

Up your street

Housing associations and the
neighbourhoods and communities
agenda



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This report was commissioned by the Housing Corporation, but the views expressed in it do not necessarily represent those of the Housing Corporation.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to various individuals and organisations that have supplied us with relevant material and intelligence to enable us to compile this report. We would especially like to thank the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, ODPM and SQW Ltd for granting us permission to draw upon the findings of the national evaluation of the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders programme. We would also like to thank the organisations who helped us to update some of the illustrative material that appears in the boxes in the text. Responsibility, however, for any errors rests with the authors.

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Executive summary

Why do neighbourhoods and communities matter?

The Government's vision for towns and cities is to create sustainable communities that are successful, thriving, well run and well served. Its latest proposals for achieving this fundamental goal are founded on two key principles which have emerged from extensive research into urban problems, residents' needs and preferences and successive regeneration programmes.

The first is to give communities more power and say in the decisions affecting them, in order to make public services more responsive, effective and accountable, use local knowledge better, encourage a sense of ownership of initiatives and increase the likelihood that improvements will be sustained.

The second is to work at the right level to get things done and to devolve more responsibility to local organisations. This involves fostering more partnership working and 'joined-up' solutions at neighbourhood level in order to tackle more effectively the issues that matter most to residents, such as crime, clean streets and youth facilities. The Government defines sustainable communities as those which offer people:

- decent, affordable homes;
- a community in which they want to live and work;
- the opportunity to develop their skills and interests;
- access to jobs and excellent services; and
- the chance to get involved and make a difference.

Its main proposals for realising such ambitions, contained in its recently published five-year plan include:

- continuing efforts to reduce social exclusion and improve the relative lot of the 88 most deprived neighbourhoods (through its National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal);
- capacity-building measures to support resident involvement in service delivery;
- progressively introducing Local Area Agreements (covering all local authorities by 2007) which seek to provide local authorities and their partners in Local Strategic Partnerships with much greater flexibility in deciding how to implement goals agreed with central government;

- placing extra emphasis on making neighbourhoods cleaner, safer and greener by combining and enhancing funding streams and providing additional powers for dealing with anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood nuisance; and
- promoting new neighbourhood governance arrangements.

It is not yet clear exactly what form the latter will take, as the Government is presently developing a Neighbourhoods Charter and is consulting on its constituent elements. Options include powers to establish neighbourhood bodies or require action by public bodies if services fall below certain standards, model by-laws, devolved budgets, ownership of assets and revenue raising powers. However, the Government is keen to build on existing neighbourhood activities and representative structures such as parish councils, area committees, neighbourhood management (better co-ordination of services at neighbourhood level) and initiatives either led by or significantly shaped by voluntary and community groups. It has also stipulated that arrangements should link closely with democratic structures and that service providers should offer a spectrum of opportunities for community involvement,

ranging from supply of information to full control of services.

Other recent policy developments have strengthened the significance of neighbourhood governance and highlighted the need for service providers to be responsive to local needs. The Government's ongoing drive to improve public services requires providers to tailor provision more closely to users' needs and also to offer choice, both in terms of supplier and specification. It is increasingly concerned with which organisational arrangements achieve the best outcomes and effectively address communities' agendas rather than who provides. The 2006-09 National Community Safety Plan recommends that neighbourhood policing teams be established in every community by 2008 and seeks to give residents more say in local community safety issues. Some local authorities are decentralising control of 'street scene' services, such as refuse collection, waste disposal and grounds maintenance, to a neighbourhood level and delivering them in a more integrated way.

This emerging agenda presents both opportunities and challenges to social housing organisations. It should bolster long-standing traditions within housing,

such as grassroots engagement, tenant control, co-operative ethos, community empowerment and concern about residents' wider concerns and needs, recently embodied in the iN Business for Neighbourhoods (InBiz) initiative from the National Housing Federation (NHF). It also echoes contemporary housing policy developments such as prioritising investment in sustainable communities, increased focus on housing markets and mixed tenures and choice-based lettings.

On the other hand, the Government's insistence upon choice and contestability of service provision may require the restructuring of housing and related services, the forging of new relationships between housing and community and voluntary organisations and changes in the Housing Corporation's policy and approach to registration, regulation and investment. Social housing organisations also face the major challenge of reconciling, on the one hand, Government demands for increased efficiency and value for money and boosting the supply of affordable homes and, on the other, the need to deliver customer-driven services, be locally accountable and involve the community.

Where do housing associations currently stand?

Housing associations' capacity to respond to the Government's neighbourhoods agenda can be gauged by analysing:

- their strengths and weaknesses;
- how well they have responded to the NHF's InBiz initiative;
- the extent of their involvement in wider, non-social housing activities; and
- the level of tenant satisfaction with housing association services and degree of involvement in decision making.

Most housing associations share basic strengths since most have a long-term stake in neighbourhoods, are well regarded by tenants and possess a reasonable level of independence and freedom. However, the sector is diverse in character and some housing associations are more suited to playing an active role in neighbourhood service provision than others owing to their financial strength, size and critical mass in particular areas, track record in wider regeneration activity and level of experience of working with other agencies.

The NHF's InBiz initiative exhorts housing associations to exercise a wider neighbourhood regeneration role where they have the means to do so, tackle residents' liveability issues irrespective of their tenure and work closely in partnership with residents and other organisations while ensuring they continue to deliver basic housing and management services effectively. A year after its launch in September 2003, associations of all specialisms, sizes and types, together responsible for over three quarters of the sector's stock, had adopted its main principles. Key partner organisations confirmed that these housing associations were placing a much greater emphasis on communities and neighbourhoods than previously. InBiz has hence given the housing association sector a more positive brand image.

Almost one in five housing associations now undertakes non-social housing activities and services which, in declining order of significance, include domiciliary care, development and management services, regeneration, provision of non-residential units and corporate services. Only 8% did so in 2002. Large housing associations, Large Scale Voluntary Stock Transfers (LSVTs) and black and minority

ethnic (BME) housing associations are disproportionately represented. Motivations for adopting a wider role include seeking to build sustainable communities, mitigating the effects of declining demand and securing benefits for their core business such as reducing rent arrears. Survey evidence suggests that in 2003-04, housing associations invested on average £0.6 million of their own funds in community services and regeneration activities and generated a further £1.1 million contributions from third parties.

A recent survey of tenant satisfaction with housing association services, perceptions of housing associations' role and tenants' perceived level of involvement in decision making showed that:

- over three quarters thought that the service provided by their landlord was satisfactory and that their current rent offered good value for money;
- tenants felt that housing associations had a role in wider neighbourhood activities and should prioritise helping tenants to get better services from the local council, help tenants to secure local environmental improvements, become involved in reducing crime

- and provide community facilities such as nurseries and youth clubs; and
- almost half did not have clear views about their level of involvement in decision making but the remainder were generally positive about the way their landlords consulted and involved them.

The survey findings tentatively suggest that there may be scope to give tenants greater say in the way housing associations are run and, if they demand it, control of certain housing association functions.

Taken together, this evidence suggests that there is considerable potential for housing associations to exercise a wider role and that increasing numbers are realising this. Given however their varied capacity, Housing associations need to exercise care and discretion in deciding whether they should exercise a wider role and if so when, where and how.

An overview of recent neighbourhood management activity and service delivery

Many forms of neighbourhood organisations and initiatives involve housing associations such as neighbourhood management (NM) initiatives, tenant management organisations, resident services organisations and community development trusts set up by housing bodies.

Neighbourhood management initiatives are mainly being developed in urban areas either on a local authority-wide basis or are being piloted in deprived residential neighbourhoods. Typically they feature:

- close joint working between local authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships, voluntary and community groups, residents, the police, primary care trusts, housing associations, Jobcentre Plus, schools and colleges;
- extensive resident involvement in identifying community needs and service improvements; and
- a combination of ‘quick win’ projects addressing residents’ most pressing concerns and catalytic pilot projects designed to transform mainstream

service delivery and meet Government floor targets.

Such programmes can comprise a wide variety of individual community safety, housing/environment, worklessness, education and training and health measures. They have been funded from various sources including Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, New Deal for Communities programmes, Single Regeneration Budget and other area based initiatives, local authorities and the Housing Corporation.

Housing associations have taken part in just over half of all neighbourhood management initiatives and either acted as lead organisation, managing agent (usually on behalf of a local authority), co-ordinator (of landlords' input) or key partner. Housing associations' level of involvement in neighbourhood management has grown recently, partly because the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit has actively encouraged them to lead some of the Round 2 NM Pathfinders and also because some local authorities have handed them responsibility for leading or managing some programmes because they value their independence and impartiality, specialist skills, local credibility and shared interest in community wellbeing. Housing

associations for their part increasingly see neighbourhood management as a tool for building and sustaining community confidence in areas where they hold significant stock or have invested and/or for adopting more standardised management and lettings policies. This is especially the case in problem areas most commonly found in the north of England, where there is often surplus stock and greater residential choice, and quality of life factors, such as crime, street cleanliness and access to key services, can matter more than house condition and type. Larger housing associations with group structures and quite diverse subsidiaries, stock transfers and those that have for some time been committed to playing a wider regeneration role tend to be the most prominent in neighbourhood management programmes.

Housing associations and other kinds of social housing organisation are also directly or indirectly supplying a variety of neighbourhood services. Tenant-controlled organisations such as tenant management co-operatives, par value ownership co-operatives, estate management boards, community-based housing associations and tenant management organisations have in some cases, gone beyond their original remit of supplying management

and maintenance services to tenants and developed community and social activities and facilities for residents. These are similar in content and scope to neighbourhood management-type projects. The 11 resident service organisations currently operating are resident-led social enterprises providing services such as grounds maintenance, cleaning, graffiti removal, minor repairs and childcare. They also train and employ local residents wherever possible. The community gateway model, though novel and largely untried, may also offer potential in terms of resident engagement and wider community measures. Some larger housing associations have supplied support services to tenant controlled organisations, helped set up resident service organisations, supported or managed social enterprises, or established Community Development Trusts to provide neighbourhood services including employment and training services and community centres.

Good practice in neighbourhood management/service delivery

Independent evaluation of neighbourhood management programmes and resident service organisations has revealed general principles of good practice and also more specific critical success factors concerning housing association involvement. These relate to their ethos, capacity, reputation, approach to resident engagement and project mix.

Effective neighbourhood management organisations tend to:

- operate in a clearly defined, identifiable and viable neighbourhood;
- have clout and the right skills mix (catalysts, listeners, communicators, negotiators, advocates, networkers, community development);
- feature strong resident involvement (in, for example, consultation, planning, project appraisal, implementation and evaluation) and necessary support structures;
- form an effective local partnership of service providers and residents who relate well and are able to put together a coherent, well-planned and credible set of proposals which are well

aligned with other local regeneration initiatives and mainstream programmes;

- have political support and backing from local authority and Local Strategic Partnership and also the sustained support from and involvement of service providers; and
- have good baseline and monitoring information.

Housing associations active in neighbourhood management and open to greater community control of service delivery tend to view these as echoing their core philosophy and an extension of what they are already committed to doing. They typically have a concern for tenants' wider welfare, a sense of social responsibility to the wider community and are willing to work with other organisations and residents in providing more than just housing services. Some larger housing associations have sought to reconcile the twin demands of greater efficiency and local responsiveness by establishing local subsidiaries with wider neighbourhood regeneration responsibilities. The neighbourhood agenda has also provided scope for community-based housing associations to develop a niche role. It is also vitally important that housing associations determine their precise role

in particular neighbourhoods by assessing their distinctive contribution, capacity, influence and the available funding and then weighing up the associated costs and benefits, risks and rewards. Generally, they have been able to play a more significant role where they have significant existing or planned stock in the area, featured prominently in regeneration plans, a good track record in neighbourhood regeneration and the capacity to supply the necessary administrative support and expertise and influence key partners.

Self-evidently, improving service co-ordination at a neighbourhood level involves establishing structures for joint working both with other housing associations and also service providers but this can be complex and time consuming. Housing associations have, however, countered problems of fragmentation and competition within the sector by various means, including joint marketing, networking and exchange of good practice, appointing lead housing associations, joint asset management planning, stock rationalisation adoption of joint procurement and management policies. Dealings with other agencies have worked best when they have been founded on honesty, openness and trust, respective

organisations are committed at all levels and a measured approach is taken to aligning and pooling resources. Most neighbourhood management initiatives are overseen by a steering group or board comprising key service providers and significant community representation tasked with reviewing service provision and community needs, planning interventions, co-ordinating inputs and reviewing progress. Usually, there are a set of supporting task groups charged with addressing issues of local concern.

There appear to be many effective forms of community engagement. Common success factors included:

- tailoring the approach to local circumstances as community relations and the degree of cohesion, extent of diversity, local capacity, professional attitudes towards and support for community involvement all vary appreciably;
- listening to the concerns of different sections of the community, communicating proposals clearly using appropriate media and welcoming feedback;
- comparing and contrasting community and service professionals'

views by carrying out baseline resident surveys and service audits;

- providing opportunities for involvement in all aspects of the programme;
- developing community facilities which build social capital, cohesion and provide residents with opportunities for training and employment as well as engagement; and
- encouraging community self-help initiatives through modest financial support and contributions in kind.

Although there is no magical mix of neighbourhood projects which guarantees success, because local contexts vary and it is still too soon to assess many interventions, certain types of project have been consistently well received. These included small scale, 'quick win' projects such as clean-up campaigns which raise the profile of programmes and boost community confidence. Popular longer-term measures include the re-engineering of street services and waste management, additional local policing and preventative community safety initiatives, 'one-stop shops' and other forms of service integration, local employment measures, multi-purpose community centres and better youth provision. Resident service

organisations have, in some cases, successfully provided neighbourhood services (e.g. cleaning, graffiti removal, childcare, garden maintenance, plumbing and minor repairs) and employed local residents, improved the skills base and reduced powerlessness. They do, however, require committed and able leadership, strong support from partner organisations, contracts that can quickly become self-financing and imaginative fundraising efforts to offset higher than normal core management costs.

Policy lessons and implications

This report has shown that housing associations and other social landlords have the potential to make a significant contribution to the Government's neighbourhood agenda owing to their ethos, long-term stake in many localities, track record in wider regeneration activities and generally good rapport with residents. Housing associations do need to exercise careful judgement in deciding upon the extent of their wider role given core business pressures and the need to complement rather than duplicate other agencies. However, there appears to be an equal risk that their wider role is both

underappreciated and underplayed since housing associations' share of funding from wider regeneration programmes and consequent scale of investment remains less than it might be. Housing associations have distinctive strengths such as independence, experience of dealing with vulnerable sections of the community and role in encouraging community self-help, harnessing residents' ideas and energy and strengthening social networks.

To play their part, housing associations should carefully assess the local context, their attributes, other partners' stances and establish the business case for engaging in neighbourhood management and service delivery. This may require internal restructuring (e.g. creating subsidiary organisations within group structures). They will also need to consider new ways of working with other housing bodies (e.g. joint marketing, stock rationalisation) and forge closer links with service providers and voluntary organisations and provide residents with a spectrum of opportunities for involvement ranging from supply of information to running services.

The Housing Corporation could assist housing associations and other social landlords in this respect by formally

recognising good practice, continuing to develop assessment of housing associations' added value, seeking to minimise the regulatory burden placed on them by different government departments, investigating whether current rules restrict sector diversification and examining novel funding methods such as gifting of land and other resources, sale and leaseback deals and equity sharing agreements. There also appears scope for the Corporation and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to commission more rigorous place-based evaluation of the effectiveness of different neighbourhood management and service delivery models and the extent to which Government housing and other policies complement them.

Introduction

Housing associations have a major bearing upon community wellbeing and frequently operate at the grassroots level. The Government is paying increasing attention to both the quality and coherence of service provision at the neighbourhood level and securing greater resident involvement in local decision making. Related policy developments therefore have major ongoing implications for social landlords.

This report describes the current policy context and the Government's emerging approach to neighbourhood governmental arrangements and service delivery, and gauges social housing organisations' capacity to play a role in delivering the Government's neighbourhood and communities agenda by investigating related good practice in neighbourhood management and service provision and discerning critical success factors. It also draws relevant policy implications for both social landlords and the Housing Corporation.

Although this report primarily focuses on major urban areas, similar issues also arise in rural neighbourhoods and smaller settlements (albeit of differing scale, distribution and intensity) as has been evident from the Countryside Agency's

Market Towns Initiative (Countryside Agency, 2004).

The content of the report is largely based upon a desk review of Government publications (e.g. White Papers, discussion papers, commissioned evaluation reports, ministerial speeches and announcements), Housing Corporation reports (e.g. Innovation and Good Practice studies), information produced by other housing organisations (e.g. National Housing Federation; Chartered Institute for Housing; PEP Ltd) and reports about individual neighbourhood management and neighbourhood service delivery initiatives.

In a limited number of instances, we have updated material in consultation with the organisations concerned.

We have focused mainly on neighbourhood initiatives involving housing associations. However, many of the findings will also be of relevance to other social landlords and housing organisations.

Why do neighbourhoods and communities matter?

The Government's vision for towns and cities is to create sustainable communities that are successful, thriving, well run and well served (ODPM 2005a). The Government defines sustainable communities as those which offer people:

- decent, affordable homes;
- a community in which they want to live and work;
- the opportunity to develop their skills and interests;
- access to jobs and excellent services; and
- the chance to get involved and make a difference.

Its latest proposals for achieving this vision are founded on two key principles:

- giving communities more power and say in the decisions affecting them in order to make public services more responsive, effective and accountable, make better use of local knowledge, encourage a sense of ownership of initiatives and increase the likelihood that improvements will be sustained; and
- working at the right level to get things done and devolving more responsibility to local organisations

and fostering more partnership working and 'joined up' solutions at neighbourhood level in order to tackle more effectively the 'liveability' issues which matter most to residents such as crime, clean streets and youth facilities.

Following lengthy investigation of the problems confronting urban areas generally and deprived neighbourhoods in particular (e.g. Social Exclusion Unit, 1998; Urban Task Force, 1999) and experience in operating many different forms of area-based regeneration programmes, the current Government has become increasingly convinced of the importance of intervention at the neighbourhood level. It has become clear that mainstream service provision is mainly driven by high level targets and objectives and not very well joined up at the local level (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit/Regional Co-ordination Unit, 2002). Often mainstream policies have effectively cancelled out the impact of special area-based measures. Research has also shown that residents are most concerned about neighbourhood conditions and 'liveability' factors such as community safety and the quality of the street environment (Home Office, 2004a). There is also mounting evidence to suggest that regeneration

initiatives which have closely involved communities and afforded opportunities for residents to directly run services can deliver more efficient and effective neighbourhood services and improvements (National Audit Office, 2004; ODPM, 2004). Government sees neighbourhoods as key arenas for intervention given that community concerns are often very localised and since a sense of community often stems from collective influence and action. The Government is committed to increasing community participation because it:

- strengthens communities;
- brings local knowledge to bear on problems and solutions;
- improves the coherence of strategies and provides feedback to increase the accountability and effectiveness of services;
- establishes a sense of ownership of initiatives; and
- increases the likelihood that resulting improvements will be sustained.

Therefore the Government's plans for delivering sustainable improvements in disadvantaged areas contained within

its National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal emphasise the crucial importance of the neighbourhood as the place for increasing community engagement and improving the effectiveness and responsiveness of services (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). In short, neighbourhoods and communities matter and are central to current Government policy.

The Government's main proposals for creating sustainable communities, contained in its recently published five-year plan (ODPM, 2005a, 2005b), include:

- continuing efforts to reduce social exclusion and improve the relative lot of the 88 most deprived neighbourhoods through a combination of Local Strategic Partnerships, preparation of Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies, Neighbourhood Renewal Funding for improvements in mainstream services, neighbourhood management¹ and community empowerment funding – the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001);

¹ Neighbourhood management (NM) entails a dedicated local manager/co-ordinator and small team working to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of mainstream public services through promoting concerted multi-agency action and community involvement.

- creating a neighbourhood element to the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund in deprived areas which do not contain Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders, New Deal for Communities or Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder programmes to fund measures which either improve liveability, reduce educational under-attainment, worklessness, ill-health, teenage conceptions and offending, transform local housing and job markets or empower local people;
- promoting best practice in citizen engagement and empowerment throughout Government and in partner organisations and continuing to supply the necessary framework for capacity building (Home Office, 2005); and
- progressive introduction of Local Area Agreements (covering all local authorities by 2007) which seek to provide local authorities and their partners in Local Strategic Partnerships with much greater flexibility in deciding how to achieve a limited number of goals agreed with central government and give them the discretion to combine related funding programmes.

Most notably in this context, it is:

- placing additional emphasis on making neighbourhoods cleaner, safer and greener by combining and enhancing funding streams and providing additional powers for dealing with anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood nuisance; and
- promoting new neighbourhood governance arrangements by developing a Neighbourhoods Charter which will set out a new range of powers for neighbourhoods to influence or control local services (which could be taken up following consultation with local authorities and other relevant service providers).

“Neighbourhood management is the key vehicle at neighbourhood level that could provide the focus for neighbourhood renewal.”

Social Exclusion Unit (2000)

It is not yet clear exactly what form the latter will take as the Government is presently developing a Neighbourhoods Charter and consulting on its constituent elements. Options include:

- powers to establish neighbourhood bodies;
- powers to require action by public bodies if services fall below certain standards;
- model bye-laws;
- devolved budgets;
- ownership of assets; and
- levying of fixed penalty notices and other revenue raising powers.

“By taking action at neighbourhood level people everywhere can make a significant difference to the quality of our country’s public services.”

ODPM/ Home Office (2005)

It is clear, however, that the Government is keen to build on existing neighbourhood activities and initiatives including:

- representative structures such as parish councils and local authority area committees;
- neighbourhood management;

- initiatives by local voluntary and community groups (e.g. residents associations, community trusts);
- neighbourhood renewal initiatives which have involved local residents in real decision making (e.g. New Deal for Communities; Sure Start; Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders); and
- service deliverers’ measures involving communities (e.g. Tenant Management Organisations).

Government has also set out some guiding principles:

- service providers will be expected to offer a spectrum of opportunities for community involvement ranging from supply of information and consultation, through accountable structures and collective choice up to full control of services;
- neighbourhood arrangements should be locally appropriate, proportionate, adaptable, responsive to needs and be capable of making a real difference; and
- arrangements should link closely with democratic structures since local councillors will be expected to

play a leading role in reconciling local interests and brokering solutions.

Other recent policy developments have strengthened the significance of neighbourhood governance and highlighted the need for service providers to be responsive to local needs. The Government's ongoing drive to improve public services requires providers to tailor provision more closely to users' needs and also offer choice, both in terms of supplier and specification. It is increasingly concerned with which organisational arrangements achieve the best outcomes and effectively address communities' agendas rather than who provides. For example, the Government's National Community Safety Plan stresses that key agencies must work more closely with the communities they serve to define priorities and then deliver accordingly. This will entail:

- establishing neighbourhood policing teams in every community by 2008;
- continuing to support Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and encouraging joined up services at neighbourhoods level; and
- granting local people more say through new neighbourhood

governance arrangements and powers to secure a response from police and partners concerning local community safety issues which they feel have not been adequately addressed (Home Office, 2005).

Also, some local authorities are decentralising control of 'street scene' services such as refuse collection, waste disposal and grounds maintenance to a neighbourhood level and delivering them in a more integrated way, in some cases by setting up local 'one-stop shops'.

“Revitalised neighbourhood and community policing for the 21st century is central to the Government's approach. By 2008 we want every community to benefit from the level and style of neighbourhood policing that they need. This will involve dedicated teams of police officers, community support officers and wardens providing a visible, reassuring presence, preventing and detecting crime and developing a constructive and lasting engagement with members of their community.”
Home Office (2004b)

The Government's emerging communities and neighbourhoods agenda presents both opportunities and challenges to social housing organisations. In some respects, it echoes longstanding traditions within housing of grassroots engagement, tenant control, co-operative ethos, community empowerment and concern about residents' wider concerns and needs, recently embodied in the iN Business for Neighbourhoods (InBiz) initiative from the National Housing Federation (NHF). Housing organisations have often been responsible for introducing or supporting innovative community projects in which residents have played a central role. There is therefore an opportunity for housing bodies to build on such foundations.

On the other hand, the Government's emphasis upon choice and contestability of service provision means that it is now less concerned with who provides housing services and different forms of tenure and more with which neighbourhood arrangements deliver the best outcomes and with how well providers jointly address different communities' agendas. This may in turn require:

- restructuring of housing and related services at the neighbourhood level such as more cross-tenure initiatives;
- housing and community and voluntary organisations to forge new relationships and develop appropriate structures;
- social housing organisations reflecting on how best to reconcile demands for achieving efficiency and value for money alongside the need to deliver customer driven services, be locally accountable and involve the community; and
- a change in the Housing Corporation's policies and approach to registration, regulation and investment.

The Government's neighbourhood agenda also underlines major recent developments within the housing policy sphere which require housing associations to develop a wider perspective, such as:

- the priority the Housing Corporation attaches to investment in sustainable communities;
- the increased focus on the operation of housing markets in demand assessments;
- the way in which choice-based lettings echo the Government's choice

agenda and open up opportunities for tenants in other aspects of their lives; and

- the move away from single to mixed tenure developments in order to promote balanced communities.

This report now sets out some initial pointers to the way forward by exploring what housing associations are already doing in the spheres of neighbourhood management and service delivery and identifying best practice and policy lessons.

Where do housing associations currently stand?

This section housing associations' potential to respond to the challenge posed by the neighbourhoods agenda which is neatly encapsulated by the philosophy of the National Housing Federation's InBiz initiative. InBiz exhorts Housing associations to:

- exercise a wider neighbourhood regeneration role and play their part in tackling residents' liveability issues, irrespective of their tenure;
- work more closely in partnership with other housing associations, local authorities and other key service providers;
- disseminate models of good practice to counter negative perceptions and misconceptions;
- actively decide whether they are best suited to providing a lead or supporting role;
- consider relinquishing stock in areas where they have no real role to play;
- ensure that they are getting the basics right of delivering high quality housing and management; and
- be open, accountable and transparent organisations and work well with others, especially residents and local authorities.

"[Housing associations] are a commending and powerful example of what the community sector can do to win loyalty and also to deliver solutions...I think that the values that drive the housing association sector are values of community, they are values of social justice, they are values of rights and responsibilities. And they are definitely third sector, community sector, voluntary sector, as far as I'm concerned. They do things in different ways from government. They do things in different ways from the private sector. At their best they correct the mistakes of both."

David Miliband, Minister of Communities and Local Government.
Interview in Inside Housing,
16 September 2005

Box 1 provides a summary of housing associations' main strengths and weaknesses in terms of their capacity to deliver the neighbourhoods agenda as perceived by a variety of stakeholders including housing association staff, tenants, the Housing Corporation, central and local government and financial institutions. The table suggests that the situation in different neighbourhoods will vary depending on:

- the balance of housing associations' collective strengths and weaknesses;
- whether active steps have been taken to exploit their strengths and minimise their weaknesses;
- which housing associations are involved since some are more suited to playing an active role than others; and
- whether housing associations have and are seen to have the necessary know how and resources by key partner organisations.

Box 1: Housing associations' capacity to deal with the neighbourhoods agenda

Strengths/enabling factors	Weaknesses/constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diversity – types, group structures • creative, innovative and flexible approach of best HAs • financial strength of larger HAs, ability to re-invest surpluses in neighbourhood services • risk assessment/project management skills • joint purchasing/procurement offer scope for such re-investment • co-operation between housing associations over rationalisation of stock holdings • experience in meeting specialist needs, often 'hard to reach' groups (e.g. older persons, vulnerable, BME groups) • high rate of tenant satisfaction with service provided • growing efficiency • long term stakeholders in neighbourhoods, ability to plan ahead • close links between housing management and street services, scope to employ local people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heavily regulated by Housing Corporation • also heavily regulated by other fund holders • pressures to get basics right/deliver core business – increased efficiency in delivering additional homes, decent homes targets • inspection – checking on other actions • rent restructuring limits scope to finance wider measures from rent charges • local authority nominations can frustrate efforts to create mixed, sustainable, communities • development bias of some HAs • management performance/ wider role seen as of secondary importance to development • perceived to be stigmatised by status of social housing, clientele • low profile due to lack of promotion, lack of recognition and perceived narrow focus

Box 1: Housing associations' capacity to deal with the neighbourhoods agenda

Strengths/enabling factors	Weaknesses/constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• some housing associations have frequent contact with residents, local knowledge, consequent trust• some housing associations have track record in regeneration and renewal• independence, non-political nature, freedom to act speedily compared with local authorities• advocacy role in pressing case of neglected areas• performance indicators provide incentives for customer care• widespread participation in InBiz initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• housing associations often not closely involved in Local Strategic Partnerships• under-exploitation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, and other funding regimes• competition between HAs, fragmented rather than united feel to sector• stock fragmentation• some HAs' tenant consultation is tokenistic• some housing associations have not risen to InBiz challenge• capacity issues in case of very small housing associations with limited stock

Source: National Housing Federation (2003); EIUA literature search, 2005.

A reasonable indication of housing associations' present capacity to engage can be obtained by investigating:

- how well housing associations have thus far responded to the InBiz initiative;
- the extent to which housing associations are involved in wider, non-social housing, activities;
- the level of tenant satisfaction with housing association services and involvement in decision-making;

Each is briefly explored in turn.

Responding to InBiz

By September 2004, a year after InBiz's launch, associations of all specialisms, sizes and types throughout the different English regions which were together responsible for (ie. owning or managing) over three quarters of the sector's stock had adopted InBiz's three main principles. These included:

- putting energy and resources into creating places where people want to live;

- investing in a range of services as well as homes;
- working in partnership with local people and other organisations.

Furthermore, a survey of key partner organisations revealed that over a third were aware of the InBiz launch and that the housing associations involved were placing a much greater emphasis on communities and neighbourhoods than previously (National Housing Federation, 2004).

Involvement in non-social housing activities

A recent study found that 19% of all housing associations now undertake non-social housing activities and services, the most significant being domiciliary care followed by development and management services, regeneration, provision of non-residential units and corporate services (Housing Corporation, 2005a). However, only 7% of housing associations (145 in total) both own or manage non-social housing and provide other non-housing activities and as few as 3% can be officially classified as diverse² organisations. Housing

²The Housing Corporation definition of a 'diverse' HA is that non-social housing and non-housing services should together account for more than 5% of its gross turnover or gross capital employed per annum.

associations' motivations for adopting a wider role include seeking to build sustainable communities, mitigating the effects of declining demand and securing benefits to their core business such as reducing rent arrears. The proportion of housing associations involved in non-social housing activities increased from 8% in 2002 to 15% in 2003. Large housing associations, LSVTs and BME housing associations are disproportionately represented. Another study found that for every five new units

of social housing provided using subsidy, housing associations supply another one without any such funding (ECOTEC, 2005). Table 1 shows that ECOTEC also found that survey respondents spent on average £343,000 of their own capital funds and £250,000 of revenue expenditure on community services and regeneration activities during 2003-04 and levered a further £271,000 and £838,000 in third party contributions, respectively.

Table 1: Extent of housing association investment in community services and regeneration activities, 2003-4.

	Average direct cost to association (£k)	Average third party contributions (£k)	Total cost (£k)
Capital projects	343	271	614
Revenue projects	250	838	1,088
All projects	593	1,109	1,702

Notes:

1. Findings based on survey returns detailing 55 capital projects carried out by 17 associations and 163 revenue projects carried out by 34 associations.
2. Such projects include anti-poverty, community services, education, environment, health, personal support and skills and employment initiatives.

Source: ECOTEC (2005)

Tenant satisfaction with housing association services and involvement in decision making

A survey of housing association tenants undertaken in autumn 2004 provides comprehensive information on how they view their homes, neighbourhoods and landlords (BMG, Research, 2005). Headline findings were that:

- 77% were satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord and 78 percent thought their current rent offered good value for money;
- 81% were satisfied with their current home and 80% were satisfied with their neighbourhood;
- 66% still want to rent from a housing association in ten years' time - this factor tends to correlate closely with degree of satisfaction with neighbourhood;
- many respondents (ie. 40-50%) found it difficult to give clear views about tenant involvement in decision making – generally tenants gave higher net positive scores for the way landlords inform tenants about their decision making (+47%) than involvement in such decisions (+33%), listening (+28%) and actively seeking opinions (+30%);
- 63% of tenants agreed with the statement that tenants should be directly involved in decision making but that the housing association should take the ultimate decision (+59 net score) whilst 50% agreed with the statement that tenants should be able to make decisions themselves (+38 net score); and
- when tenants were asked whether their landlords should be involved in specified neighbourhood activities, the top priority mentioned by half of respondents was that their landlord should be directly involved in helping tenants in the neighbourhood to get better services from the local council followed by helping tenants to secure local environmental improvements (43%), becoming involved in reducing crime (40%) and providing community facilities such as nurseries and youth clubs (35%).

Such findings suggest that there is a high level of tenant satisfaction with the service offered by housing associations but that there appears to be scope to give tenants greater say in the way housing associations are run and if they demand it, control of certain housing association functions. An evaluation of tenant management

organisations on local authority owned housing estates in which tenants control a varying range of management and maintenance services has shown that 77% of their tenants were satisfied with the opportunities to be involved (ODPM, 2002). The percentage of tenants who thought that their tenant management organisation played an important part in improving the quality of life in the area and the percentage satisfied with the overall service provided was also 77%. The implication is that tenant control appears to generate additional community spirit while delivering service standards which are similar to those achieved by housing associations. Although tenants' views on housing associations' wider role should be interpreted carefully as they may be coloured by their level of satisfaction with other services and by pressing community concerns, they tentatively suggest that housing associations should adopt a wider community perspective.

Neighbourhood management activity and service delivery

Box 2 shows that many forms of neighbourhood organisation are housing-related. This section explores the nature and origins of such activity, the different roles adopted by housing associations and the scope of constituent measures.

Box 2: Different forms of neighbourhood organisation³

- Over 150 operational neighbourhood management initiatives (members of National Neighbourhood Management Network);
- 280 tenant management organisations managing 85,000 homes;
- Over 250 housing co-operatives;
- 11 Resident Services Organisations/ Resident Management Organisations are operational and 93 organisations are members of the Resident Management Organisations Network;
- over 250 Community Development Trusts and the Development Trust Association has a membership of over 400;
- 1 Community Gateway Transfer, responsible for over 7,000 homes, operational.

Source: EIUA literature search, 2005

³Tenant management organisations manage homes on behalf of a landlord; housing co-operative own and manager their homes and are registered under co-operative rules; Resident Services Organisations deliver neighbourhood services and have a community-led management. Community Development Trusts are independent, not-for-profit, community-based organisations that are engaged in the economic, environmental & social regeneration of a defined area. Community Gateway Stock Transfers are associations with a tenant and/or community membership. Other models may also have potential such as Community Land Trusts which entail community ownership of land and property assets, especially in regenerating areas of low demand through greater community ownership, collective action on repair and improvement and supply of new housing through equity sharing.

Neighbourhood management

Neighbourhood management initiatives in England have been sponsored mainly by local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships but also by housing associations, Single Regeneration Budget Partnerships, New Deal for Communities Partnerships and Development Trusts. Neighbourhood management is mainly being developed in urban areas and is either being introduced on a local authority-wide basis through sub-division of their administrative areas into 'neighbourhoods' of up to 30,000 population or being piloted

at a grassroots level in deprived residential neighbourhoods containing between 4-18,000 people. Neighbourhood management initiatives usually involve local authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships, voluntary and community groups, residents, police, primary care trusts, housing associations, Jobcentre Plus, schools and colleges.

Housing associations and other partner organisations have introduced a wide variety of individual measures under the aegis of neighbourhood management which are summarised in Box 3.

Box 3: Menu of projects which have featured in neighbourhood management initiatives

Cross-cutting measures

- Neighbourhood plans
- Mapping services and expenditure
- Improvement in neighbourhood intelligence
- Master plans/Transport plans
- Service Level Agreements
- Problem-solving task teams
- Additional front-line workers
- One-Stop shops
- Establishment of multi-purpose community centres, related social activities
- Children/youth initiatives
 - crèches, improved recreational facilities, fun events, youth participation programmes, detached work, summer play schemes, involvement in design of facilities, cyber cafés, virtual child model
- Use of public relations consultants for marketing

Community safety

- Neighbourhood wardens/community safety officers
- Safer neighbourhoods officers
- Schools liaison officers
- Diversionary measures (see cross-cutting measures - youth)
- Community conferencing
- CCTV
- Additional police patrols
- Additional, dedicated police officers
- Target hardening
- Fire safety projects
- Handyperson schemes
- Designing-out crime
- Improved ('white') street lighting
- Domestic crime initiatives

Housing/environment

- Estate Agreements
- Common lettings/management policies
- Choice-based lettings
- Void management (e.g. window decoration)
- Warden/concierge services/super-caretakers
- Altering staff hours (late night coverage)
- Community wardens/street wardens
- Alleygating
- Tenant reference scheme
- Introductory lettings
- Accreditation of private landlords
- Good neighbours policies
- Supporting vulnerable tenants - debt counselling, mental health advice, referral, energy efficiency
- Local estate agency
- Home Zones
- Urban Environmental rangers (often Intermediate Labour Market links)
- Energy efficiency measures
- Gardening clubs, allotments, community gardens
- Environmental improvements e.g. back alleys
- Better waste collection system/ closer synchronisation with street cleansing
- Bulky items collection/removal
- Litter/graffiti teams
- Flytipping prevention/ environmental enforcement
- Removal of abandoned vehicles
- Protective landscaping
- Town centre management
- Dog wardens

Worklessness

- Resident Service Organisations - local management contracts
- Intermediate Labour Market projects
- Business measures - welcome packs; establishing business associations
- One Stop Shop advisory service
- Additional job search advice
- Youth enterprise projects
- Local recruitment incentives
- Benefit take-up campaigns
- Full Employment Pilots
- Supply of business units
- Case conferencing approach to job finding

Education and Training

- Full service schools
- Anti-bullying initiatives
- Environmental education initiatives
- Breakfast/after school clubs
- Walk-to-school initiatives
- Literacy support
- Developing young enterprise & citizenship curriculum
- Parental learning initiatives
- Individual action plans
- Language support for asylum seekers
- Out-of-hours study support
- Capacity building training for residents
- IT learning initiatives
- Alternative curriculum projects
- Training initiatives - construction, environment, media
- Youth theatre to raise crime awareness

Health

- Healthy living initiatives
- Health needs surveys
- Resident involvement in development of community health indicators
- Community health development workers/drugs and alcohol workers/health promotion officers (smoking, teenage pregnancy etc.)
- Health clinics

Source: Liverpool Housing Trust (2004)

Housing associations' involvement in neighbourhood management has, however, been uneven but it is increasing. The level of housing association participation in the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme illustrates this (Case 1). Many round 1 schemes were local authority-led and dominated and the limited

capacity of some housing associations to become involved owing to their small size or insignificant stockholdings in the designated areas and lack of designated funds further limited their involvement. However, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit has actively encouraged housing associations to lead some of the Round 2

Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders (Case 2) and some local authorities have given them responsibility for leading or managing some neighbourhood management pilots either for experimental or pragmatic reasons since they often bring in additional resources or an alternative perspective (e.g. Touchstone Housing, Whitmore Reans and Dunstall, Wolverhampton – Case 3).

Case 1: Social housing organisations and the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders

Social housing organisations have been strongly involved in six of the 20 Round 1 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders and have had some meaningful involvement in a further eight. They have had no or only marginal involvement in the remaining six. What stands out in the six Pathfinders in which they have taken a significant role is the influence of major changes to housing governance: with two involving newly created Arms Length Management Organisations (Bolton at Home in Great Lever, Bolton and Berneslai Homes in Kendray, Barnsley) and four involving housing associations linked to stock transfer, either completed or in the offing (Orbit Housing in Heart of Burton, East Staffordshire; Three Rivers in Stanley Green Corridor, Derwentside; Contour Housing in Hattersley, Tameside; and Aspire Housing in Knutton and Cross Heath, Newcastle-under-Lyme).

What the housing associations have brought to neighbourhood management is wider community engagement and some specialist care and supported housing provision (such as Orbit Housing's Safe

as Houses fall prevention initiative for elderly and vulnerable residents in Heart of Burton and Three Rivers' Quality Homes for All handyperson scheme for elderly and disabled residents in Stanley Green Corridor).

Following NRU promptings, social housing organisations have featured more in the second round of the Neighbourhood Management programme. They have been strongly involved in 12 of the 15 Round 2 Pathfinders and, unlike in Round 1, housing associations have taken the lead role in four of them:

- Guinness Trust in Croft and Cowpen Quay, Blyth (Improving Croft and Cowpen Quay);
- London and Quadrant Housing Trust in partnership with the London Borough of Waltham Forest in Leyton (Team Leyton);
- Wyre Forest Housing in Oldington and Foley Park, Worcestershire; and
- Maritime Housing and Riverside Housing in partnership with Wirral MBC in Tranmere, Wirral (Together).

Source: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2004 and 2005)

Case 2: Housing associations taking the lead in the Round 2 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders

Guinness Trust in Improving Croft and Cowpen Quay, Blyth

The Guinness Trust is the accountable body for the Blyth Pathfinder and employs the neighbourhood management team. Even though it only owns about 15 percent of the housing stock in the area, the Trust is leading the Pathfinder because it believes that neighbourhood management is necessary for securing the sustainability of the neighbourhood and also for developing its wider social role. It has, for example, recently begun a £2.9 million stock renewal programme that employs 28 previously unemployed local residents and provides work experience for 30 low achieving 16-18 year olds.

London and Quadrant Housing Trust in partnership with the London Borough of Waltham Forest in Team Leyton, London

Forest Homes (part of London and Quadrant Housing Trust) took over some 2,600 properties in Leyton and Leytonstone from Waltham Forest Borough Council

in September 2002 and the partnership working that developed between London and Quadrant (L & Q) and the Council in the stock transfer process provided the basis for the Team Leyton Pathfinder – with L & Q in the lead and the Council acting as the accountable body. Initiatives to date include:

- introduction of the Leyton Ward Improvement Plan to improve the physical environment by improving standards and local satisfaction with street cleansing, recycling participation rates and the local street scene;
- ‘Beat Sweeps’ when wards are chosen for a day of proactive enforcement by agencies working together to close crack houses, clear rubbish, remove abandoned cars, clean up graffiti, issue fixed penalties and raise general awareness of ‘crime and grime’ issues; and
- the ‘Defending Da Hood’ multi-agency programme for engaging with ‘hard to reach’ young people on issues including drugs, teenage pregnancy, gun crime, gangs and Islamophobia.

Wyre Forest Community Housing in Oldington and Foley Park, Worcestershire

The accountable body for the Oldington and Foley Park Pathfinder is Wyre Forest Community Housing. It also employs the Pathfinder's core staff. Initiatives to date have focused on community safety, education and community engagement including:

- establishing a mini police base on the site of a local school;
- leading on the Extended Schools initiative for the same school;
- establishing a credit union;
- running a clean-up operation using mechanical sweepers;
- empowering young people through a 'Junior Pathfinders' scheme; and
- successfully coordinating a task force of local residents to obtain support for a NHS dentist.

Maritime Housing and Riverside Housing in partnership with Wirral MBC in 'Together', Wirral

'Together', the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder in Tranmere, can be traced back to 1998, when Maritime Housing and Riverside Housing joined Wirral MBC and

the Housing Corporation in the Tranmere Housing Regeneration Partnership. A local neighbourhood management office was set up and a Tranmere Accountability Project introduced that linked service level agreements with service providers to the local community. Maritime Housing also managed a neighbourhood warden scheme. 'Together' is a logical development of this early foray into neighbourhood management with Maritime Housing and Riverside Housing in the lead and Wirral MBC acting as the accountable body. It has continued the neighbourhood warden scheme, funded a major clean-up campaign, put in place initiatives to address youth nuisance in local parks and developed a citizenship programme in local schools. It is working with the New Heartlands Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder to develop service delivery and is also developing, with Wirral MBC, a Tenancy Reference Scheme. The Scheme offers accredited private landlords access to tenant history and references from previous landlords to improve information sharing and to provide incentives to landlords to improve standards. Support is also given to tenants whose tenancy history might ordinarily prevent them from accessing good quality private rented and social housing.

Source: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2005)

To date, housing associations have taken part in just over half of all neighbourhood management initiatives (Shared Intelligence/BURA/Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2003) and have performed four main kinds of role:

1. Lead organisation – for example, Hyde Plus, a subsidiary of Hyde Housing, is in charge of the Evelyn neighbourhood management initiative which was developed as part of the forward strategy of a Single Regeneration Budget scheme, ‘Bridging the Gap’, for which it was the accountable body and is also overseeing four other neighbourhood management pilots in Lewisham;

2. Managing agent - for example, Touchstone Housing (part of the Keynote Housing Group) is managing Dunstall and Whitmore Reans, one of seven neighbourhood management pilots on behalf of Wolverhampton City Council, using Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and other funding (see Case 3);

3. Co-ordinating landlords’ input - for example, Chichester Diocesan Housing Association, a subsidiary of Hyde Housing, is playing a key role in the establishment of a ‘one-stop shop’ which is a key element

of the ‘EB4U’ neighbourhood management project being led by East Brighton NDC.

It is co-ordinating and standardising the management and lettings policies of five much smaller Registered Social Landlords which also hold stock in the area);

4. Key partner - for example, 1066 Housing Association has decentralised its entire operation to area offices in order to engage with the Greater Hollington neighbourhood management Pathfinder programme in Hastings and has also funded improvements to public spaces and outdoor play areas.

Housing associations have tended to become most involved in problem areas undergoing major redevelopment in which they have significant existing or planned stock holdings (e.g. Tees Valley Housing Group in North Ormesby, Middlesbrough). Those that have for some time been pursuing a wider regeneration role have been in the vanguard of neighbourhood management. Research has shown that those housing associations playing a wider role tend to be larger housing associations with group structures and quite diverse subsidiaries (Housing Corporation, 2005a).

Housing organisations' motivations for involvement have included:

- stock transfers (e.g. Hattersley, Poplar HARCA - Cases 4 and 5) and ALMOs (e.g. Bolton, Berneslai, Case 6) viewing neighbourhood management as a tool for sustaining the communities in which they have invested and thereby protecting their outlay;
- viewing neighbourhood management as a key holding measure and method of retaining community confidence in housing market renewal areas facing substantial restructuring and upheaval and also minimising displacement problems in adjacent areas (Cases 7 and 8);
- As part of Housing Regeneration Companies approach to neighbourhood regeneration (e.g. INclude, Liverpool, Case 9);
- where a number of organisations have a common interest in adopting more standardised management and lettings policies (e.g. Barne Barton, Plymouth).

Case 3: A Housing association managed neighbourhood management pilot in Wolverhampton - Touchstone Housing in Whitmore Reans and Dunstall, Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton City Council has piloted neighbourhood management in Wolverhampton in seven neighbourhoods (identified by the Council as ‘natural neighbourhoods’) and only one of these has the City Council as its managing agent, reflecting the recognition that different structures and approaches will be appropriate in different neighbourhoods. Touchstone Housing (part of the Keynote Housing Group) is the managing agent for the pilot in Whitmore Reans and Dunstall, and was the first housing association in the country to be appointed to lead a Neighbourhood Management pilot programme. It was also the first housing association to receive Housing Corporation revenue funding to support its involvement in the pilot. Initially running between 2003 and 2005, the pilot has been extended to 2006.

The area has around 8,700 residents living in 3,300 households with a diverse population, predominantly of Afro-

Caribbean and Asian origins but also with a mix of Polish, Ukrainian and Italian communities. In the last three years, there has been an influx of asylum seekers/ economic migrants, mainly Kurds and Afghans. More than 46 different languages are spoken in the area. The neighbourhood experiences relatively high levels of deprivation (with, for example, official unemployment rates in Whitmore Reans twice and in Dunstall over one and a half times the Wolverhampton average). House prices have been inflated by demands for private rented accommodation from asylum seekers and students. It also has relatively high crime rates (particularly in relation to domestic burglary).

Touchstone Housing got involved in the pilot as majority landlord (owning some 650 properties) and its recognition that neighbourhood management clearly fitted with its overall corporate vision of “building better places to live” through investing in homes, communities and individuals. It has used the pilot to look more strategically at the way it develops and delivers its core business both in the city as a whole enabling it to experiment with combining neighbourhood management with its Local Area Management Plan that is designed to help the association meet its

financial, service and social objectives. The combination of neighbourhood management and housing management and wider regeneration activity is seen as crucial to the achievement of the overall aim to make Dunstall and Whitmore Reans a popular place in which people want to live.

Key achievements:

- increased community engagement - a strong partnership with Whitmore Reans In Partnership (WRIP), the main voluntary sector umbrella organisation in the area, has been developed and has helped WRIP to increase its membership; Planning for Real events have helped to reach the wider community including Black and Minority Ethnic groups and have been fed into a Local Action Plan; development of the local Community Centre where the Neighbourhood Management team is based has also encouraged more community engagement; funding of a multi-agency community newspaper; development of a learning group for women from asylum seeker and refugee communities (in partnership with City of Woverhampton College);
- education: the promotion of a Local Learning Partnership and learning

opportunities including a Learning Ambassadors scheme (in partnership with City Of Wolverhampton College); and

- environment/ crime and community safety: introduction of 24 Police Community Support Officers as part of neighbourhood policing; establishment of an anti-social behaviour action group chaired by the neighbourhood police team sergeant; a successful alleygating scheme.

Touchstone believes that the pilot has made a major contribution to making the neighbourhood a more popular and more attractive place to live and has allowed it to develop new ways of working with local residents to challenge the inequalities and problems that they experience. A strong message from the pilot is that empowering residents to challenge service providers to change services to meet local conditions and priorities is a long term project and that housing associations considering adopting a neighbourhood management approach need to plan for short and medium term achievements within a longer term plan.

Source: Touchstone Housing Association (2003,2004,2005a,b), Liverpool Housing Trust (2004)

Case 4: Preparing the ground for stock transfer in Hattersley, Tameside

Social housing in the Hattersley Round 1 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder in Tameside has been owned principally by Manchester City Council until May 2005 when tenants voted for the transfer of this stock to the Contour Housing Group. The formal transfer to Contour and its specially created subsidiary, Peak Valley Housing, is scheduled for early 2006.

In the four years leading up to the transfer ballot, Portico (now Contour) Housing was actively involved in the Pathfinder at both board and thematic group levels to promote housing and environmental management initiatives as a holding measure while the uncertainties over transfer were resolved and to pave the way for the housing improvement programme to be implemented if the ballot supported it. Two initiatives were central to this holding operation, an Empty Properties Management Scheme and a Sustainable Lettings Initiative. Both involved extensive partnership working, facilitated by the Pathfinder, between Portico and Manchester City Council and local resident groups and remain important building blocks for the

housing improvement programme now to be implemented by Peak Valley Housing.

Source: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2004 and 2005)

Housing associations in the north of England have a particular interest and stake in the general wellbeing of neighbourhoods in which they hold stock and the quality of local services. In these areas, there is often surplus stock and greater residential choice and quality of life factors such as crime, street cleanliness and access to key services can matter more than house condition and type.

Case 5: Poplar Housing and Regeneration Community Association (HARCA), Tower Hamlets: a pioneer in neighbourhood management

Poplar HARCA was the first housing company set up to manage former local authority housing in an urban area. It was created in 1997 through a large-scale voluntary stock transfer from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and today is a limited company, registered social landlord and registered charity, owning and managing over 4,900 homes in Poplar.

In 2001 when the Government first reported its Social Exclusion Unit findings, Poplar HARCA was already moving ahead with the development of its own model for neighbourhood renewal and is now seen as a pioneer nationally of Neighbourhood Management, working in partnership with residents, local organisations and other service providers to deliver its services. At the same time it has been commissioned by the Tower Hamlets Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership) to provide Neighbourhood Management in Poplar, in order to lever, broker and influence other service providers to deliver more locally accountable services.

Poplar HARCA leads neighbourhood management across four neighbourhoods in the east of the Borough. These neighbourhoods experience pockets of extreme deprivation, with high crime rates, poor housing standards, few green spaces and low qualification levels. They also reflect the diversity and youth of the borough's population. Tower Hamlets has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the country and also one of the youngest (with Census statistics showing 32% of the population under the age of 19).

Four Neighbourhood Directors (Managers) co-ordinate the work of the Local Strategic Partnership in line with the Tower Hamlets Community Plan but also deliver the Poplar HARCA approach by linking housing to training, jobs, education, youth services, health, sport and the arts as well as environmental up-lift. At the heart of this work is a network of ten estate based Neighbourhood Centres under the jurisdiction of the Neighbourhood Directors. These centres help to facilitate the delivery of key services. Each Centre runs an average of 45-50 sessions per week and there are over 100 staff members in the HARCA Neighbourhood Renewal/Community Regeneration Team. Neighbourhood Centres

have provided space for local people to become involved in their community but also to access local services. Local governance has kept the work rooted in the needs of local people and, as a result, resident-led trusts and local regeneration groups have been established and initiatives such as community greens and social enterprises successfully introduced.

Through the Neighbourhood Directors, neighbourhood management is embedding public services within the communities of Poplar, making them more responsive to local people. Poplar HARCA argues that added value is being provided in the following way:

- funds are being levered in to develop new projects and initiatives and to extend existing ones;
- links are being fostered and developed with mainstream agencies such as the local Primary Care Trust to ensure local people have involvement in, and development of, primary health care issues; and
- residents are being consulted about a range of issues from community safety, housing and health and being involved in the development of new initiatives.

With the high proportion of young people, youth services have always been a high priority for local residents. In 2002 Poplar HARCA was contracted by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to manage youth provision in Poplar. It is believed that Poplar HARCA is the first registered social landlord anywhere in the country to be awarded such a contract. Poplar HARCA has endeavoured to integrate youth provision into the wider network of neighbourhood services. This approach has brought additionality, with the establishment of local teams (Youth Workers sitting next to Housing Officers, sitting next to Anti-social Behaviour Officers, sitting next to Volunteer Co-ordinators sitting next to a Sure Start Co-ordinator etc.) all of whom endeavour to provide creative solutions to local problems. It is within this context that Poplar HARCA has developed its youth services, acknowledging local young people and their development as a vital part of any Neighbourhood Renewal process.

Source: Liverpool Housing Trust (2004), Poplar HARCA (2005)

Case 6: ALMOs playing an active role in the Round 1 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders

A Regeneration Manager from Bolton at Home is a member of the Great Lever Pathfinder Board and also chairs its Housing and Environment theme group. Bolton at Home has a Neighbourhood Office co-located with the Pathfinder with a shared reception that reflects the close working relationships being developed between the two organisations. The Arms Length Management Organisation has not only played a lead role in work on improving the quality of housing management and enhancing the physical environment to make the area look and feel better but has also got involved in crime and community safety issues, seconding a Safer, Stronger Communities Officer to engage with local residents and service providers to promote community safety. There are plans to combine the Housing and Environment and Crime and Community Safety theme groups to reflect the increasing integration of housing and environmental management and crime and community safety activity.

Berneslai Homes has played a lead role in the Kendray Pathfinder in Barnsley with housing being a major priority. In response

to residents' concerns over plans for housing demolition and tenant nomination to fill voids it has engaged in a lengthy process of community consultation and engagement over its housing 'Blueprint' involving demolition, new development and management/letting policy. This community engagement has seen changes made to the 'Blueprint' in terms of the mix of housing types, design and layout and management/letting policy with Berneslai Homes taking the lead on void management. The Pathfinder provides a good example of the way in which the provision of new and management of existing housing services has been influenced through a close working relationship between a Pathfinder and ALMO that is grounded in community consultation and engagement.

Source: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2004)

Case 7: Working in partnership and taking the lead in Housing Market Renewal - Aspire Housing and the Knutton Cross Heath Neighbourhood Management and RENEW North Staffs Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder.

Aspire Housing is the largest housing association in Staffordshire. Its origins can be traced back to Newcastle-under-Lyme Housing, a local housing company set up in 2000 to take ownership of the Borough Council's housing stock. It changed its name to Aspire Housing in 2002 and has been part of the Beth Johnson Partnership, a Housing Corporation development partner, since 2004.

It has taken an active role in work in the region on housing market renewal and sustainable communities. RENEW North Staffordshire, the local Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder, identified Knutton Cross Heath as one of four "Areas of Major Intervention" (AMIs) and Aspire Housing has been selected to take the lead role in the programme for the area. Working in partnership with RENEW North Staffordshire, English Partnerships, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and the Round 1 Knutton Cross Heath

Neighbourhood Management Partnership, it is managing an initial £2 million RENEW North Staffordshire Programme up to March 2006 with a further potential investment of £80 million up to 2019.

RENEW is funding a project worker, community support worker and part-time administrative clerical assistant to work in the Knutton Cross Heath Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder exclusively on the communication, community and service provider engagement aspects of its housing renewal programme in the area. Although line-managed by the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, the Knutton Cross Heath AMI Manager from Aspire Housing directs the work of the team operationally and links it to the activities of the HA and other partners in the housing renewal programme.

Aspire Housing is a good example of a housing association broadening out its activities from housing management to taking a lead in developing sustainable communities through partnership working.

Source: Housing Corporation (2005b), Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2004 and 2005)

Case 8: Taking the lead in a neighbourhood management initiative linked to a Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder - Home Housing in North Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne.

“North Benwell will be an area where there is a healthy mixed-tenure housing market, where there has been a significant narrowing of the gap of inequalities between this area and those that are more well off, where there is a cohesive sustainable community, with nationally average levels of crime and a local Partnership that monitors and has direct influence over the range of improving and responsive services into the area.”
(North Benwell Neighbourhood Management Initiative Vision)

Home Housing (part of the Home Group) is taking the lead in the North Benwell Neighbourhood Management Initiative in Newcastle upon Tyne. The Initiative has been running since 2003 and is a partnership between Home Housing, Newcastle City Council, Northumbria police and the Newcastle Gateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder, Bridging NewcastleGateshead.

Like Guinness Trust in Croft and Cowpen Quay (Case 2), Home Housing is not a major stockholder in the area but feels strongly that the neighbourhood management initiative (see Vision above) can help it achieve its financial, service and social objectives and that taking a lead in it gives it an impartiality that facilitates the building of the trust and integrity between stakeholders that neighbourhood management requires. It is convinced that its strong and impartial position has enabled it to cross boundaries, breaking down barriers between the public and private sectors and facilitating the joining up of services at local level.

Bridging NewcastleGateshead has ring fenced funding for the neighbourhood management initiative with matching support coming in various forms from the other partners. It is run by an Initiative Team made up of:

- a Neighbourhood Manager and assistant (both employed by Home Housing);
- a Community development worker and support staff (seconded from the City Council);
- a Street Wardens’ team (of 3 wardens employed by the City Council); and

- a Policing team (of 10 police constables, 6 Police Community Support Officers and 1 Traffic Warden match funded by Northumbria police).

The Initiative's first year of activity saw a halving of the number of empty and neglected homes (with just under 70 properties brought back into use), the introduction of an innovative and popular decorated board scheme on empty RSL properties, reductions in burglaries and vehicle crime and the development of opportunities for wider community involvement. By September 2005, the number of empty properties had been reduced by 60% and reported crime by one half.

It is now working on a set of priorities covering housing and environment, crime and community safety, resident involvement, health, perception and communication, education and physical investment that are designed to contribute to the overall housing market renewal objectives of Bridging NewcastleGateshead. It has also translated the different elements of its own vision – creating a mixed-tenure housing market, reducing inequality, creating a sustainable community, reducing crime and setting up a partnership to

monitor and influence service delivery – to a set of identified actions clearly assigned to different partners and a range of measurable indicators that are regularly monitored using a traffic-light system. An integral element of its ongoing evaluation process is the involvement of local people – importantly in setting the parameters for monitoring progress rather than simply monitoring outputs set by agencies to meet funding criteria. The evaluation involves qualitative indicators of improvement including people's feelings about the area, how they interact with their neighbours and their sense of community.

Source: North Benwell Neighbourhood Management Initiative (2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b)

Case 9: Housing Regeneration Companies (HRC) a new approach to neighbourhood regeneration - INclude Neighbourhood Regeneration in Liverpool

Set up in a partnership between Liverpool City Council and CDS Housing (now part of Plus Housing Group) in 2001, INclude Neighbourhood Regeneration Ltd., is the HRC for the western part of the Liverpool 8 area in the south of the city. The area has 20,000 residents living in 8,000 households. Eighty percent of the stock is social rented (50% HA and 30% Liverpool City Council), 10% private rented and 10% owner occupied. It contains significant proportions of the city's BME population, mainly of Afro-Caribbean origin but also some of Somali, Asian and Chinese origins. The area is characterised by multiple disadvantage, a degraded environment, commercial decline, fragmented service delivery and increasing housing voids and tenancy turnover.

It has a clear remit that reflects the expressed desire of local residents to see the area 'cleans, safe and well managed – then regenerated':

- to help to achieve its mission statement of working with local people to create a neighbourhood

environment where they choose to live, work, learn and play and are able to access necessary services and financial opportunities to fulfil their aspirations for their neighbourhood;

- to help to deliver its five headline objectives (deliver comprehensive housing/environmental improvements; oversee all physical and infrastructural regeneration; maximise opportunities for community engagement in decision making and project outcomes; be the neighbourhood manager of local services; and secure the necessary funding); and
- to seek to break down the barriers, demarcations between different agencies.

The themes being pursued relate closely to its five overall objectives:

- delivering housing and environmental regeneration which spans tenures and is designed to shift the social rent/owner occupation balance to 50/50;
- overseeing all physical and infrastructural projects which either major upon developing new or improved educational, health, leisure

and social facilities or improving major transport routes through the area;

- co-ordinating all locally delivered services such as housing management, community safety and ‘street services’; and
- seeking to maximise the opportunity for community involvement by offering support for resident Board members, establishing various consultative fora, introducing community regeneration projects and promoting direct community action.

The INclude Centre for Neighbourhood Management delivers the activities with a team that brings together over 70 staff from a range of agencies:

- Liverpool City Council Neighbourhood Management Team;
- officers from other RSLs in the area;
- Fire Safety Officers;
- Youth Engagement Officers;
- Safer Neighbourhoods Officers;
- Environmental Officers, the Liverpool South Central Cluster Team (part of the city’s Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy);
- Liverpool City Council Social Services, Education and Lifelong Learning;

- Merseyside Police; and
- HEAL8 (a health and social regeneration initiative).

Its activities to date include:

- environmental improvement: with a local social enterprise, Include Environmental Services cleaning up and maintaining vacant sites and pocket parks;
- kerbside recycling;
- alleygating;
- target hardening for repeat and vulnerable victims of crime;
- youth engagement including ‘Include Young Voices’ in partnership with Save the Children and the Groundwork Trust;
- regeneration of a major transport corridor in partnership with Liverpool City Council and Merseytravel;
- community engagement programme (see Case 21).

Source: renewal.net (2002), Liverpool Housing Trust (2004), Tic Consultants (2005)

Neighbourhood management programmes have invariably featured:

- extensive **resident involvement** in identifying deficiencies in service delivery, suggestions as to how providers can deliver services more efficiently and link them together more effectively and monitoring the subsequent impact of improvements on the neighbourhood;
- ‘**quick win**’ projects addressing residents’ most pressing concerns, such as community safety and street cleanliness;
- **catalytic pilot projects** designed to achieve more fundamental changes in the way that mainstream services are delivered and also meet the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal’s five floor targets (worklessness, crime, health, housing and physical environment and education and training).

Most neighbourhood management initiatives and programmes have been funded using Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, New Deal for Communities, Single Regeneration Budget and Local Authority funding. For their part, housing associations have secured Neighbourhood Renewal Fund

and Round 2 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder funding and occasionally Housing Corporation support and, in some neighbourhoods, have accessed funding from Area Based Initiatives and more general sources.

Neighbourhood service organisations

Besides these varying kinds of neighbourhood management initiative, many different kinds of housing organisation are supplying a variety of neighbourhood services. The main types are summarised in Box 2.

In some cases, tenant-controlled organisations such as Tenant Management Co-operatives, Par Value Ownership Co-operatives, Estate Management Boards, Community Based Housing Associations and Tenant Management Organisations have gone beyond their original remit of supplying management and maintenance services to tenants and developed community and social activities and facilities for residents. These are similar in content and scope to projects which have formed part of neighbourhood management initiatives.

The 11 Resident Service Organisations currently operating are resident-led social enterprises providing services such as grounds maintenance, cleaning, graffiti removal, minor repairs and childcare. Wherever possible they employ and if necessary train local residents. The Community Gateway model is novel and as yet Preston is the only local authority to go down this route. Preston Community Gateway Association assumed responsibility for 7,000 properties in November 2005, and is committed to involving tenants at every level of policy making and decision making and also wider measures which will boost local jobs and help to create sustainable neighbourhoods.

Some larger housing associations have supplied support services to tenant controlled organisations or been instrumental in setting up Resident Service Organisations (e.g. Plus Housing - INclude Environmental). A recent study showed that 23 out of 350 housing associations based within the South East have supported or managed social enterprises (SEEDA, 2005).

In other instances, parent bodies have set up development trusts to provide community services. For example, Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust set up a

community development trust, 'O-Regen', to sustain momentum in its aftermath. It supplies a local employment and training service covering IT and basic skills, provides capacity building and fundraising services for community groups and runs community and conferencing centres. The emergence of the Government's neighbourhoods agenda provides an opportunity to build on many of these approaches.

Good practice in neighbourhood management and service delivery

This section seeks to present salient examples of good practice and also draw out the key underlying success factors, focusing especially on housing organisations' contribution to neighbourhood management and service delivery.

A national evaluation of the 20 Round 1 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders in which some housing associations have taken part revealed some key ingredients of good practice which are summarised in Box 4. A separate audit of housing association involvement and good practice in neighbourhood management has confirmed the importance of these factors (Liverpool Housing Trust, 2004). Housing associations' involvement in neighbourhood management and service delivery has been uneven and both their level of involvement and the extent of good practice has hinged upon a range of factors including:

- degree to which they have involved residents and supported community initiatives; and
- judgement and capacity to implement the right blend of initiatives.

Each is explored in turn.

- their ethos;
- capacity to take an active role;
- reputation amongst other service providers and consequent degree of clout;

Box 4: Seven key ingredients of neighbourhood management

Key element	Components
1. A clearly defined neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• identifiable and meaningful to inhabitants• a viable future• service boundaries reasonably co-terminous or scope to adopt common boundaries in future
2. A neighbourhood manager with clout	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• right skill mix - catalysts, listeners, communicators, negotiators, advocates, networkers, community development skills• good rapport with service provider 'champions'• support team with expertise in relevant service areas
3. Strong resident involvement and support to residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• listening to their concerns• communicating proposals clearly and welcoming feedback• giving residents a real stake (e.g. local jobs)• supporting local champions, advocates, entrepreneurs• encouraging community self-help initiatives (grants etc)• ownership through involvement in consultation, planning, project appraisal, implementation, evaluation

Box 4: Seven key ingredients of neighbourhood management

Key element	Components
4. A local partnership of residents and service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• relationships between key parties founded on trust, openness, honesty, realism• sufficient time allowed for understanding respective agendas, identifying shared interests and scope for joint working• good leadership and management• focused, business-like meetings• Board membership with strategic influence and clout• incremental approach proceeding from straightforward to more complex, time-consuming issues• a coherent, carefully integrated, and costed programme of interventions with scope for mainstreaming
5. Support and commitment from local authority and from Local Strategic Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• political ownership and backing for initiative• partnerships with strategic links to the LSP, other strategic groupings and senior executives of service providers, thereby offering scope to apply lessons to other areas/ neighbourhoods

Box 4: Seven key ingredients of neighbourhood management

Key element	Components
6. Quality information for prioritising and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• baseline research on local needs, service provision and its collective impact, gaps• collecting and utilising community intelligence• performance management, monitoring and evaluation of interventions
7. Commitment from service providers – and mechanisms for engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• credible and exemplary lead organisation• champions in relevant service organisations recognising where improvement necessary and open to new approaches• mechanisms for committing service providers and monitoring their performance• coherent, well-planned and achievable set of proposals well aligned with other local regeneration programmes

Source: Liverpool Housing Trust, 2004, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2005)

Core philosophy

“My promise is this. We can reduce the burdens of inspection and regulation, but you need to share power and control with tenants and put tenant involvement at the heart of your organisations. This will involve housing associations bringing to the fore the ethos and spirit of mutuality, self-help and voluntarism that characterised their early development.”

David Miliband, Minister of Communities and Local Government.
Speech to the National Housing Federation Annual Conference, Birmingham, 16 September 2005

Those housing associations which have been most active in neighbourhood management and open to greater community control of service delivery tend to have made appropriate changes to their ethos, organisational structures and accountability arrangements. Housing associations are simultaneously being required by government to become more efficient in delivering more affordable homes and also more responsive to community needs and preferences.

This is prompting larger housing associations to establish local subsidiaries with wider neighbourhood regeneration responsibilities and also providing scope for community-based housing associations to develop their niche role. Those housing associations playing either an effective lead role or significant part in neighbourhood management/service delivery tend to share the following characteristics:

- a willingness to provide more than just housing services if necessary;
- a commitment to extend tenant engagement and also community capacity building;
- a concern for tenants' wider welfare;
- a focus on consumer needs and outcomes rather than service providers' interests;
- a sense of social responsibility to the wider community; and
- a desire to work in partnership with other associations, housing organisations and key local service providers.

Some housing associations see involvement in delivering neighbourhood services as an extension of what they are already doing and echoing their core philosophy and ethos and a social welfare tradition which goes

back to nineteenth century philanthropists such as Octavia Hill. In many cases, though, umbrella organisations such as the National Housing Federation and particular housing associations have given a powerful lead and encouraged housing associations to adopt a neighbourhood perspective (Case 10).

Case 10: Change agents

At its 2003 annual conference, the National Housing Federation launched the iN business for neighbourhoods initiative to encourage housing associations to improve their performance and challenge negative perceptions of the sector and its clients. It invited housing associations to make a fresh commitment to creating successful neighbourhoods, becoming more customer driven and accountable and improving performance.

The NHF has sought to deliver change by introducing InBiz award to celebrate excellence and develop a database of good practice and by developing business planning tools, self-assessment frameworks, exploring methods of achieving efficiency savings and supplying toolkits on involving residents and other stakeholders, communications and impact assessment. It is engaging with stakeholders through publications, discussion of respective agendas and production of a new code of governance. It is working with Government, regulators and other agencies to ensure inspection and regulation frameworks are proportionate and to obtain the necessary resources, freedoms and flexibilities for the sector.

About 80% of the 1.6 million homes run by housing associations are now managed by those who have joined the initiative. InBiz has given the sector a more positive brand image and helped other agencies realise that housing associations accept that they have a wider commitment to the neighbourhoods in which they hold stock.

London and Quadrant Group has recently decided to set up a Future Shape of Sector Commission involving housing associations, regulators, funders and key representative bodies to consider the implications of increasing consolidation and to devise solutions to common challenges such as building more affordable homes, achieving higher social returns and delivering better customer service. This will involve consideration of governance, finance and operational structures, balancing consistency with local responsiveness, customer service, resident involvement, links with communities, performance management and other relevant matters.

Source: National Housing Federation, 2003 and 2004, London and Quadrant (2005)

Housing association involvement and role

Both the work of InBiz and specific examples such as the LIFE model (see Case 11) have shown the importance of housing associations determining their precise role in particular neighbourhoods and that inactivity is not an option.

Case 11: A partnership approach to RSL engagement in neighbourhoods - the Liverpool LIFE model

RSLs are playing a lead role in housing market renewal in Liverpool, not least because they account for some 15% of the total housing stock in the city and around 26% in the inner core of the city (compared to a national figure of about 3%). Their participation in housing market renewal and neighbourhood management is crucial and a major development in this context has been the Liverpool LIFE model.

The model has been developed since early 2004 by the Strategic Housing Partnership of the city's Local Strategic Partnership, the Liverpool Partnership Group. The Strategic Housing Partnership brings together representatives of the six largest RSLs, two representatives of smaller RSLs and the city's BME RSL, the Housing Corporation, Government Office for the North West, Liverpool City Council and the Director of the Liverpool Partnership Group. The aim was to ensure that RSLs could make an effective contribution to wider housing market renewal and wider regeneration activities and its objectives are to:

- provide a structured, inclusive and transparent vehicle for partnership working at the neighbourhood level between RSLs, the City Council, other key stakeholders and local residents;
- provide an effective approach to the management of the Liverpool Housing Market Renewal Initiative's identified areas of opportunity; and
- maximise the efficient use of resources.

The Housing Market Renewal area has been divided into four areas of opportunity or zones with RSLs taking one of the following roles in each of them:

- Lead - with the agreed RSL working with the city council and lead private sector developer to take the lead in delivering housing market renewal;
- Influence - with RSLs with commitment and interest in a zone or with specialist skills (like supportive living) working to influence what happens;
- Follow - with RSLs collaborating in delivering the direction set by the Lead RSL;
- Exit - with RSLs who see no longer-term management or development

opportunities making a strategic decision to withdraw from a zone.

Each zone thus has one lead RSL. The number of RSLs seeking to influence activity currently varies between one and five and the number following the direction set by the lead RSL varies between one and three across the zones. In two zones five RSLs have agreed to exit (two in one and three in the other). Each zone has LIFE forums that bring together the partner associations and other stakeholders to produce and implement neighbourhood management and redevelopment schemes and the city council organises a city-wide LIFE forum at which the four lead associations meet on a quarterly basis to discuss the operation of the model across the four zones.

The model has brought together stakeholders at neighbourhood level (at no additional cost) and has already seen some rationalisation of stock, management, premises and staffing including:

- stock swaps;
- Home Ownership officers employed by one association but working from another's premises;

- RSL 'influencers' working with developers to promote local labour and training initiatives;
- the joint funding of community and youth engagement workers and neighbourhood wardens;
- the establishment of neighbourhood resource centres with liaison officers coordinating activity on behalf of all RSL partners.

The four Lead housing associations have just produced (December 2005) their first Delivery Plans setting out how the model is to be applied in each of the zones.

Source: Liverpool Strategic Housing Partnership (2004), Liverpool City Council (2005a, 2005b)

To determine their precise role, housing associations have had to investigate:

- the extent to which they possess unique attributes and can make a distinctive contribution (see Box 1 on housing associations' strengths/weaknesses);
- the approach being taken to neighbourhood management and their capacity to respond (see Box 5);

Box 5: Different approaches to neighbourhood management

Neighbourhood management has been interpreted in three different ways:

- as a logical extension of more longstanding localised approaches to housing management and other basic services (Power, 2004);
- better co-ordination of the whole gamut of service provision to improve the lot of deprived areas (NRU, 2001);
- part of local authorities' modernisation and decentralisation agendas which are designed to increase responsiveness and accountability, build community capacity and further develop multi-agency working at all levels (Local Government Association, 2000).

Consequently, neighbourhood management has taken varying organisational forms, involved different lead agencies and been applied in areas of different size and character.

Housing associations work in different institutional contexts and need to read the interpretation of neighbourhood management that is being applied locally and decide what implications that has for their involvement. Given their core competencies and stock holdings, they are more likely to play a major role in more tightly defined areas where either the first or second approaches are being pursued.

Source: Liverpool Housing Trust (2004)

Housing associations have found that they have been able to exercise an effective lead role in neighbourhood management and neighbourhood service delivery where they have significant existing or planned stock in the area, are committed to working in partnership with the local authority and other key providers and also possess one or more of the following characteristics:

- they feature prominently in regeneration plans;
- they are acting as champions, advocates and enabling bodies for community self-help groups and in under-served neighbourhoods;
- they are willing to act as managing agent, co-ordinator and supply the necessary staffing and administrative support for a particular initiative;
- they have a demonstrable record in neighbourhood regeneration (e.g. Home HA in North Benwell; Tees Valley Housing Group, North Ormesby, Middlesbrough);
- they are enhancing a local partnership's prospects for securing additional resources such as Round 2 Neighbourhood Pathfinder status (e.g. Guinness Trust, Cowpen Quay, Blyth); and

- they are able to influence key partners such as the local authority and the LSP (e.g. Touchstone HA, Whitmore Reans and Dunstall, Wolverhampton).

In other instances, housing associations have decided to participate to varying degrees depending upon the extent to which the above factors apply but have accepted that other partners are better placed to take the lead because of their greater capacity or legitimacy.

Partnership working

Effective participation in neighbourhood management and service delivery requires housing associations to work closely with each other and other key service providers. Each is considered in turn.

Box 6: Costs/benefits/risks/rewards of neighbourhood management

Essential costs

- Neighbourhood Manager and team
- Up-front investment in local office, equipment etc.
- Additional maintenance, cleaning, security services
- Building and maintaining links with residents/users, local enterprises and community groups
- Establishing and servicing Neighbourhood Management Steering Group/Board
- Local authority political backing and central support/re-orientation
- Dialogue/co-ordination work with other key service providers (e.g. police)
- Additional revenue costs for deployment of additional front-line staff
- Collection of additional neighbourhood intelligence on needs, services

Anticipated benefits and rewards

- Greater sense of pride and commitment to area, better environmental conditions and lower service maintenance costs?
- Improvements in basic services (maintenance, repair etc.)
- More patrolling, supervision and control over conditions
- More resident input and liaison
- More reporting, more local information, better informed action
- Better co-ordination, understanding between local actors
- Innovatory projects and initiatives
- More investment in area (businesses; households) and asset appreciation
- Fewer voids, stronger income base
- More interest in neighbourhood from senior politicians/officers creating virtuous circle (note 'first mover' advantages/diminishing returns)
- Knock-on local job creation
- Skill development amongst residents - greater access to training - new roles, demands, responsibilities

Potential risks

- Boundary problems – lack of identification with neighbourhood, overlapping service boundaries
- Difficulties in engaging different elements of community, capture by unrepresentative elements
- Lack of clout/ability to influence other service providers
- Lack of strategic backing from local authority and from Local Strategic Partnership
- Difficulty in accessing necessary information for prioritisation and monitoring

Source: Power (2004), Liverpool Housing Trust (2004)

A common complaint levelled against the housing association sector by other agencies is that it is overly fragmented and fiercely competitive and therefore not well placed to address wider neighbourhood agendas and engage in necessary joint working. Housing associations have sought to overcome this by various means including:

- joint marketing (e.g. New Heartlands RSL Forum, Liverpool; g15, London - Case 12);
- joint asset management planning (e.g. LAMP, Liverpool - Case 13);
- stock rationalisation (e.g. LIFE, Liverpool - Case 11); and
- adoption of joint procurement and management policies.

Neighbourhood management also requires housing associations to establish structures for joint working with other key service delivery agencies. While the precise organisational arrangements in effective neighbourhood management initiatives vary depending upon the local institutional and physical context and also tax and personal liability issues, they have features in common. Each has a steering group or board consisting of the key service providers and significant community representation whose brief it is to review the baseline

position, plan interventions, co-ordinate inputs and review progress. In most cases, each is supported by a set of task or action groups charged with addressing main issues of local concern. Housing associations have invariably been board members where they have played the leading role in neighbourhood management initiatives whereas they have tended to be members of relevant thematic sub-groups in those cases where they have been partners.

Case 12: Presenting a united front: examples of joint marketing

Housing associations with major stock holdings in the NewHeartlands market renewal pathfinder area on Merseyside have established an RSL Forum and prepared a report entitled “Fulfilling the Potential” showing the breadth of activities undertaken by them over and above managing and maintaining their stock. It is designed to show their potential contribution to reviving neighbourhoods, provide a platform for engaging different communities and service providers and promote consistency and excellence in service delivery. It features good practice in neighbourhood management, co-ordinated asset management and investment, stock rationalisation and community engagement.

g15, a group of the 15 leading housing associations in London that manage over 60% of the capital’s 400,000 homes, have commissioned an independent report entitled “Social Capital” which examines the group’s contribution to meeting government targets for improving Londoners’ quality of life. It shows that housing associations do not simply deliver low-cost housing and physical regeneration but a wide

range of employment, health, education and community safety initiatives. Part of the report shows how G15 has invested £18 million in 51 neighbourhood planning and renewal projects. These include the following kinds of initiative: Neighbourhood Management, Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes, New Deal for Communities, Home Zones, Community Development Trusts, SRB community projects, master plans and community consultation exercises.

Source: NewHeartlands RSL Forum (2005), g15 Group (2004)

Case 13: Improving the delivery of neighbourhood services through co-ordinated investment and stock rationalisation - the Liverpool Asset Management Project/Programme

The Liverpool Asset Management Project (LAMP) was initially developed in 2001 by a partnership of local housing associations and Liverpool City Council (the Strategic Housing Partnership) to:

- assess the effects of housing market trends across the city;
- provide an evidence-based approach to housing market renewal; and
- facilitate joint working and decision-making on investment and asset management.

The project received Innovation and Good Practice Funding from the Housing Corporation to develop a model for measuring and predicting housing markets and guide investment decisions. It builds on the Housing Corporation's Sustainability Toolkit for RSLs by refining the key indicators of neighbourhood wellbeing and using these to produce detailed neighbourhood profiles.

The project/ programme is now managed by a small team based in the City Council. The team produces and analyses statistical data in the form of over 30 different socio-economic indicators including housing market variables, income and disadvantage, crime, migration patterns, health and educational standards. Using a GIS system the data can be analysed at a variety of spatial scales from city-wide to neighbourhood and, in some cases, to postcode levels and in varying combinations of indicators. The data also allow the modelling of inter-relationships between the different indicators in order to help predict neighbourhood wellbeing or decline. A common set of data on stock condition has also been developed to monitor the degree to which social housing across the city is meeting the Decent Homes Standard.

LAMP has helped local housing associations to develop a joint approach to asset management and in developing bids to the Regional Housing Board. It also allows RSLs to coordinate investments in priority neighbourhoods and has already paved the way for a Stock Swop Programme between participating housing associations.

Source: DTZ Pieda Consulting (2002),
Liverpool City Council (2005c)

Like most forms of partnership, neighbourhood management partnerships have worked best when:

- relationships are founded on honesty, trust, openness and mutual respect;
- stakeholders are valued as equals and their respective roles, contribution and also operational constraints and limitations are well understood;
- there is the necessary commitment at all levels within their respective organisations;
- partners seek to forge common cultures, systems, skill sets and methods of exchanging information;
- partners jointly identify community needs, empower residents through appropriate training and capacity building and develop the necessary community development skills within their own organisations;
- local intelligence is used to convince partners of the need to change the nature of delivery; and
- partners move towards adopting joined-up strategies, staffing and budgeting arrangements and information and accountability systems.

Regarding the last point, there are many different forms of aligning and pooling resources and research has shown that partnerships have found it preferable to adopt a staged, incremental approach and that complications may arise, for example, if common staffing procedures are introduced and budgets are pooled prematurely.

Housing associations have also had to consider carefully what form their involvement in partnership working should take. Neighbourhood management can embrace a wide range of issues and initiatives and housing associations need to be selective in deciding where they should concentrate their efforts. Also, there is no dedicated source of mainstream funding for neighbourhood management and service delivery and those involved can incur significant transaction costs. Some housing associations have successfully met these challenges in various ways including:

- identifying lead housing associations in particular neighbourhoods to simplify joint working arrangements (see LIFE, Case 11);
- embedding themselves in wider good practice networks and forging links with more strategic bodies

such as Local Strategic Partnerships (see Touchstone Housing and Poplar HARCA examples, Cases 2 & 4) and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (see Box 7) to extend their influence and the prospects of pilot initiatives becoming mainstreamed by partner organisations;

- demonstrating entrepreneurialism in procuring funding from other sources such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and most recently the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (e.g. g15 housing associations in London, Case 12);
- weighing up the costs and benefits of involvement and particular projects through appraisal and evaluation and establishing whether certain kinds prove self-financing through generating efficiency savings (e.g. Housing Corporation, 2003);

Box 7: Working together in tackling anti-social behaviour

Some housing associations have found it difficult to access Local Authority Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) which are important vehicles for agencies sharing information and resources and devising successful collective ways of tackling anti-social behaviour. To facilitate better working arrangements with Coventry CDRP, the 13 housing associations working in the area have used Innovation and Good Practice Funding to form a consortium. Its staff of two also provide training and support to consortium members.

The 17 largest housing associations in London are working together to develop a common approach to dealing with problems of anti-social behaviour which will mean that tenants will benefit from receiving a consistent service. This move should also facilitate the exchange of good practice.

Source: Housing Corporation (2004)

Resident engagement and empowerment

Housing associations are contributing to three separate but overlapping agendas in respect of community engagement:

- community involvement: which entails local people taking part in public decision making, participation in general community activity and provision of services by community and voluntary organisations;
- community empowerment: which involves providing access to basic rights and opportunities, more consumer choice, supporting community activities and networks and involvement in how services are delivered;
- community cohesion: which includes the degree of common vision and sense of belonging, respect and appreciation of diversity, common opportunities and good relations between people from different backgrounds.

This review of good practice encountered a wide variety of effective forms of community engagement. Housing associations and partners have tailored

their approach to local circumstances as community relations and degree of cohesion, extent of diversity, local capacity, professional attitudes towards and support for community involvement can all vary appreciably. However, we did detect some common success factors:

- relating well to residents from different sections of the community by listening to their respective concerns, communicating proposals clearly and welcoming feedback;
- mapping and opening sensitive lines of communication with 'hard-to-reach' groups and setting out, at the outset, clear and measurable 'success criteria' for evaluating this engagement as recommended in relation to BME communities, for example, in the ODPM/Housing Corporation 2004 Report 'Empowering communities, improving housing: Involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities' (Ealing Family Housing Association, a subsidiary of Catalyst Housing Group, demonstrates good practice in this respect);
- comparing and contrasting community and service professionals' views and undertaking thorough

groundwork to identify levels of service provision and local needs by, for example, carrying out baseline residents' surveys and service audits against which to monitor subsequent progress;

- utilising a variety of means to reach different sections of the community (e.g. one of the best examples of this is INclude's Community Engagement Programme – see Case 14);
- providing an opportunity for community involvement at every stage of the programme;
- developing community facilities which can build social capital, cohesion and provide residents with opportunities for engagement and progression, for example in training and employment terms (e.g. Poplar HARCA, Case 5);
- giving residents a real stake in the outcome by supplying local job opportunities, and either establishing or giving residents the opportunity to deliver local services by, for example, supporting the setting up of Resident Service Organisations (e.g. INclude Environmental Services Case 9; support offered by certain Tenant Management Organisations - see Priority Estates Project, 2004);

- encouraging community self-help initiatives through modest financial support and contributions in kind and supporting local champions, advocates, entrepreneurs;

These findings tend to echo those of a review of Community Participation Programmes which concluded that the six key requirements for community involvement are to attract the widest range of groups, help groups see their contribution to neighbourhood renewal, build confidence by supplying the necessary training, let the community lead as much as possible, be representative and demonstrate transparency (NAO, 2004).

Case 14: Good practice in community engagement – INclude Liverpool.

INclude's community engagement programme was set up by the Engage Business Unit (Tic Consultants) and INclude and is part funded by the Housing Corporation's Community Training and Enabling Grant Programme. It started in the spring of 2003 (originally as the Community Involvement and Implementation Project) and involves staff from INclude, TiC Consultants and CDS Housing (all members of the PLUS Housing Group) alongside community groups and volunteers and external partners and agencies. The programme is made up of a number of projects:

- community Board Members (elections/development and training/support);
- focus Groups (five: covering housing and regeneration, safer neighbourhoods, children and young people, environment and health and social regeneration);
- Rapid Response Panel/ Community Evaluation Team (a panel of local people representing a cross section of residents to appraise projects, test ideas and review plans/proposals);
- INclude Community Chat Shop (via visits and freephone calls to a residents' resource centre).
- Reach out to the BME Community (a range of methods but importantly through membership of the Black and Racial Minority Network, part of the Community Empowerment Network of the Local Strategic Partnership);
- Toxteth Park News (a community newsletter);
- annual road shows (for information dissemination and canvassing community views);
- Neighbourhood Planning Process (covering 13 neighbourhoods and two micro planning areas); and
- outreach/capacity building (training in IT, environmental and arts skills and regeneration and practical work experience).

Tic Consultants have just completed a second-year evaluation of the Community Engagement Programme, reporting favourably on the levels of participation achieved and the programme's overall inclusivity.

A number of lessons and critical success factors are identified: "The most valuable lesson learnt has been an acknowledgment

of the sensitivity required when actively engaging the community in regeneration. It is extremely important to spend adequate time in working with the community to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their role and the extent to which their role is one of decision making at a strategic level or local level or whether the purpose of engagement is to inform or consult.”

Critical success factors include:

- people at all levels from grassroots to decision makers need to have a clear understanding of all the issues (with an engagement policy and terms of reference helpful in achieving this);
- in-depth local working knowledge is crucial for officers and lead-in time and experimentation is necessary (with carefully monitored/ evaluated pilot studies helpful for larger scale initiatives);
- community support is essential and will vary according to the level of participation (with induction schemes, formal training and informal support networks all being successful);
- all officers involved in the area should be given training in community engagement;
- there should be a continuing effort to widen the circle of community engagement;
- feedback mechanisms are important for letting community representatives know where and how they have influenced decision making and for recognising the value of their participation.
- clear terms of reference are needed to demonstrate the type, level and extent of different methods of engagement and how the different methods link to the overall framework;
- well defined channels of communication are vital to ensure that information is shared and the results of engagement are fed into the decision making process;
- regular reviews are needed to ensure that the engagement programme is meeting its objectives. Activity should be allowed to evolve and develop and it is also important to recognise when engagement is not working and needs to be curtailed or modified; and
- building strategic links can enable more effective delivery of outputs, prevent duplication and reduce the need to resource work.

Source: Liverpool Housing Trust (2004); Tic Consultants (2005)

Effective initiatives

As already pointed out, a vast range of projects has been introduced under the banner of neighbourhood management. However, it is not possible to give a definitive list of which of these projects have been successful for a number of reasons:

- neighbourhood contexts and needs both vary, demanding different types and combinations of projects;
- many neighbourhood management and neighbourhood service projects tend to be very recent and have often not been systematically evaluated;
- some projects are pilots and it is too soon to tell whether they will become permanent once special funding ends; and
- most such interventions only prove effective in reviving the fortunes of struggling neighbourhoods if they are part of a wider package of measures.

Having said this, tentative lessons are emerging concerning effective implementation and certain kinds of project have been consistently well received by residents. All lead housing associations have orchestrated preparation of a Delivery

Plan or Action Plan specifying problems, interventions and intended outcomes to guide future activity and also facilitate evaluation and review. Our audit of good practice revealed that housing associations and other housing organisations delivering neighbourhood management felt that the following kinds of project had achieved an impact and/or offered value for money:

- initial small scale, short term ‘quick wins’ projects which raise the profile and credibility of programmes, counter disenchantment with existing services and previous initiatives, inspire residents and boost community confidence;
- one-stop shops and/or community centres which prompt partners to widen their perspective, review the way they structure local service provision, focus more on service accessibility issues and the provision of social, health and leisure facilities rather than simply basic services and infrastructure;
- multi-purpose buildings featuring service co-location and space for community organisations can also generate a great deal of energy, self-help and commitment from the local

community, especially if they can be locally run;

- local training and employment projects, which can enhance local ownership of the initiatives and level of accountability;
- allocation of comparatively modest sums of money for community projects which boost local confidence (e.g. community grants scheme, North Ormesby, Middlesbrough); and
- joint initiatives with private sector (e.g. new local cash points, retail facilities).

Overall, there appears to have been most success to date in the areas of improved community intelligence, re-engineering street services and waste management, additional local policing and preventative community safety initiatives, 'one-stop shops' and other forms of service integration, local employment measures and better youth provision.

There is less comprehensive evidence about the effectiveness of neighbourhood service delivery organisations since they are much thinner on the ground. An evaluation of resident service organisations has, however, shown that they can be successful not just in employing local

people to provide neighbourhood services (e.g. cleaning, graffiti removal, childcare, garden maintenance, plumbing and minor repairs) but also in improving the local skills base and also reducing the sense of powerlessness. However, they require committed and able leadership, strong support from partners organisations (such as Housing Regeneration Companies and Tenant Management Organisations), contracts that can quickly become self-financing and imaginative fundraising efforts to offset higher than normal core management costs associated with training and managing inexperienced staff (Priority Estates Project, 2004).

Policy lessons and implications

This review has shown that housing associations and indeed other housing organisations are in many respects well placed to make a significant contribution to the Government's neighbourhood agenda owing to their ethos and long term stake in many localities and generally good links and rapport with residents. The fact that many are well regarded and trusted by tenants presents them with many opportunities to act as support agencies for all kinds of resident-led initiatives. Many are now committed to playing a wider role and delivering more than just affordable housing and have begun to match intentions with deeds. On the other hand, the overall scale of such investment remains modest. Significant intervention has only occurred in selective circumstances where housing associations have concentrations of stock, a good track record and reputation, the necessary influence and either sufficient internal capacity and resources or access to special funding regimes.

As the report has demonstrated, housing associations do need to exercise careful judgement in deciding upon the extent of their wider role given the pressures they are under to deliver their core business. Furthermore, there is little point in housing associations usurping the role of other

agencies. However, there currently seems a greater risk that housing associations' wider role is both underappreciated and underplayed. Wider neighbourhood measures are seen by some housing professionals as overstressing housing associations and jeopardising their core business. On the contrary, as this report has shown, properly thought through, justified and orchestrated measures should be seen as integral to core business because they should yield longer term benefits and savings. Evidence suggests that many housing associations are not procuring their share of resources from wider regeneration programmes. Allocation of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the neighbourhood element of the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund to housing associations has been comparatively modest and many have been fringe players in local Local Strategic and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. Many such partnerships have been local authority dominated and changes in funding streams and rules have presented a further barrier to take up, at least initially. Also some housing associations have interpreted neighbourhood management too narrowly as just a more extensive version of intensive housing management. Some housing association-run Neighbourhood Warden

“This is not a numbers game, it’s a community drive. We are about building communities, not just building units.”

David Miliband, Minister of Communities and Local Government.
Interview in Inside Housing, 16 September 2005

schemes have been guilty of this. As a consequence of all this, there is a risk that housing associations will not be able to influence strategic policy discussions and utilise related funding opportunities. There appears to be scope for the sector to adopt a much more proactive, confident stance by playing to its unique strengths.

This review has also revealed that housing associations can perform a niche role in neighbourhood management and service delivery even in areas where they do not manage significant stock. Housing associations have a long tradition of accommodating and supporting sections of the community with special needs such as young people, members of BME groups, elderly, young offenders and those suffering from mental health problems. This means that they have a potentially important role to play in community engagement work,

especially with the harder to reach, and also initiatives which seek to build community cohesion. Another indigenous strength of social housing organisations which has lately been receiving more recognition is that organisations such as co-operatives and tenant management organisations have encouraged community self-help and harnessed residents’ ideas and energy and strengthened social networks.

In the light of the report’s findings, we propose the following recommendations, some of which primarily concern social housing organisations, others the Housing Corporation.

Social housing organisations should:

- carefully consider where it is appropriate to play a leading or active role in neighbourhood management and service delivery taking into account local circumstances and the interpretation of such concepts that are being applied, community views and preferences and also associated costs, benefits and risks to their core business;
- seek to maximise benefits and minimise risks by playing to their unique strengths and ensuring that

the neighbourhood is both a viable and meaningful entity, residents and service providers are fully engaged and committed to the initiative and that it has the strategic backing of both local authority and the Local Strategic Partnership and fits well with local, regional and national priorities;

- ensure (if they control stock in run down neighbourhoods) that their business is structured in such a way as to allow them to deliver both the Government's efficiency and neighbourhood agendas (e.g. subsidiary organisations within group structures) or in the case of smaller more community-based housing associations establish a robust case for specialising in providing housing management and certain neighbourhood management/services functions, perhaps on behalf of other housing associations;
- undertake joint marketing to make other stakeholders more aware of the breadth and significance of their wider role in neighbourhood management and service delivery;
- work closely with other housing organisations in assessing local market conditions, agreeing

appropriate divisions of roles and also deciding where rationalisation of stock holdings is necessary;

- facilitate partnership working with other key service providers by forging umbrella groups and alliances and nominating leading social housing organisations;
- be open to engaging in new cross-tenure initiatives and forging closer relationships with community and voluntary organisations;
- consider innovative and effective methods of funding neighbourhood management such as gifting of land and other resources, sale and leaseback deals and equity sharing agreements;
- ensure that they can offer tenants a spectrum of opportunities for involvement ranging from supplying information, consultation, participation in decision making, choice of service options to commissioning or even running some services; and
- ensure that this spectrum of involvement opportunities is sensitive to the particular needs of 'hard-to-reach' groups and communities, including BME communities.

The Corporation should consider:

- including neighbourhood management and service delivery and community empowerment as themes in its recently established Gold Award for the dissemination of good practice;
- extending and developing recent attempts to measure the value added of housing associations so that the performance of different types of housing organisations can be fully and fairly assessed and compared;
- working with ODPM and other government departments to alleviate the burden of regulation, inspection and bureaucracy on social housing organisations to deliver wider services by, for example, exploring joint accreditation and selective waivers perhaps linked to past performance - this is a particular problem in the supported housing sphere;
- giving more explicit recognition of, and credit for, housing association involvement in neighbourhood management activity in Housing Corporation Assessments;
- waiving the '49% rule' as this could discourage the emergence of multi-purpose neighbourhood organisations which appear to be a logical concomitant of the government's choice agenda;
- encouraging innovative and effective methods of funding neighbourhood management such as gifting of land and other resources, sale and leaseback deals and equity sharing agreements;
- advising whether Government policy facilitates different levels of community engagement and empowerment and is sufficiently consistent in terms of the rules, funding and regulations relating to different forms of tenure;
- working with the Government and the Local Government Association to ensure that central and local government housing policies – for example, on homelessness and tenant nomination – reinforce rather than undermine housing association initiatives in neighbourhood management;
- commissioning further research on the relative effectiveness of different kinds of organisational arrangement and varying housing association roles in neighbourhood management and service delivery as many initiatives are comparatively recent and have not

yet been systematically evaluated and compared;

- commissioning more place-based research to explore how well different kind of communities and neighbourhoods are being served by housing organisations. Evaluation of housing policies in the past has often tended to have been either programme, initiative and tenure specific rather than place-specific and this also applies to neighbourhood regeneration initiatives. Place-based research would also show how effectively social housing organisations are responding to new government agendas, exploiting neighbourhood funding regimes and working effectively with each other and other key service providers. It might also reveal which forms of support and capacity building have most helped residents to become involved in influencing or managing local services;
- commissioning more research into housing futures, along the lines of ODPM's New Horizons programme, especially on such subjects as how best to deliver both efficiency and neighbourhoods agendas (along the lines of London & Quadrant Group's

inquiry into the implications of consolidation);

- redoubling efforts to research and disseminate independently verified good practice on housing associations' wider role since this continues to be overlooked or insufficiently acknowledged, especially in publications by key Government Departments such as the Home Office, despite initiatives such as InBiz;
- recommending to ODPM that more independent evaluation is carried out on the cost-effectiveness of housing association neighbourhood management and neighbourhood service delivery initiatives and the comparative performance of different service delivery organisations; and
- recommending to the ODPM and other relevant Government departments that a proofing exercise is conducted or commissioned to ensure that the links between housing and other Government policies are fully appreciated and understood.

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Up your street

Housing associations and the neighbourhoods and communities agenda

Making sure that services are delivered effectively at the neighbourhood level has never been more important. Involving residents in local decision making has almost become a given. Housing associations have been at the forefront of implementing what's known as the Government's neighbourhoods and communities agenda.

This report gives the context behind the Government's approach to neighbourhood governmental arrangements and service delivery. It also assesses housing associations' capacity to play their part, by offering examples of good practice in neighbourhood management and service provision and highlighting critical success factors, and pinpoints policy implications for the social housing sector.

