






Developing people – regenerating place: achieving greater integration for local area regeneration

There are basically two different approaches to tackling social exclusion – one focusing on the residents of specific neighbourhoods and others targeting eligible individuals irrespective of where they live. This study looked at the potential for maximising the linkages between area-based and wider approaches to social inclusion, as part of a larger programme of work on area regeneration. The research focused on nine localities around the UK and was based on interviewing a wide range of key players in each. The study was carried out by Glasgow University's Training and Employment Research Unit under the direction of Alan McGregor. It found:

-  The practical benefits for clients of bringing into closer alignment area regeneration initiatives and wider social inclusion are substantial and varied. These generally involve different forms of sharing: of information, premises, staff and expertise, clients and outcomes for clients.
-  National government and its programmes generate a large number of barriers to the development of more effective joint working at the local level through the proliferation of initiatives, different funding and performance monitoring systems, lack of local flexibility and by a lack of central co-ordination.
-  Joint working is difficult in any case because of the complexity of social exclusion in many areas, different organisational cultures, variations in targets and timescales – and the time cost of working in partnership.
-  A number of practical steps can be taken at the local level to promote joint working, including overlapping board membership, joint delivery strategies, co-location of different agencies, staff exchanges and other forms of operational integration.
-  The researchers conclude that:
 - national government has a key role to play in developing more effective joint working by requiring central government departments to work more closely in a transparent way, rationalising their funding and monitoring systems, demanding joint working down the line and promoting and rewarding effective partnership working;
 - the main contribution government can make to greater integration of area-based and wider approaches to social inclusion is to create a period of stability in terms of new social inclusion interventions and in the operating rules for existing ones.

Background

There has long been a parallel approach to tackling the problems of people on lower incomes, at high risk of unemployment and suffering from a range of disadvantages we now call social exclusion. These approaches have involved regeneration projects and programmes targeted at individuals irrespective of where they live.

During the later 1990s a hybrid model was introduced which tied together thematic issues with priority for the residents of specific localities. These included Employment Zones, Health Action Zones and Education Action Zones.

Typically these varied approaches have been developed and driven by different government departments, with area-based regeneration activities looked after by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister or its predecessor departments, and the more thematic interventions run by a range of departments depending on issue. This study aimed to:

- investigate the extent of effective joint working between area-based and wider social inclusion initiatives;
- assess the benefits of a more integrated approach to social inclusion;
- isolate the barriers to more integrated working; and
- suggest ways in which more effective joint working could be promoted.

The study was based on interviews with key players funding and delivering area-based and other social inclusion interventions in nine localities around the UK.

Benefits from integrated working

Strategic co-ordination

By working together at a strategic level, organisations are able to add value to existing activity, rather than duplicating or replacing it. Strategic co-ordination can:

- ensure that initiatives and programmes are not working against each other;
- reduce the fragmentation of service delivery making it easier for clients to engage;
- facilitate the development of protocols covering the relationships between agencies to create the greatest value for common client groups.

Joint funding or resourcing

Where organisations come together to pool their funds and resources, significant benefits can flow to their client groups, including:

- improvements in the scale, quality, range and sustainability of services;
- a shared and therefore lower risk for funders which can lead to more innovation;
- a stimulus for a more holistic approach;
- a more effective process for addressing gaps in provision and a platform for project development;
- flexibility of funding associated with some projects helping other more rigidly constrained projects.

Operational integration

The fieldwork around the UK uncovered many examples of successful operational integration between agencies. These generally involved different forms of sharing.

Sharing information:

- prepares the way for future joint working;
- gives front-line area regeneration staff information about a range of other relevant services for clients;
- reduces the potential for duplicating service delivery.

Sharing premises:

- provides a one-stop approach for clients;
- allows national programmes to reach into local communities;
- facilitates referral of clients between agencies;
- encourages organisations to share expertise;
- breaks down barriers of culture and work practices across organisations.

Sharing staff and expertise:

- gives area regeneration initiatives access to in-house specialist support;
- allows staff of national agencies to learn more about the needs of clients in regeneration areas;
- builds up relationships between organisations.

Sharing clients through appropriate referral arrangements:

- allows the staff of neighbourhood regeneration initiatives to source specialist expertise which they cannot deliver.

Sharing outcomes for clients:

- gives different organisations an incentive to refer clients to other organisations.

Barriers to integration

The feedback from practitioners around the UK pinpointed a large number of barriers to more integrated working between area regeneration and wider social inclusion initiatives.

Top-down programmes

Many problems were associated with the nature of top-down programmes emanating from national government departments.

- National organisations tend to have a limited appreciation of local problems and potential solutions, and yet the design of programmes is generally determined at the centre.
- National agencies tend to respond slowly and inflexibly to local circumstances.
- National programmes tend to look more for short-term gains rather than long-term impacts.
- In terms of Welfare to Work, the mandatory aspect of a number of national programmes conflicts with the ethos of community involvement and empowerment espoused by neighbourhood regeneration projects.

Government departments are not 'joined-up'

The inflexibilities associated with national programmes are added to by the limited amount of joint working between government departments.

- Because policy development is segmented, there is a lack of understanding of shared problems and of the potential for joint solutions.
- Each government department tends to have different auditing and monitoring systems.
- The lack of transparent integration between central government departments, and within their regional agencies and regional government machinery, sends a negative signal on joint working to localities.

Too many players and initiatives

- The proliferation of initiatives makes it difficult for local staff of particular initiatives to understand how they might get together with others.
- The large number of local initiatives places a significant demand on staff time in terms of the practicalities of joined-up working.
- Multiplication of initiatives and a focus on volume targets means organisations are often in competition for clients and funding.

Different priorities, timescale and boundaries

- Some initiatives are working to very short-term priorities ('get people into jobs') and others to much longer term goals ('reduce the rate of local unemployment').
- The tightly defined geographical boundaries of area regeneration initiatives cause difficulties for national programmes and agencies focusing on individuals.

Output- and target-driven programmes

- Some national programmes, such as the New Deals, give no additional weight to assisting the residents of regeneration areas.
- Where the outcome from working with a client group can be claimed only by a single organisation there is little incentive to collaborate across agencies.
- Targets tend to promote a focus on groups that are easier to help, whereas area regeneration initiatives often work across the full spectrum of the client group.

National versus neighbourhood

Within localities, relationships are not always strong between the staff of national agencies and people working in area-based initiatives.

- Sometimes this reflects different organisational cultures.
- The use of private sector contractors in some Welfare to Work programmes has introduced an extra dimension of suspicion on the part of area-based initiatives.
- Both in area-based initiatives and for staff delivering national programmes, there are issues about the extent to which they have been given

the skills to work effectively in partnership with others, or indeed the knowledge of what is available to help their clients across the patch.

Joint working has time and resource costs

Although partnership working is promoted heavily by government, it carries a lot of costs for those involved.

- A major investment is required to keep up to date with what other players are doing.
- Building up working relationships with the staff of other organisations is also a time-consuming process as there needs to be a quality aspect to this.
- Attending the large number of formal and informal meetings which go with partnership working is also a major consumer of time.

Lack of interest or incentive

Given that joint working carries a number of costs there need to be clear incentives to promote this way of working.

- One incentive would be the value for clients from partnership activity, but particularly for organisations with a wider social inclusion brief, engaging with and progressing possibly a small number of clients in regeneration areas may involve a lot of cost relative to the potential benefit.
- Competition around clients and claiming the positive outcomes for clients can create a disincentive to working in partnership.

Conclusion

The researchers conclude that a mix of actions is required at both national and local level in order to raise the volume and quality of joint working between area-based and wider social inclusion initiatives. They suggest the following.

Local action

Although the research established that many barriers to effective joint working arise at the national level, a number of things can be done locally to promote more effective joint working.

Find out what is already happening locally

Bringing about a situation where a range of organisations involved in area regeneration and promoting social inclusion can work together more effectively requires information exchange so that everyone knows what everyone else is doing. The various mechanisms to join up services at the local level, such as Local Strategic Partnerships in England and Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland, tend to operate by producing a snapshot of service delivery. The high rate of change in the types of services being delivered suggests that information exchange has to become an ongoing process.

Take practical steps to develop joint working between local organisations

A number of relatively small measures could facilitate

Box 1: Barriers to integration

The table summarises some of the key barriers to the more effective integration of area regeneration and welfare to work initiatives, based on the views of the staff involved.

	Area regeneration initiatives	Welfare to Work programmes
1. No one told us to work together	✓	✓
2. Not sure our superiors want us to work together		✓
3. Detracts from meeting our targets		✓
4. Don't have the time or resources to integrate	✓	✓
5. We don't know how to work together:		
• limited knowledge of each other's programmes	✓	✓
• lack of skills in development work		✓
• limited skills in partnership working		✓
6. We don't see it as a priority	✓	✓
7. We don't know with whom to work		✓
8. They're different from us	✓	✓
9. They don't understand us	✓	✓
10. They don't like us		✓
11. We don't like them	✓	
12. We don't have any autonomy at a local level		✓
13. There is limited incentive to work jointly	✓	✓

joint working including some of the following:

- **Overlapping board membership** to spread knowledge about other organisations and promote joint working.
- **Joint strategy meetings** between area regeneration and wider social inclusion initiatives to identify common goals, complementary services and duplication.
- **Greater operational integration** including:
 - secondments between organisations;
 - sharing premises;
 - joint training for the staff of different social inclusion organisations;
 - building up the partnership working skills of operational staff, again through joint training.
- Capturing and sharing the **tangible benefits** of integrated working can help demonstrate the value of joint working to otherwise sceptical staff. Case studies of clients benefiting from this type of working can be extremely valuable.

National action

- *Become more joined up at the centre and require this down the line*, in particular promoting a convergence of auditing and performance monitoring systems.
- *Give the flexibility to local delivery to promote effective joint working*. The growing local flexibility announced for Jobcentre Plus in the 2003 Budget is a move in this direction.
- *Set joint targets – and make organisations jointly responsible for meeting them*.
- *Drive joint working down through national*

organisations, including building effectiveness in joint working into training and development, and performance appraisal systems for individuals.

- *Create more stability*. The introduction of new initiatives and the constant tinkering with the operating rules for existing ones create knowledge gaps and undermine the capacity of local players to build stable working relationships between area-based initiatives and the staff of wider social inclusion initiatives.
- *Make integration a key programme design and redesign component*. This is now a requirement for new area-based initiatives, but does not apply to the full set of social inclusion interventions.

About the project

The fieldwork was carried out in the autumn of 2001. The areas studied were Birmingham, Brighton, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Nottingham and Southwark.

How to get further information

The full report, **Developing people – regenerating place: Achieving greater integration for local area regeneration** by Alan McGregor, Andrea Glass, Kevin Higgins, Lynne Macdougall and Victoria Sutherland, is published for the Foundation by The Policy Press (ISBN 1 86134 311 6, price £11.95).