into the second category of 'significant added value' while a minority fell into the third category of 'little or no added value'.

A first important change that IiC brought about was to provide some structure and reasoning for community investment. It made thinking about community investment more focused – it provided a framework. It also provided validation and legitimacy. In doing so it raised the profile of community investment within the association as a whole. For some this resulted in a changed culture – community investment had become part of the language used in the association and more people were involved in doing community investment.

An important part of the changed culture was more cross-departmental working and, as one respondent put it, more camaraderie. Improved communications within the association were mentioned by a number of people. In at least two associations getting recognition had been treated as a major event, worthy of bringing out the champagne – it had created a good feeling, a good atmosphere.

In a more practical way a number of associations commented on the improved links between community investment staff and housing management staff (and maintenance and development staff). It would appear that, in most cases, when associations became interested in community investment they created a new department or section to deal with it, usually separate from housing management (and also from tenant participation which stayed with housing management). The Investors in Communities process brought these two sets of staff together in a steering group and productive dialogue ensued. This was helped by the trend for housing management staff to have repairs and rent functions taken away from them and given to specialist teams, freeing them up for more estate and locally based work. Two stories illustrate this process:

- In one association we were told of a surveyor who, when faced with a maintenance problem on an estate, suggested consulting the tenants – this was apparently unheard of before.

- In another association a pre-school play group had approached an estate office about funding. Instead of being sent elsewhere as would have happened recently, the officer said they would look into it and see what they could do to help.

As well as producing internal change, IiC recognition was seen as valuable in promoting associations externally. It was a 'badge of honour', 'a flag to wave'. In one case, involvement in IiC was used to support the association in securing a transfer of stock from a Housing Action Trust. In another case, the association believed that being involved in IiC had helped them to secure preferred partner status with three district councils.

In some associations it was difficult to get respondents to identify specific changes that had been brought about as a result of IiC – instead there was simply reference to a changed culture or better communication between different groups of staff. However, in two associations lists of changes were produced and these usefully illustrate the range of changes that can result from this process.

Association A

- A Resident and Community Investment Team was established.
- A Community Projects Co-ordinator was appointed to support projects inside and outside the association with fundraising and other advice.
- The board agreed a Community Investment (CI) Strategy – this outlined broad principles rather than giving a detailed work plan – that will follow.
- A resident research project was initiated. Finance and HR were involved in payroll and budget issues and risk assessment.
- Greater understanding and commitment to CI from the board, staff and key residents (on Residents' Panel) – this should lead to longer term spin offs. Better understanding of how everyone is involved.
- Staff Volunteer Scheme – this idea was learned of from another association at an IiC conference. It was quickly established. Employees were allowed up to two hours a week if matched by their own time. Eleven employees took up the option with eight continuing. Not always the people who were expected to participate.
- Creation of a Community Chest. £10,000 this year and next. For any group of HA residents or a project which benefits HA residents. Panel of residents and staff agreed grants. Good for smaller communities, e.g. clean-up day. Idea of Head of Housing Management.
- Fund for environmental improvements on estates – £50,000 a year. A day was spent prioritising bids from residents.
- Role of housing officers changing and strengthened by IiC. Customer Service Centre and rents team have freed up time to do CI work. Might have happened anyway but IiC action plan was important. Housing officers attended more evening meetings. Surveyors also involved in projects. Improved housing management/maintenance relationship. A housing officer on one estate organised a community safety day and attended the Domestic Violence forum. Residents became involved in anti-social behaviour work.
- One person from IT became involved with young people and IT.
- The idea of a 'Dreamscheme' project picked up from the conference – on an estate with youth forum.
- The association is now thinking about priority areas, and using the residents' survey to help define these.
- The process helped the association to get preferred partner status with the district council – feedback from the council said that information about community investment and being involved in the IiC pilot was important in decision.

Association B

- The IT section worked with Regeneration to appoint an IT trainee for whom they would pay half of a salary to provide a service to community groups, e.g. doing an audit of equipment and software.
- Employee volunteering – staff who did not usually work with residents got a chance to do so. Staff from Rent Arrears, Customer Services, Finance and Development helped with clearing land, doing gardens, decorating.
- A rent arrears surgery was held on one estate (this probably happened quicker because of IiC).
- The development department became more actively involved with tenants – linking this back to tenant participation.
- Maintenance worked more closely in co-operation with Tenant Participation colleagues.
- Tenants became more involved in budgetary processes, e.g. environmental and community grants processes.
- More regular contact occurred between the Community Investment team and Housing Development and Housing Management staff. Housing officers undertook training for working with youth. Overall the housing officer role changed.
- Overall, a greater interest in evaluation – but no answers!

When specifically asked to sum up whether the IiC process had been useful and valuable the great majority of respondents said that it had been useful.

Respondents were also asked if the process had been worth the time and resource committed to it. In three associations we attempted to calculate the level of resources that had been needed. In two of these associations it was agreed that the IiC process had taken the equivalent of one person day per week for two years (being a combination of the time of the lead officer and the time of all those involved in attending meetings). Adding on some other specific costs, e.g. the financial contribution to IiC centrally, gave total direct staff costs over two years of between £12,000 and £15,000. The third association put the staff commitment higher at two person days a week for two years – this gave a total staff cost over the two years of £25,000 – £30,000. To these direct staff costs needed to be added overhead and administration costs. These costs are significant. However, all those who had considered the question felt that it was a resource well used.

Finally, when asked if IiC had changed the association in a sustainable way the responses were mixed. For some, not a lot had changed as the association had already been committed to a community investment approach. IiC may have made this approach more systematic and formalised but fundamentally nothing had changed. For others, having more people involved in community investment and seeing a positive change in the culture of the organisation meant that community investment ideas were now more sustainable, and the key discussion focused on how to mainstream these ideas into corporate and business planning. In many associations, neighbourhoods rather than properties or estates, were becoming the focus for association work and prioritising and it was felt that this change must make community investment more sustainable.

Chapter Six

Investors in Communities and local authorities

The two local authorities involved in the pilot were both small rural authorities, one with a population of 74,000 and the other with a population of 46,000. They were district councils responsible for planning, the local environment, leisure, refuse collection and street cleaning, and housing. They were not responsible for education and social services. Both authorities were Conservative controlled. In both authorities a key issue was how they could relate to local communities, usually in the shape of town or parish councils. One of the authorities had had a proactive agenda towards local communities for some time – it had created a Rural Action Zone, it had a Community Support and Regeneration Manager and had worked with parish and town councils and piloted the idea of a Rural Compact in two areas. In the other authority it was part of the Corporate Plan to encourage Parish Plans and village appraisals.

As with the housing associations it would appear that the two local authorities already had a considerable commitment to the sort of work that IiC was encouraging and recognising.

Only one of the local authorities undertook the full Investors in Communities process and received IiC recognition. The other authority did not really engage with the process, partly at least due to pressures on staff time. This left the evaluation team with a dilemma as it is very difficult to make generalisations based on one authority (even with two it would have difficult to draw conclusions about applicability elsewhere with any certainty). Therefore, at this stage, we briefly describe what happened in the one authority and, in the conclusions section, make some tentative suggestions about using IiC in the local authority context.

The authority with the Rural Action Zone and the Rural Compacts is the one that proceeded with IiC and achieved recognition. The driving force behind becoming involved in IiC was the previous chief executive. After his departure the driving force was the lead officer who worked with a working group with representatives from all departments, although there was a core group from Housing, Communications and Public Relations. The chief executive wrote to all staff and the lead officer attended team meetings to discuss IiC. A request for information about community investment activities brought a good response – some 160 initiatives were identified. There were no staff surveys. Nor was there an action plan – despite which there appears to have been enough evidence to meet all the standards. Some support was available from the adviser and the recognition process was felt to be very good – everyone gave positive feedback about the assessor.

In the final analysis, it was felt that any changes that had taken place with respect to community investment over the previous 18 months to 2 years were not directly attributable to IiC. However, it was viewed as a useful process and although it did not change anything fundamentally, it got everyone inside the authority to think about what they were doing in the community. It provided recognition for the community involvement work that everyone was involved in. It made staff recognise their worth. There was also some evidence of more joined up thinking with community team staff. It also got teams to move away from their isolated ways of working. It was a real focus – providing a more consolidated operational framework. All agreed that it was difficult to quantify the time spent on IiC, but when asked, everyone said it was worth the time spent on it.

An important issue was the time and commitment that had to be put into it. IiC had to be given a priority over all the other initiatives that were going on. It was not possible simply to 'add it on'.

Chapter Seven

Investors in Communities and community groups

Selecting the community groups

For the pilot study the community groups were selected by the 14 housing associations and local authorities taking part. Each association and authority was asked to find two communities – some provided more, some less. They did this in different ways. In a small number of cases, bids were called for from local community groups. More usually, associations and authorities selected possible candidates and then discussed their involvement with the groups themselves. This led to an amount of confusion and a lack of clarity about the selection criteria for the groups. In a few cases areas were picked that were seen to be problem areas in the hope that the IiC process could help in sorting out the problems. In other areas relatively strong groups were picked in the hope that they could benefit from seeking recognition and assessing themselves against the standards.

The initial selection process led to a number of groups being put forward but some soon fell by the wayside, and one or two groups were substituted with more relevant or well developed groups. In all, 36 groups were at one time put forward. However, of these 36 groups, 14 never engaged with the IiC process in any meaningful way – in some cases the concept was never introduced to the groups because the housing association reconsidered which groups to put forward or a group put forward ran into problems. In other cases while the concept of IiC may have been introduced to the group no meaningful engagement took place because the group did not see the relevance of the process and therefore did not give it any priority. Therefore, it is the remaining 22 community groups that the evaluation team looked at. Of these, 14 have been recognised as meeting the standards. Three further groups were assessed but did not meet the standards. Five groups were not assessed.

Who were the community groups?

Of the 22 groups:

- 12 were residents' or tenants' associations;
- 6 were community groups ranging from one with charitable status to one with no constitution;
- 2 were housing co-operatives;
- 1 was a parish (associated with a rural local authority);
- 1 was a village company registered as an Industrial and Provident Society.

Of the 14 groups recognised as meeting the standards, seven were residents' associations, four were community groups, two were housing co-operatives and one was the village company. The spread of organisations who were recognised indicates that IiC is appropriate for a variety of organisational forms.

All of the 14 groups that received recognition were established groups at the time IiC was introduced to them, with existing programmes and committees. Looking at those groups that did not receive recognition or who never engaged with the project a number of them had problems as a group – or, indeed there was no group at all and the housing association hoped that IiC would provide the stimulus for a new group. However, there were two important exceptions to this statement, both of which were groups in the same housing association area – here the housing association successfully used IiC as a development tool to establish and develop residents' groups. In these cases the time frame was longer than for established groups (both groups did not get recognition because they did not have time to demonstrate that they met all the standards).

In general, therefore, we believe that, if IiC has a future with community groups, it is likely to be with established groups who wish to get recognition for their achievements, or who wish to undertake a process of self improvement by judging themselves against the standards.

How did the community groups implement IiC?

(In the paragraphs that follow the numbers of groups quoted refers to those groups where it was possible to obtain information)

The great majority of groups dealt with IiC through their main committee. Three established an IiC group to steer the process. In one there was a steering group of three to four volunteers and in another a smaller IiC group endorsed by the main committee. In the third, a conscious decision was taken to set up a separate project group chaired by someone who was not on the committee. This group tried to follow the IiC process as closely as possible.

About half the groups informed residents through their newsletter that IiC was being implemented, but no one saw this as a major part of the exercise. In three groups, surveys were carried out to obtain the views of residents about the main issues affecting their area and these surveys were used to inform action plans. Ten groups produced an action plan – these were around the activities of the group or were action plans for specific activities (rather than action plans for the IiC process). The most positive comments about the usefulness of the IiC process came around the idea of action planning and of being more systematic about how they planned their work, recorded it and then reviewed it.

There was a mixed response to the role and usefulness of the residents' advisers that were appointed by IiC to assist groups to come to grips with the IiC process:

- Nine of the groups felt that the adviser had been useful but only three said that the adviser was essential – and in one of these cases the group commented that it was essential for new groups, rather than themselves.

- Four of the groups felt that the adviser had not been useful – one group felt they were too aligned with the housing association; one group said they were difficult to contact and more of a hindrance than a help, and one group said they were difficult to understand.

- In one group opinion was divided about the usefulness of the adviser.

In part, these comments about advisers were due to their late appointment and some confusion about their role. For example, were they some sort of community worker or were they just there to advise on IiC?

A number of groups commented favourably on the usefulness of the Leicester conferences and the opportunity to meet with groups in similar situations – in at least one case a project being undertaken by one group was adopted by another.

In the groups which received recognition, the recognition process itself and the assessors were given high ratings. Comments included:

- *Excellent – very positive comments*.
- *Brilliant – open process – rapid and useful feedback – a confidence builder*.
- *Enjoyed accreditation and found it helpful – good feedback – useful to have someone from outside look at what we are doing*.
- *Fair process and good helpful feedback*.
- *Tremendous, excellent – good feedback – made us feel someone was noticing*.
- *Very good*.
- *Viewed positively but visit was too long*.

Only one group had a concern which revolved around the question of whether the whole group or a particular project was being assessed. The assessor came back to them for information about the whole group after having just collected information about one project. However, at the end of the process this group felt that the feedback was good.

Did Investors in Communities add value?

As with the housing associations we developed a four-fold typology for the assessment of community groups in the pilot. This was as follows:

1. IiC was the stimulus for a complete change in culture and practice within the community group.
2. IiC did not lead to a complete change in culture and practice but added significant value to the community group.
3. IiC recognition was achieved but there was little or no added value.
4. IiC recognition was not achieved or the group dropped out or IiC was inappropriate.

In order to apply this typology we asked a number of people – the evaluation team, the advisers, the assessors and the IiC central team – to allocate the community groups to one of the categories. There was not agreement on the ratings to be given to all the groups and, therefore, in one or two cases, the evaluation team had to take a final view on which category groups should fall in.

Three groups were assigned to the first category, i.e. IiC was 'the stimulus for a complete change' within the group. However, two of these groups did not receive recognition – they are the two groups referred to earlier where the housing association had used IiC as a development tool. This was felt to have been a very dynamic process but that there had not been enough time for the groups to demonstrate that they met all the standards.

Five groups were assigned to the second category, i.e. IiC 'added significant value', while eight groups were placed in the third category, i.e. IiC recognition 'was achieved but there was little or no added value'. The remainder of the groups had different levels of non-engagement with IiC – only one of these groups was assessed and here it was felt that the group was more of a single project being run by two people than a community group and therefore not appropriate to IiC.

The gains that respondents commented on included:

- Ten groups talked about getting better organised and being more focused. There was an emphasis on documentation, record keeping and paperwork. Action planning was part of this process. It meant that groups were more business minded, with comments such as:
  - *We developed a professional attitude*.
  - *We used to be a bit 'tatty' but got organised*.

- Six groups commented on how IiC had given them more confidence. They said it had made them aware of what they had achieved – they now knew they were on the right track. Partly this had come from simply being recognised.

- For five groups IiC had got them thinking about how to involve more people – there was more focus on local engagement. For one group this centred on involving more young people.

- Two groups talked about how IiC might help with future funding.

In many cases we are not clear that these gains added up to significant added value. The IiC process may have made the group more business like and increased the confidence of some of those involved in the group, but this does not necessarily add up to evidence of substantial and sustainable change in the activities of groups or of the number of people involved in them.

However, one of the advisers identified the mechanisms that he observed with one group although it did not necessarily work in the same way for every group:

- Encouraged change where appropriate resulting in positive outcomes.

- Provided a significant health check.

- Encouraged the group to further engage with its communities.

- Community members became more involved with group.

- Ensured issues were progressed rather than just discussed.

- Got more people involved with the group than were involved before.

- Helped divide up work more equally thus ensuring a greater sense of ownership.

- Helped link training and other capacity building to activities they were involved in (rather than just taking up training when it was made available).

- Helped the sharing of information between members of the group.

- Got more group members involved in delivering activities (rather than just attending meetings).

- The group became more proactive in lobbying and involving stakeholders – it encouraged seeking support.

- Improved how other organisations viewed the group both in terms of the changes in the group's working practices and the recognition of the group using a quality assurance system to improve their capacity.

- Placed value on the work that the group undertook.

- Raised the local profile of the group.

- Provided recognition for the work of the group.

- Provided an opportunity to celebrate success.

Six groups specifically said that there had been no real change in the IiC period. Comments included:

- *It confirmed that we were on the right lines.*

- *Nothing changed but we were encouraged to carry on.*

- *IiC was a standard community development approach that could have happened anyway.*

- *Change was not down to IiC – it would have happened anyway. It took up too much time.*

Chapter Eight

The standards

We asked all the community groups, housing associations and one local authority for their views on the standards. In the following paragraphs we have combined these views with our views about how the standards operated in practice.

The main concern with the standards was that they implied that the association, authority or community group had to take a particular journey in order to receive recognition. This journey implied:

- starting with a blank sheet;

- deciding that investment in communities or a community should take place;

- agreeing a vision;

- sharing that vision with everyone;

- reviewing the capacity of the organisation to carry out the vision;

- agreeing an action plan;

- building the capacity of the organisation;

- doing the work (which centres on local action plans);

- periodically reviewing progress;

- making sure everyone is involved in the outcomes of reviews.

The problem with this rather mechanistic approach is that it does not reflect reality. The reality is that organisations are already involved in the work of community investment, and may have been for many years. The result is that, for housing associations, only two of the 14 standards relate to what they do on the ground and in communities – the other 12 standards are about processes. Similarly for community groups only one of the six standards concerns what they do as a group to improve conditions in their area – the standard that says, *the local plan is implemented*. There was a feeling amongst many of those we talked to that the sections on local action should be at the beginning of the standards and that these should be expanded to reflect what might be expected of a good housing association doing community investment, or a good community group working in its area. One might summarise this set of concerns by saying that the standards put too much emphasis on *planning* and *reviewing* and not enough emphasis on *doing*.

Related to this broad concern was a concern that standards duplicated each other and could be simplified and reduced in number. Examples given for the housing association/local authority standards were:

- The standards concerning sharing, communicating and understanding the vision (Standards 7, 8 and 9) could be combined.

- The standards concerning drawing up a plan to build internal capacity, implementing the plan and reviewing the plan (Standards 13, 14 and 15) could be combined.

- The final standard on on-going commitment to the vision (Standard 20) duplicates the earlier standard on communicating the vision (Standard 8).

Other points that were made about the standards were:

- The numbering system is confusing and there should be separate numbering for the communities and organisational standards.

- There is too much jargon in the standards – 'capacity building' came in for the most criticism – they should be in plain English.

- For organisations other than housing associations, e.g. local authorities, the language needs to be modified.

- Do community groups have to develop something called a 'local action plan'? Could they not get recognition if they were carrying out a number of valuable activities in the community involving a wide range of people? (Standard 3).

- In Standards 7 and 8 the reference to 'others' is vague and should be defined.

- What does 'communicating the vision to residents' mean? Is it important to communicate an overall vision or just to be able to show that residents understand that the organisation is involved in the community? (Standards 8 and 9).

- The standard on equality of opportunity should make positive reference to diversity (Standard 10).

- For organisations, reviewing all policies, procedures and practices is a huge task and should only be carried out when specific policies etc. come up for review (Standard 12).

- It is not clear what drawing up 'a plan to build internal capacity' refers to – is it a specific plan related to the IiC process or does it refer to many plans which an association or authority will have that concern capacity to deliver? (Standard 13).

- Again associations should not have to produce local action plans to meet the standard – these are only one method available for working in communities (Standard 17).

- Under evaluation what does *the* strategy refer to in Standard 18 – is this the action plan or something else?

- It is very difficult to measure broad costs and benefits (Standard 19).

While being critical of the standards, most respondents accepted that while there may have been initial difficulties in getting to grips with the standards, after a little time they were understandable and usable and did, in the main, reflect what they were doing.

Chapter Nine

Discussion and conclusions

The nature of IiC

Investors in Communities is a standards-based recognition system, i.e. it is about how far an organisation has got, not how far it has moved. IiC sets standards – different ones for housing associations and local authorities, and community groups and assesses whether organisations and groups have met those standards. However, the developers of the IiC system see it as more than just a simple meeting (or not) of a set of standards.

> *IiC is a catalyst…IiC aims to support a change in culture…is a means to an end – and the end is more successful communities and satisfied residents.*

From the pilots we can identify three different ways in which IiC works in practice. Firstly it can be seen as an *incentive to change*. Here housing associations or community groups (or more likely significant persons within associations or groups) acknowledge their need to invest more in their communities and see IiC as a way of promoting change in this direction. From the pilot housing associations we do not have evidence of this happening as all the associations in the pilots were already committed to community investment and had already invested considerable resources in this process. However, it is possible to see how IiC might act as an incentive to housing associations that were thinking about becoming involved in community investment – in their case IiC could provide a framework for considering what their involvement might be and how they might go about it. Further work is needed with suitable housing associations to test this hypothesis.

There are examples from the community group pilots of IiC acting as an incentive. However, the incentive was primarily to staff within housing associations to work more productively with community groups. So in one housing association two areas were picked and IiC was used as a development tool to help with setting up community groups and developing their programmes of activity. In another association a tenant participation worker was given the licence by IiC to move beyond a narrow tenant participation brief into working with residents on wider issues within the community. In these cases IiC provided an incentive (or appropriate working method) to housing association staff. It is less clear whether IiC is an appropriate incentive for a newly formed or putative community group – our evidence from the pilots is that IiC works best with established groups.

The second way in which IiC can work is as a *change agent* within associations and community groups – the 'catalyst' referred to in the quote at the beginning of this chapter from the IiC developers. Here there is evidence from both housing associations and from community groups that IiC can work in this way (this evidence is summarised below). However, the pilots also demonstrated that for

some associations and many of the groups, it did not act in this way in any significant sense.

This leaves the third way in which IiC can work – as a *badge* or *acknowledgement of meeting an externally assessed standard*. We have evidence from housing associations that this was seen as important in some cases and particularly when selling the association to local authorities as preferred partners or to tenants and residents in stock transfer situations. With community groups the situation was less clear – some groups had hopes that having the IiC badge would mean better relationships with other partners and, particularly, funders but in general this had still not been shown to be the case. In both cases, a badge is only useful when the value of the badge is widely recognised and, clearly, as this was still a pilot, this is not yet the case. The badging element of IiC may become more significant if and when a permanent national scheme is agreed.

Housing associations

For housing associations IiC generally worked through four mechanisms.

Reinforcing existing commitment. The housing associations that took part in the pilot were mainly large and medium large associations that were already committed to community investment. They had demonstrated this by appointing specialist staff to undertake community development and community investment work. It was not a surprise that 11 out of the 12 associations received recognition.

A top-down tool for promoting a bottom-up approach. The associations followed a common pattern in undertaking the IiC process. There was commitment from the top (usually an officer in a senior position but endorsed by the board) followed by the establishment of an IiC steering group with representatives from most departments and from different grades and a lead officer – usually in the community investment team.

A clear process for operationalising commitment. One group and the lead officer took the IiC message out to the rest of the staff in a systematic way (staff surveys showed that staff were more informed about, and committed to, community investment at the end of the process). The group discussed the standards and how evidence might be collected for each standard and the lead officer put the evidence together into a story board. There is little evidence of steering groups generating specific changes to association policies and practices as a result of their testing of the standards against current policy and practice – rather they were reaffirming current policy and practice. The assessment process was handled professionally and smoothly and had value to the association.

Legitimising community investment and improving internal communication. For the housing associations in the pilot, IiC was not an *incentive* – they were already involved in community investment. In terms of *change management* the majority of associations valued the process that they had gone through. When asked to define

that value they often resorted to generalisations about a changed culture, a more focused approach to community investment and increased validation and legitimacy for community investment activity. More specifically there was evidence of better cross-departmental working and, particularly, of better communication between housing managers and community investment staff. When community investment had been introduced into associations, new teams had been created separate from housing management (and, often, but not always, tenant participation). The move towards specialist housing management teams dealing with repairs and rents had freed up housing management staff to be more estate focused and this gave more time and space to work more closely with community investment staff. All agreed that this closer working of community investment and housing management staff was a positive benefit.

For some associations the *badging* element was important and there were examples of associations that had used their involvement in IiC to their advantage.

With respect to costs – staff, overhead and administration costs were in the order of £20,000 to £40,000 over two years. To this would need to be added the direct costs of IiC, i.e. the adviser and assessor which might total up to £5,000. However, all those asked thought that the money they had spent on IiC was money well spent.

The key question concerning IiC and associations is whether there is a case to be made for offering IiC as a national scheme for all associations. On the evidence of the pilots we would conclude that there is but there are certain caveats to this conclusion. The pilot associations were mainly large or medium large and committed to community investment. Given that 50 associations applied to be part of the pilot and that enquiries have been received about accessing the scheme since the pilot phase has been underway it might be reasonable to assume that there are up to 100 associations who might want to be part of it in the immediate future. This could provide a core group who would pay a commercial cost for the service, allowing a small central staff team to be established. However, it is less clear if there is a wider group that would want to use the service. In the country as a whole there are just under 200 large and medium large associations (i.e. with over 2,500 properties) and nearly 200 medium sized associations (i.e. with between 500 and 2,500 properties). These figures are likely to shrink as mergers and partnership arrangements increase.

We propose that some form of market research should be carried out with these medium sized associations to see how many would be interested in IiC. A different approach may be needed for those associations already involved in community investment and for those associations who know a little about community investment and for whom IiC might be more of an incentive to get involved.

Local authorities

It is difficult to draw any significant conclusions from the two local authorities that were part of the pilot. In the end only one of them undertook the process.

However, it did receive recognition thus showing, at a minimum, that IiC can be used in a local authority setting. In this authority the *badging element* was more important than the *incentive* or *change agent* elements.

The two pilot authorities were both small rural district authorities but even here IiC was competing with a range of other initiatives, plans and inspections. In larger authorities identifying a specific role for a process such as IiC would be even more difficult. If IiC is to have any role in local government then more detailed thought will need to be given to how it might fit with other processes to which local government is subject. Organisations such as the Local Government Association, the Audit Commission, IDeA and the Countryside Agency need to be involved in these discussions.

Communities

It is less clear whether, and consequently how, IiC worked for community groups so we can only identify some characteristics of their participation.

Hand-picked by various criteria

The community groups were selected through the housing associations that were going to be part of the pilot. However, the criteria for selection was not clear with a few associations opening up the process to all residents' groups for their properties, others selecting well established groups and others picking areas or groups that were 'problems' that it was felt that IiC might address. This led to a high drop out rate amongst residents' groups. Of the 36 groups that were put forward during the course of the pilot, 14 never had any meaningful engagement with IiC while a further five had some minimal engagement in the sense that they knew they were part of the pilot but did not engage with the process. One other group did engage with the process but the assessor decided that they were not really a group but two individuals with a project. Therefore a total of 20 of the 36 community groups did not engage with the pilot process or were unsuitable.

A change management tool for some and a badge for others

Of the 16 groups that did have a meaningful engagement, 14 were recognised as meeting the standard – the other two were fully involved in IiC but were not yet ready to be assessed. Of the 16 engaged groups, IiC was seen to have added significant value to eight of them while for the other eight who got recognition it was concluded that IiC of itself had not added value – rather it was a badge showing what they had achieved as a group.

Generally more effective with established groups not facing major issues

All 14 groups that received recognition were established groups in existence before they became part of the IiC process. Generally, where IiC was proposed for a problem area or for groups that associations had concerns about, it did not turn out to be effective. There is one exception to this – in one association the community investment workers used IiC as a development tool in areas without residents'

groups as a process of developing groups. In these areas they followed the linear path laid out on IiC – get a group together, consult widely, draw up an action plan, implement the plan and review it. In essence in this case (and in one other case where recognition was achieved) IiC was used as a development tool by community development staff rather than being independently picked up by a group of residents.

We would conclude that for residents' groups IiC can be useful in one of two situations:

- For established groups wishing to review their activities – in this respect the idea of action planning seems to have been particularly useful and to have given form to the often disparate and unplanned activities of community groups.

- For community development staff looking for a template for working with new groups and for a tool which newly formed groups can see as a way of deciding what they want to do and evaluating the process as they develop.

There does not appear to be a role for IiC in problem areas or where groups are struggling to exist, e.g. through personality problems or through poor relationships with external agencies. Here IiC can become a diversion from the main business of sorting out the problems.

There was also a potential tension between IiC as a developmental process and IiC being seen as some sort of test that groups had to pass. This occurred in some cases because it was the housing association that had put the groups forward, and groups felt that they were being tested by the association. However, in other cases the tension was a creative one with groups recognising that the 'test' aspect was both off putting and helpful, i.e. a challenge that could bring productive benefits to groups.

In general because of the way in which groups were selected IiC could not be seen as an *incentive* although in the few associations where groups were asked to put their names forward there was some element of incentive. With three groups IiC was an incentive for the community development staff working with them. The idea of IiC as a *change management* process was important for some groups although in only seven of the original 36 groups was some significant added value identified. *Badging* was potentially important for some groups although there was no evidence that it yet had any value in the external world.

We have identified two possible future scenarios for IiC with community groups. Firstly IiC could be limited to groups that have some connection with housing associations, i.e. primarily tenants' and residents' groups, but also wider based community groups or organisations such as housing co-ops. In this context one possibility being explored is a sort of franchising to individual housing associations who would promote the IiC concept and process to their associated groups, bring them together in local networks (paralleling the success of the Leicester conferences), offer local community development support and then bring in outside assessors from IiC nationally for the recognition process. However, there is a cost to this, particularly the cost of the assessment process. In the pilot this cost was

approximately £4,500 a group but would be more like £2,000 a group in a rolled-out national scheme. Local community groups are unlikely to be able to afford this level of cost and housing associations would have to consider how to finance such a scheme.

The second scenario is for IiC to be available to all community groups, irrespective of whether they have any connection with housing associations. For this to be taken forward, considerably more work would have to be done involving national organisations such as the Active Communities Directorate at the Home Office, the Community Development Foundation, Community Matters and the British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres (BASSAC). Recognition would have to be given to the national debate on indicators for community involvement and other quality systems (which we discuss in the final section).

Standards, advisers and assessors

We have already commented that the standards were understandable and usable but that there was too much concentration on 'planning' and 'reviewing' and not enough emphasis on 'doing'. The standards implied a particular journey that needed to be taken which started with a blank sheet and went from deciding to undertake community investment through to periodically reviewing progress. However, reality is not like that – associations and groups start from different places and find different ways of achieving their ends. Therefore there needs to be an emphasis within the standards on what associations and groups actually do and on the achievement of specific outcomes.

All the associations and community groups were provided with advisers who helped them to understand the standards and advised on how they might order their evidence in order to demonstrate that they complied with the standards. The experience of the advisers was mixed. While all of the associations found the advisers to be useful only four thought that they were essential. Of the 14 community groups on which we have information nine said the adviser had been useful but only three said they had been essential while four said they had not been useful. However, nearly all the associations and community groups found the assessment process to be a good one and to have been helpful in making them reflect on their experience.

Given that the adviser role was a considerable part of the cost of the IiC process it may be more productive to issue better written guidance and to offer a pre-assessment visit by an assessor to enable associations and community groups to see how near they are to complying with the standards before the formal assessment visit. For community groups, where the standards are much simpler, the adviser role could be played by a local community development worker. In addition, national, regional or (in the case of community groups) local seminars and conferences are likely to be of considerable value.

Chapter Ten
The changing context – looking to the future

Housing

From our visits to housing associations, a number of important developments emerged, which will have an impact on the ability and desire of housing associations to get involved in community investment.

The institutional context: fewer, bigger housing associations often controlling (former) local authority stock

The Housing Corporation wishes to see fewer, bigger housing associations, or more partnership arrangements between housing associations, to which it can direct investment resources. This means that many associations are looking to mergers with other housing associations or to new group structures which will usually mean bringing together associations covering very different geographical areas and, often, with different cultures and interests.

A further important development has been the significant number of Large Scale Voluntary Transfers (LSVTs) of social housing stock and the setting up of Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). All are seen by government as ways of getting more investment into existing social housing stock to enable it to meet its PSA target that all homes in the social sector meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. ALMOs have grown in scope and popularity over the past three years, tending to be favoured by urban authorities who prefer to retain ownership of their stock. While the initial stock transfers were predominantly shire county stock in good condition, more recent transfers and ALMOs have involved homes in poorer condition, with high levels of deprivation and requiring large scale improvement works. These areas have many social problems which cannot be tackled without adopting a community investment approach and government will expect to see this reflected in any proposal for stock transfer or an ALMO. One of the housing associations in the pilot was set up as result of LSVT. Its chief executive argued strongly that its history of local authority tenancy with access to councillors and notions of paying rents and council tax for services and having votes on transfers set the context for a commitment to community investment. Significantly, he was also chair of his Local Strategic Partnership.

Housing linked to regeneration

The new opportunities for growth, mergers and new structures in the housing association sector can bring advantages (apart from being able to access Housing Corporation and government money). They allow for economies of scale with

respect to support and development services and they allow for a sharing of expertises. With respect to community investment they might mean the spreading of ideas to associations not involved with them in the past – or they might threaten existing community investment policies and practices. Much depends on the board and senior officer make up of the new body. The process of merger itself is very time consuming and can become a primary pre-occupation of many of the key players to the detriment of other policies such as community investment. And, finally, if one way for a housing association to invest in its community, is to be part of overall civic life, e.g. by being on the Local Strategic Partnership, this may be more difficult if a newly merged and larger association is having to relate to a number of diverse local authority areas.

The business case for community investment

In the paragraph above we referred to possible economies of scale through mergers and new group structures. Over the last five years, if not longer, many associations have been looking at how they can provide a more efficient service by centralising some of their functions into specialist teams. The earliest manifestation of this was in the creation of call centres dealing with all existing and prospective tenant enquiries, including repairs. More recently associations have been creating specialist rent teams dealing with all aspects of rents, including arrears, and also with possible tenant income maximisation through benefits and work around debt. This centralising of maintenance and rent functions has meant that local housing managers have had their time freed to be able to do more estate based and local area work. The government's anti-social behaviour agenda has fed into this and local housing managers have been more able to engage with combating anti-social behaviour. They have also been enabled to take a greater part in community investment work at a local level, which helps them to develop strategies for dealing with anti-social behaviour. These developments have been reflected in the pilot authorities and have created the conditions for better dialogue and co-operation between housing management and community investment staff.

Redefinition of the role of social landlords

Many of the changes in the above paragraphs and in previous sections are encapsulated in the re-branding of housing associations being promoted by the National Housing Federation in its 'iN campaign'. This campaign is not about standards but rather about an expression of underlying principles and values. The strap line is: *In business for neighbourhoods – action for change*. (In some ways reflecting a Housing Corporation strap line – Raising the Standard for Homes and Neighbourhoods.) The iN commitments are to neighbourhoods, customers and excellence. The commitments to neighbourhoods are:

- We will put neighbourhoods at the heart of everything we do.
- We will promote neighbourhoods where there is a place for everyone, with positive support for diversity of people and places.

- We will work in partnership with local people, councils and other agencies, and will champion local needs.

- Each of our members will be open and explicit about its role in neighbourhoods where it works, and about the time and money invested in them.

The Federation has allocated £750,000 for the iN campaign.

Nine of the 12 IiC pilot associations have signed up to the campaign. (This is approximately proportionate to the total number of NHF members that have signed up although there is a feeling that the proportion of larger housing associations signing up is larger than this. There is also anecdotal evidence that some associations do not see the iN goals as ambitious enough.)

Given these developments, and the new regulation and inspection regimes described above, IiC will need to decide how it is to place itself over the coming years. Three options present themselves:

- IiC should enter into discussions with the Housing Corporation about the regulatory framework and the Audit Commission about the inspection framework to gain an understanding that community investment should be part of both frameworks and that IiC recognition is evidence of housing associations complying with understood industry standards about community investment. One outcome might be a statement of Housing Corporation policy on community investment to match the policy statement and guidance on involving residents (*Involvement policy for the housing association sector*: Housing Corporation). A second outcome would be to get included in the Appendices to the Audit Commission's draft paper on approaches to housing inspection, which makes reference to community investment as part of possible inspection and assessment activity.

- IiC should enter into discussions with the National Housing Federation about the relationship between the iN campaign and IiC. IiC could be recognised and promoted by the Federation as one way in which associations can show themselves to be committed to the values of the iN campaign.

- The final option is a more pragmatic one and is to continue to develop IiC as a self standing recognition process as outlined in Chapter Nine.

The case for housing associations becoming community investment agencies is as strong as it has ever been, yet, as the People for Action report on O2 said,

> …*there is still a battle to win the hearts and minds of staff, board members and residents who are not convinced of the value and benefit of community investment.*

IiC has a part to play in this battle but it needs to be mindful of the overall context in which it is working and to seek to make alliances and partnerships with the other key players in the field.

Community

As we have described earlier, the national debate about community and communities continues to engage policy makers and practioners – and, occasionally, community groups. Some see communities as important in helping to deliver key government targets – the managerialist approach. Others are more interested in empowerment ideas in which local community empowerment is good in itself and in which local communities define their own agendas and, indeed, their own boundaries, which may not reflect those of various government initiatives. IiC can be placed in the community empowerment part of the debate – it takes as its starting point the community itself and allows for the community to agree on its own issues that are to be tackled. It offers a particular process that community groups should follow and a badge of recognition if there is compliance with the standards.

There are other standards-based approaches for use with local communities and voluntary groups. However, they do not cover the same territory as IiC. One such approach is Active Partners developed by COGS for Yorkshire Forward (*Benchmarking community participation: Developing and implementing the Active Partners benchmarks* – Mandy Wilson and Pete Wild – Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2003). This approach looks at whole communities and tests community participation in four dimensions – influence, communication, inclusivity and capacity and with 12 benchmarks, e.g. the community is recognised and valued as an equal partner at all stages of the process. It is interesting to note that the five key steps for applying the framework are very similar to the IiC standards:

- developing a shared understanding of community participation;
- establishing the current position;
- identifying issues and needs to be addressed;
- agreeing an action plan;
- reviewing progress.

Nevertheless, Active Partners is not about individual community groups but about whole communities with a myriad of groups, the ways in which local communities interact with a range of partners, and how groups and individuals are involved in the future of their area.

The leading quality standards approach for voluntary organisations is PQASSO which has been developed by Charity Evaluation Services. This identifies 12 quality areas, e.g. planning, governance, managing money, networking and partnership and for each area there are three 'levels of achievement' which give details of what the organisation should be doing to achieve each of these levels. This is a relatively sophisticated approach which is suitable for organisations with developed constitutions and resources that they control, often including paid staff.

It has been developed for the traditional voluntary sector and is less appropriate for the more locally based and informal community sector.

IiC provides a much more simple quality approach than PQASSO and one geared to individual organisations, unlike Active Partners. Therefore it is likely to be of use mainly with smaller community groups – as was seen in the pilot. However, it has also proved that it is appropriate to validate the activities of a more formal community group, with paid staff and only a tenuous partnership with the dominant landlord.

As with housing associations the debate about the future potential of IiC needs to involve a wider range of stakeholders than has been the case to date.

Appendix One

The IiC standards

The IiC standard for residents (and community groups)

Local people and service providers invest in their communities to achieve significant improvements. The criteria for the standard are:

1. There is commitment among residents, housing staff and others to take action.

2. Residents are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity.

3. Residents and others develop a local action plan.

4. Residents develop their capacity to implement their local plan through training and skills programmes.

5. The local plan is implemented.

6. There are regular reviews of progress against the plan.

The IiC standard for housing associations (and local authorities)

Associations develop their commitment and capacity, and assist residents with their local plans. The criteria for the standard are:

Commitment

7. Board members, senior managers and residents' representatives share a vision that communities can be sustainable if they work with others.

8. This vision is communicated effectively to residents, staff and others.

9. Residents, staff and others understand and support the vision.

10. The association is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity.

Capacity building

11. With residents and other service providers, the association discusses strategic priorities and methods of joint working.

12. The association reviews its own culture and capacity in terms of:
    *   its policies, procedures and practices;
    *   the motivation and skills of staff;
    *   relations with key service providers;
    *   money and other types of resources needed.

13. The association draws up a plan to build its internal capacity.

14. The capacity building plan is implemented.

15. Progress against the plan is reviewed regularly.

Local action

16. The association establishes strategic and local ways of working with other service providers.

17. The association works with residents and others to implement local action plans.

Evaluation

18. The association reviews periodically progress in achieving the strategy, and makes amendments as necessary.

19. Board members, senior management and residents' representatives understand the broad costs and benefits of the strategy.

20. On-going commitment to the vision continues to be communicated to residents, staff and others.

Appendix Two

The pilots

Bedford

The housing association

Bedford Pilgrims Housing Association (BPHA)

BPHA manages 10,000 properties. 7,000 of these were acquired through a transfer in 1990 and just under 6,000 of these remain after right to buys. 8,000 of the properties are in Bedford, the rest within four or five miles of the town. The chief executive saw IiC as a vehicle for cultural change. He suggested that the need to get tenants to vote for stock-transfer in the beginning had created an environment in which resident involvement was a priority. The chief executive is chair of the Bedford Local Strategic Partnership board. The HA has a 'Sustainable Communities' plan into which regeneration and community development fit.

The communities

London Road

London Road is an area of high deprivation (three quarters of the households are on benefits) and high turnover. 40 per cent of the stock is flats. Money has been spent on energy efficiency, thermal cladding of the 1,500 homes in the area and on making it look attractive, but it is still not seen by tenants as desirable, though it has gone from being an area of low demand to being an area with a waiting list. There had never been a tenants' and residents' association – there had been some resistance to community participation – although there are a number of committed individuals. A Community House opened in February 2002 as a meeting place and as a base for the Housing Association and other agencies, e.g. SureStart and a Healthy Living Centre. There have not been a lot of activities involving black communities but some work had been done with Bangladeshi women and with young people.

A community development worker employed by BPHA organised a public meeting in the area and explained IiC. Six people stayed to form a steering group. The group then worked through the IiC process: produced a mission statement, carried out a survey, and produced an action plan. Individual members of the group took responsibility for implementing and monitoring parts of the action plan.

Balliol

This is a mixed estate built between the 1950s and the 1970s on the edge of the urban area in Kempston. It was formerly separate from Bedford but is now part of the town. 50 per cent of the residents are owner-occupiers and 50 per cent BPHA tenants. It is largely an established white community spilt into a number of

separate smaller areas. The HA has worked with the council to develop community planning. A joint survey two years before IiC began started the process but it moved at the pace of the slowest partner. An investment programme for modern secure homes has been identified. Other issues include vandalism and a poor environment, e.g. uneven pavements and dog fouling. An established tenants' association covers part of the estate – one road – but there is a history of the TRA being disappointed with the HA over what it saw as a breach of promise over redevelopment plans.

Birmingham

The housing association

Castle Vale Community Housing Association (CVCHA)

CVCHA works solely within the Castle Vale Housing Action Trust (HAT) area in north Birmingham. It has around 1,000 mainly new build properties, currently all on long lease. It was registered in 1997 and is now resident controlled, with a tenant board member as chair. In October 2003, it was chosen as the successor landlord for the Castle Vale Housing Action Trust and will take over the HAT properties in March 2005.

The community

Watton Green Residents' Association

This is a cross-tenure group of HAT tenants and owner-occupiers. They have been in operation for about 3 years and CVCHA has been working with them for about 18 months. The Residents' Association have moved from activism to influencing policy and have worked with CVCHA on design and lettings issues around the CVCHA new build, where the mix of stock has been determined by Birmingham City Council. The group also succeeded in getting the council to change its policy on the location of street lighting.

Leicester and North Derbyshire

The housing association

Leicester Housing Association (LHA)

LHA manages over 7,000 homes to rent in Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. It has 340 staff, 170 of which are supported housing staff, the largest supported housing staff team in the East Midlands. In addition to its homes to rent, it has 10 care homes; a hostel in Eastwood for young people; a hostel in Leicester for women and children fleeing domestic violence; and a foyer in Sleaford. It also provides 'Service 24', a 24 hour emergency service for elderly people (not just LHA tenants) all over the East Midlands. It has a well developed community development strategy and formal mechanisms for resident participation.

The communities

Belgrave Co-ops

LHA took on responsibility for providing services to 4 fully mutual co-ops – Belgrave (333 units), Crossington (139 units), Maynard (114 units) and Ross Walk (110) – following the demise of Leicester Federation of Housing Co-ops in the early 1990s. The co-ops are located in a mainly Asian part of Leicester. LHA provides a management, maintenance and finance service to the co-ops, including servicing their monthly meetings from their Belgrave area office and training. The co-ops are well involved in the community and hold regular community events. LHA support the community by using locally based companies and employing local labour. Two of the co-ops took part in the pilot – Maynard and Ross Walk.

Elmton and Cressswell Village Company

LHA owns some 615 ex-Coal Board homes in the Meden Valley in north Nottinghamshire/north Derbyshire. They were part of a consortium of three HAs which took over 1,800 homes, following a campaign in 1987 by residents against the Coal Board disposing of their homes to private landlords. Tenure in the area is mainly owner-occupied, with some local authority and some absentee landlords, as well as the HA stock. The main problem is unemployment, following the collapse of the coal industry. The Creswell pit closed in 1991.

The establishment of village companies as profit making social enterprises owned and controlled locally was recommended by the Coalfields Task Force in 1997. LHA made a bid for the Meden Valley area in 1999 to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, and received funding for a project team to establish six village companies.

The main activity so far has been the provision of the Creswell Resource Point in March 2002, run by a paid organiser and seven volunteers from the village. The Resource Point offers free training, free advice, a nearly-new shop and an office and meeting room space. It is about to host a homework club. The police have a fortnightly surgery. It is out-growing its original space and the company is purchasing a row of three shops to form bigger premises. It works closely with the numerous other organisations in the village.

Merseyside

The housing association

Maritime Housing Association

In April 2002, Maritime Housing Association became part of a group structure called Regenda. Three organisations form part of the group, Maritime HA, Templar HA and Heartlands, the community investment arm of the group structure, which has charitable status. Maritime is a medium sized RSL, which owns approximately 3,500 properties for rent and manages 1,000 shared ownership properties focusing on four core areas – Liverpool, Wirral, St Helens and Sefton. Maritime HA's head office is in Liverpool and there are two area offices, one in Birkenhead and one in St Helens. They have 120 FTE staff .

To help develop their role in community regeneration, Maritime set up a charitable parent organisation (Heartlands) three years ago. The aim of Heartlands is to maximise the funding available to support community investment programmes which contribute to area regeneration and community safety and address issues of service quality, poverty and social exclusion. This structure has now changed with the establishment of a new group structure. Regenda is the overall group providing core services to three housing associations (Maritime, Macclesfield and West Pennine) as well as Heartlands.

The communities

Victoria Fields

This is a small housing estate in Birkenhead with 51 houses, 16 flats and two bungalows. There are 173 residents. The Residents' Association has undertaken a number of projects including the creation of a small communal garden, working with the police, running a scheme for young people who carry out environmental projects and holding social events.

Grizedale and Penrose Street Tenants' and Residents' Association, North Liverpool

The estate consists of 200 homes and is a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) which took place 12 months ago. The Tenants' and Residents' Association (TRA) was established five years ago and transferred to Maritime a year ago when the LSVT took place. They held a meeting every week for three and a half years with 25 to 30 people attending prior to the transfer. Now that houses have been refurbished, attendance at meetings has dropped. There are only two or three people now actively involved with the group but there are still a lot of issues to be addressed. It is seen as being particularly important to get young people involved.

The group has a Local Tenant Participation Compact (the first RSL on Merseyside to have one). The local authority still provides some services on the estate. The area is within the North Liverpool SRB partnership and is part of the Breckfield/Anfield initiative. There are big changes happening around the Liverpool Football club. They want to get a bid through the Neighbourhood Renewal fund to employ two supercaretakers on the Grizedale estate.

Oxford

The housing association

Oxford Citizens Housing Association (OCHA)

OCHA manages 2,800 homes throughout Oxfordshire. It started in 1866 through university-related people providing housing for the deserving poor. It was very small up to the late 1980s with around 300 properties, mainly sheltered. Then there was rapid expansion up to the current 2,800 properties. 1,500 are general needs rented homes, 180 shared ownership, 31 are leasehold homes, 127 supported shared homes and hostel bedspaces and 352 sheltered homes. There are also 413 privately leased homes. 60-70 per cent of properties are in Oxford. There are 107 staff – about 94 FTEs.

The community

Barton Estate

The area involved in IiC is the Barton Estate which is an isolated estate on the Oxford ring road. There is a population of just over 4,000 people living in 1,427 households. There are high levels of poverty. Oxford City Council is the main landlord but OCHA has also been building on the estate and has built 92 properties with another 45 in the pipeline. Barton was a Round Three SRB project but this was felt to be a very top down scheme. A new partnership has been started – Barton's Better. There is also a Barton Community Forum as part of the SRB and a Barton Community Association. Additional resources for capacity building were received from the Housing Corporation but there was no one group that was suitable for IiC accreditation.

Portsmouth

The housing association

Portsmouth Housing Association (PHA)

PHA began in the early 1970s as part of a response by local churches to the TV film, *Cathy Come Home* and was backed by Shelter. It was partly a housing association and partly a homelessness campaigning group. In the early 1980s it developed responses to a number of community needs and became quite diverse with a group structure. The current parts of the group's structure are:

- *Portsmouth Housing Association*. This is a general needs housing association with over 3,000 homes to rent in Portsmouth and south Hampshire. 350 are supported homes managed by a variety of other agencies. It runs community regeneration activities and a volunteer service, providing volunteers not just to PHA. It has recently incorporated the *Southlands Housing Association* which previously had been a separate company within the group. Southlands has 750 part buy, part rent properties together with 300 properties leased from private landlords.

- *The Portsmouth Foyer*. Accommodation and support for 50 vulnerable young people.

- *EC Roberts Centre*. Supported housing for vulnerable families plus day nursery, playschemes, support.

- *The Bill Sargent Trust*. Provides funding for action research, e.g. on asylum seekers, affordable housing, and social needs in Southsea.

PHA have also developed and floated off a company providing 450 bed spaces for people with special needs – PHA owns the properties but an outside agency provides the management.

The group has around 180 staff with PHA having 116 staff. The group is in discussions with a housing association based in Southampton about a possible merger.

The communities

Howard and Matapan Road Residents' Association (HAMRA)

This is an estate with 140 units and a high percentage of single parent families. There is a high turnover on the estate. The services that HAMRA offer are mostly aimed at children – they run clubs after school and in holidays. There are also adult nights, coach trips and an old ladies' club. They also ran a Jubilee Party. Their community building is financed through a levy on rents. Altogether, they have substantially increased the amount of work they do with children and young people on the estate.

St Mary's Viewpoint

St Mary's was originally an old workhouse. There are now 68 flats with 59 shared ownership flats, i.e. it is a mixed tenure estate. There is a high child density. The estate was isolated within an owner-occupied area and did not have a good reputation. In St Mary's there are two community rooms and a dedicated community development worker was based there but this post ended during the IiC period. The community development worker started activities in the two buildings – playschemes, after school clubs, residents' group, socials. There are computers and training in the second building. A new caretaker and the community development worker improved things and the desire to move from the estate has lessened. People are now responding. There have been quizzes, bingo, a Jubilee event and a tenth anniversary event. They have developed use of a second building and improved the grounds as well as murals, a ball park with graffiti murals and a youth club.

Preston and Newcastle

The housing association

North British Housing (NBH)

NBH is part of the Places for People Group, which operates throughout England and has one Scottish arm. In total, Places for People has about 52,000 properties, of which NBH is the main general needs landlord, managing around 42,000 homes. Separate organisations manage general needs property in south west England (3,400 homes) and Lothian (1,500); care and support homes (500); and market rented property (200 homes). There is also a joint venture company, which works with the other parts of the group on wider initiatives, such as economic development; a foyer in Salford; and student accommodation in central London. NBH initiated a formal resident participation scheme five years ago.

The communities

Ingol & Tanterton Action Group (INTAG)

The Ingol estate was built in the late 1970s by the Central Lancashire New Town Development Corporation for families, single people and the elderly. There are around 1,350 homes, of which NBH manages 1,102, with the remainder privately owned. Ingol is located in a semi-rural area, about four miles from Preston city

centre, and is surrounded by fairly wealthy private housing and a small council estate. INTAG is a highly active community group which was founded in 1993 and gained charitable status in 1995. NBH literature describes it as acting as *a focal point for information, support and advice on a wide range of issues*. It has paid staff – a co-ordinator, a volunteer co-ordinator, a community development worker, two part-time admin. officers and a youth worker.

There are also around 20 volunteers, who have undertaken INTAG's training process, which involves mostly practical training with the paid staff and working with another volunteer for a number of weeks. There is a high turnover, as the volunteers get jobs – INTAG see volunteering as a stepping stone to work. Volunteers also have the opportunity to get qualifications – four are currently doing the Community Volunteer Award (NVQ2).

INTAG publish a regular newsletter, detailing the variety of community activities they undertake. They have recently taken over the Ingol Youth and Community Centre from Preston council; they have re-established a youth club and are basing the community development worker there.

Newcastle – Stanhope Street

The estate consists of 358, 1970s homes; two thirds of them are in five storey deck access blocks and the rest are in three storey brick houses, five minutes from the city centre. It looked very well maintained – no litter, graffiti – so the main focus of the IiC project was to ensure the sustainability of the estate. There are three resident caretakers and a housing officer who works exclusively on the estate. The estate is managed by the local office in Newcastle, which has 30 members of staff. This office has its own IiC Steering Group.

There was a significant improvement programme on the estate seven years ago. The Residents' Association was set up when the improvement programme started and is still going strong on both landlord/tenant issues and social activities. The estate is very culturally diverse with a substantial Asian community. Ten per cent of residents at Stanhope Street are foreign students and they have a representative on the Community IiC steering group. A lot of things have already been achieved in the community. A three-bedroom house on the estate has been given over for use as a community centre. There is a resident representative on the RSL IiC Steering Group (which is separate from the Residents' Association) as well as the Community IiC Steering Group.

Sheffield and Rotherham

The housing association

South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA)

SYHA manages about 2,800 general needs homes and 1,200 supported housing units, including Safehaven, the Yorkshire contribution to housing dispersed

refugees and asylum seekers. It has areas offices in Rotherham and Chesterfield, plus it holds surgeries at three community houses. It operates mainly in Yorkshire and north east Derbyshire, although it is also a preferred partner in north east Lincolnshire. SYHA has a long standing commitment to tenant participation since its formation about 30 years ago.

The communities

St Elizabeth's Community Group

St Elizabeth's is a small fairly self-contained development of 95 homes, built some 15 years ago. It has ten three-bed houses and 36 two-bed flats; the remaining one-bed units are mostly within a 'community block' where other residents provide informal support to residents, who are often people with health or other problems. The housing around it is mostly owned by Sheffield City Council. It was developed as an estate with a high degree of community involvement, with a community development worker appointed by SYHA before the estate was let, who still lives and works there. Activities at St Elizabeth's currently include a shop open twice a day for essential groceries; credit union collection point; various community activities; catering, cleaning and decorating for SYHA, not just on that estate; and managing the hire of community rooms.

White City, Maltby, Rotherham

The estate was built in the early 1950s by the National Coal Board, using REEMA style precast concrete (defined as defective under the Housing Defects Act 1984). By 1995, the estate was in major need of refurbishment; it had a poor reputation, high voids and a high level of crime and anti-social behaviour. SYHA opened a community house in 1996 and gave support to a multi-landlord community group. The house is shared by SYHA and the group, but used mostly by the group. SYHA has carried out the bulk of the estate renovation, which is now complete. A wide-ranging multi-agency group, the White City Partnership, was set up in 1999 to include the community, SYHA, Rotherham's housing, planning, environmental health and community development services, local councillors, the police and the fire brigade. The three landlords – Rotherham, SYHA and a private landlord – work together on anti-social behaviour and offer mutual support. There are weekly estate walkabouts and joint visits with the police on anti-social behaviour cases. Rotherham have included the White City Partnership within its new area committee structure.

The community group are currently refocusing their activities now the general environment of the estate has greatly improved. They have expanded to include an adjacent area and are working with a nearby council estate. The group itself has grown in size and they are working with children and young people on the estate to plan what is needed to improve an adjacent area of open land.

South London

The housing association

Presentation

Presentation has 4-5,000 homes under its management and in development. It has a staff of 90 people at its HQ in south-west London and in Luton and others in sheltered housing schemes.

Presentation is a black-led housing association, registered in 1970. It was originally mainly Afro-Caribbean led. It now interprets 'black-led' more widely. It was very active in the 1970s when 700 homes were built. There was a slowing down in the 1980s until, after the 1988 Housing Act, the Housing Corporation took initiatives to promote BME housing associations. Presentation aims to champion equality, diversity and social justice and provides services for all disadvantaged communities. Presentation is a partner in five major regeneration programmes in London and has undertaken a significant stock transfer in Lambeth as part of the St Martin's Community Partnership. Presentation is now concentrating its activities on London, Bedford, Luton and Medway.

Presentation has established a social investment agency that includes a community investment foundation and has also set up a Regeneration and New Business Department which undertakes community development work on their regeneration programmes. However, other departments, e.g. Housing Services and Corporate Services, also undertake community development work. In addition, during the period of IiC, the Getting Engaged Project was established to look at ways in which disadvantaged communities could engage in regeneration processes.

The communities

Bronze woman

The original aim was to put up a statue in Stockwell to commemorate the contribution made by Afro-Caribbean women and the contribution of Afro-Caribbean men in two world wars. In conjunction with creating the statue, an educational programme was established for local school children to help them recognise the contributions made by members of the African-Caribbean community. It was the idea of one woman living in a sheltered housing scheme for elderly Afro-Caribbean people. Now there is a committee and the project has networked with other agencies. The Presentation worker became involved about 18 months before IiC accreditation.

This group is different from other residents' groups involved in the pilot because it is focused on the community as cultural and ideological concept rather than simply as a geographical community. Therefore it has the potential to impact on a large number of people.

3 Ts

This community is located around the Elephant and Castle – Hedger, Hales and Orient streets. There are 23 properties – part of a stock-transfer – with a mixed white and black and minority ethnic community. Some of the communities are 'recently arrived', e.g. the Vietnamese community. It is a deprived area which is surrounded by affluent private housing. It had a very active and enthusiastic chair who died suddenly as the IiC project was starting – her death had a significant impact on this small and closely knit community and galvanised other members of the Tenants' and Residents' Committee to put a great deal of effort into establishing the project.

Activities have been developed for children and this has empowered children and mothers (many of them single parents) because they are seeing ideas come to fruition and they are currently feeling very pleased with progress. Planning permission has been received for a portakabin for children's activities. The police and youth service have become involved. A survey involved children surveying other children on the estate and the children have made a video documentary of the estate.

South and west London

The housing association

Threshold

The Threshold group owns and manages 4,500 homes in south and west London and north Surrey, in 17 contiguous local authority areas. These include 3,000 general needs homes with the remaining units in supported housing and shared ownership. They employ 350 staff including staff employed in their supported housing projects. Their local communities include a mix of inner city and suburban housing, estates and street properties. They already had a very well developed 'Local Neighbourhood Strategy', prior to IiC, which has been running since the mid 90s, giving a strong community focus to their work. This strategy emphasises the identification of local community priorities for change and improvement, in particular working and contributing to sustainable regeneration initiatives.

The communities

Earls Court, west London

Earls Court consists of 150 street rehabilitated properties, managed by Threshold in an area of mixed tenure with many problems – hard to let, street drinking, vulnerable tenants etc. A community centre in the area has been set up and is managed by a local volunteer/activist. There are lots of things going on there, but no structured group of residents. Attempts have been made in the past to set up a residents' association.

Wandle Valley, London Borough of Sutton

Wandle Valley is a new build multi-landlord estate with 301 homes in an area with very few facilities. There are many households with social problems living on the estate. Threshold is the largest of the five landlords on the estate, with 170 properties. A residents' association has been running for five years which has achieved quite a lot, e.g. £2,000 grant to run music workshops on the estate, a petition about traffic conditions which resulted in road calming measures, fashion design courses on the estate and an extension of a bus route to the estate. These initiatives have sometimes been resident-led and sometimes led by a Threshold Neighbourhood Liaison officer. There is still a need to raise the profile of the residents' association, get more residents involved and many more initiatives to improve the quality of life on the estate.

Teeside

The housing association

Tees Valley Housing Association

Tees Valley HA is a medium sized RSL, which owns 4,000 properties. It forms part of the Tees Valley Housing Group (TVHG) structure, which is composed of the parent, Tees Valley Housing Association and three subsidiaries. It works in Middlesbrough, Stockton, Redcar and Cleveland; its head office is in Middlesbrough. It employs a specialist tenant consultation and community organisation, Banks of the Wear Community Projects (BOWCP) to provide specific services around community development and tenant consultation services. BOWCP was for a time part of the Tees Valley group, but is now a contractor to them. Tees Valley have been working on the Community Investment Strategy for five years. Low demand and sustainability are strong external drivers for doing this and they describe their internal driver as,

> …the wish to make sure that the organisation delivers both its business and social objectives in such a way that they are balanced one with the other.

The community

New Chiltons, Billingham

In 1993, TVHG took over 100 houses belonging to ICI, which were built around 1930. 40 three-bedroom houses have been refurbished and the remaining 60 properties were demolished, to be replaced by a new development completed in 2000 of 40 houses and bungalows. The two schemes are separated by a large area of open space owned by the local authority. There has been little mixing of the two communities and no residents' group exists. BME tenants form less than five per cent of residents. The main problems in the area are unemployment, estate traffic, lack of bus services and lack of facilities for children and young people. A small group of residents is trying to improve the area, working with other organisations. In 2003, they held a successful 'Event in a Tent' enabling residents to see possible uses for and improvements to the local authority-owned open space.

West London

The housing association

Notting Hill Housing Group (NHHG)

NHHG is a large housing group based in west London which includes the Notting Hill Housing Trust. They have over 17,000 properties with more in development as well as bids to take over local authority stock as part of regeneration initiatives. NHHG is also trying to extend its involvement in new (often suburban) areas.

The communities

Windmill Park

Windmill Park in Ealing has 650 properties with twelve landlords – of whom three or four are large. NHHG is the lead, but not the largest landlord. The estate was between two and three years old when IiC started. Residents see the problems as 'young people', drugs and litter. It is one of the areas covered by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The lead for IiC had been working with local people and the residents' association which was already set up. It is a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund site and the University of Westminster was funded through the NRU to do a community audit, and the council was already doing a needs assessment exercise before IiC started. A neighbourhood management organisation is now proposed for the area.

Porters Way

Porters Way is in Hillingdon. It consists of 60 properties. It has a very poor history of resident involvement in the view of the housing association. It is adjacent to another larger estate – Bell Farm – which has historically had more attention. There were riots there in 1996. There are other initiatives going on in the area and one of the problems IiC faced was co-ordination to avoid duplication and gaps.

Purbeck

The housing association

Purbeck District Council

Purbeck District Council is a small council on the coast in the south of Dorset. The population is 46,000. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty. Over 50 per cent of the population live in three main towns – Wareham, Swanage and Upton. There are very few jobs within the district – mostly service jobs or jobs in the tourist industry. There are many second homes – in one parish over 50 per cent of houses are second homes which stay empty for most of the year. House prices are very high which means that local people cannot afford to buy there. There are a number of transport issues – bottlenecks in the summer and small roads not suitable for taking many different types of traffic.

There are about 25 parishes in the district and these are seen as important vehicles for involving local people. Two of the key actions in the Corporate Strategy for 2002/2007 are to:

- Encourage more people to take part in the development of their communities by the development of Parish Plans.

- Develop a community based approach to the formulation of the Community Plan by encouraging the use of Parish Plans, Planning for Real and village appraisals.

South Holland

The housing association

South Holland District Council

South Holland District Council is a council in the southern part of Lincolnshire, bordering on the Wash. It has a population of 74,000. Spalding is the main town (about 25,000) and there are about 50 other small towns/villages. 60 per cent of the people either work on the land or in the food industry. This has led to a low skill/low wage economy. In some areas there are labour shortages – in other areas there is under employment because of seasonal work. For every one young person who leaves, three elderly people arrive. Many of the incoming elderly are well off and bring wealth to the area, but have considerable health and social care needs.

The council has been involved in a number of initiatives in recent years, e.g. a Community Development Initiative Fund was set up to support development of the voluntary sector; a Rural Action Zone was set up with key stakeholders in the area which has turned into the Local Strategic Partnership; there has been increased emphasis on working with local communities and parish councils; a Community Strategy is being developed after wide consultation. Two areas – Donnington and Spalding – are piloting a Rural Residents' Compact.

The community

Donnington

Donnington is a village with a population of around 2,000. It is fairly rural but would like to have town status. Perceived issues include youth crime, older people and social exclusion. A Residents' Rural Compact is being developed and a steering group set up. This group has developed a survey about local concerns. The three areas already identified for improvement are the quality of life for young people; policing, vandalism and security; and the need for a more welcoming appearance and better communication between villagers.

More books from CIH and JRF on housing and communities

UK Housing Review 2004-2005

Steve Wilcox

The **UK Housing Review** provides the key information for busy managers and policy makers. This 13th edition brings together the most up to date housing statistics available for England (and its regions), Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

It features over 200 charts and tables including data about:
- UK and international economic trends
- Public expenditure plans
- Housing stock and conditions
- Housing characteristics and incomes
- House prices and market trends
- Housing investment by councils and housing associations
- Rents and revenue spending
- Homelessness and lettings
- Subsidies, tax relief and benefits

In addition to commentary on current trends, in this edition leading analysts offer their views:
- Hal Pawson addresses issues raised in *Reviewing stock transfer*;
- Steve Wilcox writes on *Taxing questions*;
- Steve Pomeroy evaluates *Housing need indicators in Australia, Canada, England and the United States*;
- and Steve Wilcox comments on changes *From rent policy to local housing allowances*.

The UK Housing Review continues to be the key resource for anyone interested in housing policy and finance, in both the public and private sectors.

> *"The great thing about the Review is that it brings together such a huge range of different data sources in one convenient place. But it's more than just a bible for statistics anoraks – the articles are insightful, and the tables are indispensable for anyone trying to get a broad understanding of housing-related data outside their specific areas of expertise."* Sue Anderson, CML Head of External Affairs.

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Price: £40.00   ISBN 1 903208 75 0   Order no: 353   Published: October 2004

Encouraging Participation: A toolkit for tenants and social landlords

Liz Millward, Joan Beckford, Alethea Dougal and Barbara Reid

Tenant participation has become more important than ever, with all social landlords required to demonstrate they are involving tenants in a range of ways. Despite good intentions, genuine participation can be difficult to achieve. This Toolkit offers practical help to enable tenants' groups and social landlords to work together more effectively. Based on research carried out across the UK, the Toolkit explores key themes such as the changing role of tenants' groups and networks, equal opportunities, and the resources needed to start up and sustain tenant participation.

Designed as a working resource for tenants' groups and landlords to share ideas, concerns and plans, the Toolkit features:

- A series of questionnaires to enable you to benchmark tenant participation in your organisation, to identify areas where work is needed and to evaluate progress over time;
- Good practice examples from successful organisations;
- Self-contained modules with easily photocopiable pages, to be used, shared and re-used in discussion and training sessions.

The Toolkit takes a realistic look at 'what works' and identifies common pitfalls and how to avoid them. Working through the Toolkit will help social landlords and tenants' organisations to make the best use of available resources, establish a more effective partnership and reflect on successes already achieved.

Price: £35.00. Discounted rates for tenants' groups/residents' associations: £20.00. ISBN 1 903208 28 9
Order No: 226   Published: June 2003

Allocate or let? Your choice: Lessons from Harborough Home Search

Tim Brown, Alan Dearling, Ros Hunt, Jo Richardson and Nicola Yates

Many local authorities and housing associations are developing new approaches to letting housing and to offering their customers more choice. The Housing Green Paper, government targets and pilot schemes and legal requirements under the Homelessness Act mean that social sector landlords are increasingly considering the issue of choice in lettings.

This report tells the story of the initial development of Harborough Home Search (HHS) – the first choice-based lettings scheme in the UK to cover all the social housing stock in a local authority area. It explains how Harborough District Council worked with local housing associations and a voluntary sector disability group to develop and implement the scheme drawing on the Delft model from the Netherlands. At this stage of its development – and in common with most landlords considering a move to choice-based lettings – the scheme had been set up without the aid of additional government funding.

As well as explaining the principles behind the scheme, this account of action research provides information on who used the service, what applicants, tenants and other stakeholders thought about it, and the implications for landlords and staff.

Allocate or Let? explains the steps undertaken by HHS in moving from a culture where housing officers allocated properties to applicants to one in which homeseekers are assisted in their search for a home.

Price: £13.95   ISBN 1 903208 29 7   Order no: 228   Published: December 2002

Social engineering or consumer choice? Rethinking housing allocations

Ian Cole, Barbara Iqbal, Louise Slocombe and Tony Trott

The allocations policies of social landlords have attracted intense attention of late, not least following the promotion of more flexible and choice-based lettings schemes in the Housing Green Paper, and the launch of a range of pilot schemes designed to test out new approaches to lettings. Many local authorities and RSLs are undertaking fundamental reviews of their allocation systems and are challenging some long cherished principles along the way.

Two of the main objectives of reform – to use lettings policies to help engineer more social balance on estates and the adoption of choice-based schemes designed to give more power to applicants – are sometimes characterised as polar opposites.

This timely report draws on survey and case study research to review the policy implications of moving away from current needs-based approaches to letting social housing – whether to create more socially mixed neighbourhoods, or to offer more choice. The report identifies the wide range of options that social landlords now have before them. Instead of seeing estate profiling and choice-based systems as being in conflict, the report argues that a more effective approach may be to combine elements of both to produce hybrid schemes in tune with local housing markets. It also outlines some of the challenges to policy and practice which might emerge as innovative approaches are introduced.

Price: £13.95   ISBN 1 903208 18 1   Order no: 223   Published: June 2001

Social housing in rural areas

Mark Bevan and others

Social housing in rural locations may seem idyllic, but what is the reality?

This important research report provides case study evidence from five contrasting English rural areas. Following in the wake of the Rural White Paper, registered social landlords and their tenants are seeking holistic, joined-up responses to meet the needs of low income people – those already living in rural locations – young people who want to stay – and incoming residents.

Within this report are graphic examples of the positive aspects of living in the countryside, alongside the problems of: affordability, lack of employment opportunities, residualisation, transport, out-migration of young people, and rising house prices, often caused by the influx of second and holiday home owners.

Experiences of demand for rural social housing across England remain variable. But the authors argue convincingly for increased flexibility in interpreting 'local needs' and local connections to ensure the future role of RSLs in maintaining a supply of "affordable housing of good quality for low-income residents."

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