



## **Solutions for entrenched deprivation on small estates Summary Report – September 2009**

### **1. Foreword**

There are many small social housing estates where residents experience profound deprivation and disadvantage. These can be among the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in an area, but are often not big enough to attract substantial regeneration funding or management initiatives. These estates sometimes become the housing of 'last resort', home to the most disadvantaged and excluded families and individuals in a community.

The aim of this project is to identify new approaches to tackling long-standing problems in such estates. We will draw on the lessons from intensive practical work with three estates in South Shields, Coventry and Kent, as well as wider research and practical evidence. An important part of this project is to understand why previous regeneration initiatives and ongoing work at neighbourhood level have not succeeded in tackling underlying problems of deprivation and poverty.

In each neighbourhood we will carry out focused research with residents and practitioners and professionals to get a picture of what life is like on the estates, exploring both day-to-day challenges and the long-term social and economic problems for residents. This information will be used to bring together residents, community groups and local public agencies to take part in an action planning process to collaboratively design and develop approaches to alleviate these problems. The Young Foundation will secure a commitment from the stakeholders to take forward ideas developed in the action plan.

The intention is to devise potentially radical options, addressing social, environmental, physical, economic and tenure issues, not simply looking at the conventional range of regeneration or neighbourhood management approaches. This project intends to tackle the causes rather than the symptoms of disadvantage and exclusion in a unified way.

The Young Foundation will draw out the experience from each estate to share lessons and develop replicable approaches that can be used on other small estates in England, with a focus on those that can be delivered against a likely background of recession and scarce public sector resources.

The Young Foundation's work is being funded from an Innovation and Good Practice Grant awarded by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) in 2008 and managed on their behalf by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH).

This is an interim report setting out the Young Foundation's approach to the small estates project and summarising findings from the initial phase: the scoping fieldwork in each location.

The report includes:

- our definitions of small estates and entrenched deprivation
- the criteria used to select the three estates
- a summary of findings from the first stage of the project
- detailed case studies about each estate
- a review of relevant literature on housing and neighbourhoods and the national policy context for this work
- an overview of our research approach
- information about the next phase of the project.

This phase of the project is not intended to provide a conclusive investigation of the problems that residents face on the three estates. Rather, our aim is to explore residents' experiences of the places where they live through in-depth conversations and group discussions. We are looking at both the difficulties residents face and what they like about their neighbourhoods, in order to understand how living on the estates either mitigates or exacerbates social and economic problems. We will contrast these experiences with the perspectives of professionals and practitioners working on the three estates to explore why deprivation is so hard to tackle in these communities.

It is important to note that this report reflects only the early findings from initial scoping work with each estate. There are important areas that still require more work, in particular around the role of local housing policy and the recession. As the project progresses we will build on this work with a deeper analysis of the function of the estates in the wider area. We will carry out further research at local authority level to understand how our early findings relate to overall patterns of resource allocation for housing and welfare, and we will look at how the recession and wider economic patterns are impacting on the estates. The majority of this work will be critical to the success of the next phase of the project, the local action planning.

The following perspectives have been recorded through in-depth interviews and group discussions with residents, community workers and local public agencies. All responses have been anonymised. The names of the estates have been removed from this report because the areas of housing are so small it may be possible to identify individuals who live and work there. Throughout the report we refer to the estates as for example 'the Coventry estate' or 'the Kent estate'.

## **2. Our approach**

### **2.1 *What do we mean by small estates?***

For the purpose of this project we have defined small estates as those with fewer than 500 households, with a neighbourhood geography and/or identity that clearly distinguishes the estate from other parts of a neighbourhood.

The figure of 500 households is to some extent arbitrary, as an estate of this size in a densely populated urban area is relatively much 'smaller' than a similarly sized estate in a rural town. However, our conversations with local and national agencies about 'small estates' have suggested that 'less than 500 households' is a useful benchmark for describing small pockets of housing.

### **2.2 *What do we mean by 'entrenched deprivation'?***

We have defined 'entrenched deprivation' as persistent and profound poverty and disadvantage that has proven resistant to change and improvements in quality of life for residents.

In each of the three areas included in this study, we have used a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures to determine whether the estates have problems of entrenched deprivation. We have looked at data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation, looking at super output area and ward level statistics in relation to other local neighbourhoods, along with local authority and housing association sources such as neighbourhood surveys. However, for these three estates, as is the case for many small neighbourhoods, statistical data does not reflect the 'true' picture of local deprivation as understood by local professionals, practitioners and residents. For example, in Coventry and Kent the two neighbourhoods are both in super output areas that also contain more affluent areas of housing. Official statistics are therefore skewed and mask the true extent of local deprivation.

To address this weakness in the available evidence we talked to local authority officers and local public agencies with first-hand experience of working in the three areas. In each case, local agencies confirmed that the three small estates have long-established issues with multiple forms of deprivation that have prevented improvements in the quality of life and outcomes for residents over time, and, in the case of the Coventry estate, have been overlooked when previous regeneration opportunities have arisen because of problems with statistical representations of neighbourhood deprivation.

### **2.3 *Where are we working?***

The project involves work with three small estates:

- an estate of 269 households in a deprived neighbourhood near the town centre of South Shields
- two adjoining estates of 500 households that form part of a larger estate neighbouring a village in Kent
- a small area of housing (290 households) in a much larger estate in Coventry.

More details about the population and tenure of the estates, and our criteria for selection, are in Appendix A.

### 3. Summary of findings

'Does size matter for small housing estates?' is a central question for this project. Our hypothesis is that size does have an effect in reinforcing problems of entrenched deprivation for the three small estates.

We have identified several factors relating to the smallness of the estates that appear to be significant, and have developed the following hypotheses:

- in very small areas of social housing official measures of deprivation, such as super output area statistics, often disguise the real extent of deprivation as understood by local people and local agencies because data is skewed by the presence of more affluent households. This means resources are allocated to other estates or neighbourhoods that appear to have more pressing social needs
- in very small areas of social housing, problems with routine service delivery and estate management, such as rubbish collection, street lighting, street cleaning and basic repairs, are much easier for services to overlook or ignore, especially if estates have a poor reputation. This is because poor performance against service level agreements can be masked by performance data for neighbouring areas and agencies can make arguments against taking action because of the high cost of tailoring services to a very small area
- housing allocations policy can appear to have more negative effects in small estates because concentrating vulnerable or chaotic tenants in a very small area of housing has, or appears to other residents to have, a proportionally greater impact than in larger areas
- if small estates are very isolated from surrounding neighbourhoods there appears to be a greater risk of there being an estate culture that limits people's mobility and aspirations. This is because opportunities for experiences outside the boundaries of the estate are limited.

The problems we have identified are not unique to the three small estates in this project. Our work has revealed a familiar picture of poverty and disadvantage that affects communities of all sizes around the country. However, our aim with this study, and in particular with the next stage of the project, is to explore what function smallness plays in concentrating problems on these estates, and whether size also provides opportunities to develop highly targeted and practical responses.

We have identified three different approaches to tackling problems of entrenched deprivation, which we feel provide a framework for developing local action plans and practical solutions for the three estates. These approaches are:

- tackling everyday issues through public service provision
- improving local economic, social and physical conditions through regeneration
- interventions to tackle underlying causes through non-conventional means.

Each of these approaches relates to a different tier of issues. For example, the first relates to the policies and performance of public services that affect day-to-day quality of life on the estates, from the discussion of cleaner, safer and greener options, to housing and health services.

The second relates to issues that are tied into local or regional economic decline. In both South Shields and Coventry, the industrial decline has caused serious, long-term social and physical as well as economic consequences for the small estates in this study, and the wider area. Major regeneration schemes have been proposed for both areas, presenting opportunities for agencies to think about holistic approaches to estate regeneration that include, for example, estate-based training and employment programmes alongside physical improvements.

The third relates to the emotional, attitudinal or behavioural issues that underpin people's quality of life. These factors have a major influence on people's levels of happiness and melancholy, and directly affect an individual's ability to flourish. All three estates have issues that fall into this category: low-self esteem, resilience, expectations and aspirations. These are issues that serve to reinforce problems caused by deprivation, while also being a result of entrenched poverty. Traditionally, tackling emotional issues is not within the mainstream remit or toolbox of approaches for local agencies. In both South Shields and Coventry we identified mainstream services trying to address underlying issues through non-conventional methods. Teachers at the local community college in South Shields are trying to improve young people's outlook through classroom-based lessons to build resilience. In Coventry, the estate's largest social landlord is going into the secondary school and delivering lessons on being a responsible social tenant.

We propose to use these categories as a framework for the local action planning phase of the project.

This section of the report summarises the main observations and issues from the scoping fieldwork on each estate. Detailed case studies are contained in Appendix A, which provide a full explanation of the findings and supporting data about each estate.

### **3.1 *Identity, reputation and self-esteem***

Local perceptions about the reputation and identity of the three estates show interesting variations and reflect wider issues of pride, belonging and self-esteem in the neighbourhoods.

Constructing the boundaries of an estate or neighbourhood is a conceptual and highly personal experience, influenced by daily routines, local facilities, personal history, the proximity of friends and family, transport links, physical landmarks and various other factors. Unsurprisingly therefore, there was variation in how people talked about the identity or reputation of the three estates in the study, influenced by whether they were residents or professionals, how long they had lived in the area and the strength of their local connections.

However, observations about reputation and the distinctions between the 'good' and 'problem' areas within these small estates were reasonably consistent. For example, in all three neighbourhoods there is a clear hierarchy accorded to different estates within the neighbourhood. This hierarchy is constructed from a number of factors, including the identity and reputation of the estate, which in turn is based on the

behaviour and values of residents, and the design and quality of the housing and the estate.

On the South Shields estate, most residents interviewed state that they are happy with where they live. There is a lot of casual neighbourliness on the estate, with people saying hello to each other on the way to local shops or chatting to each other while they sit in their front gardens.

Most residents described the wider neighbourhood as a good place to live and many people who leave the area return to be close to their family and friends. Older residents have a strong sense of pride and belonging to the neighbourhood, although they fear this is being lost in the younger generations.

Local agencies reported that residents do not like to be described as deprived or poor, which suggests a stoicism about their circumstances, but also reflects the overall deprivation in South Shields and the wider Tyneside area. Arguably, this sense of pride reflects a broader sense of belonging that is attached to living in South Shields, which is built on historical notions of strong community networks and connections to major industries. However, the neighbourhood has a poor reputation in the wider community. While residents from the estate acknowledged this, they felt that the outside perception was exaggerated, in spite of the extensive anecdotal evidence describing the extent of domestic violence, substance abuse and child poverty in the neighbourhood. This conflict reflects the widespread deprivation and social difficulties in the South Shields area. The town and the Tyneside region have suffered from the decline of major industries; the population is falling and as one interviewee stated, "there is no reason for people to come to South Shields anymore".

Neighbourhood identity and reputation play a different role on the Coventry estate. To the residents of Coventry, the estate is simply part of a wider neighbourhood that has a very poor reputation locally. Lots of young people revel in this and use the neighbourhood's reputation to project bravado and toughness. Within the wider neighbourhood, the estate ranks at the bottom in terms of reputation and desirability. It has a sense of belonging that is 'owned' by longstanding extended families; newcomers are not welcomed on the estate. This exclusive sense of belonging has created a strong sense of hostility, which is directed at newcomers and perceived outsiders. The result is high levels of racism and harassment of vulnerable residents.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that residents are stigmatised and looked down upon by some local agencies and service providers. Several interviewees, both residents and agencies, used the word 'neglect' when describing the area – a word aimed at agencies as well as at residents. One resident described his ability to speak confidently on the phone – knowing the "right things to say" as the reason why he is able to get his housing association to "get things done". He felt that this was something other residents lacked. Other interviews revealed a sense that some staff from local agencies felt residents were 'lucky' to receive the services they did, given where they were from.

This picture is mirrored on the Lower and Upper estates in Kent, although with less overt hostility between residents. Again, the estate has a poor reputation among local public agencies and residents from other parts of the village, including the more affluent estates. The relative isolation of Lower and Upper from the rest of the village, combined with long-standing and intermixed family networks, have created a strong sense of belonging on the estate. However, there is little of the pride exhibited in South Shields, as one local worker put it: “I don’t see the aggressive response to the label of poverty on the estate, people don’t have that sense of pride”.

### 3.2 *Social networks and local wellbeing*

The idea of social capital, made prominent by the work of the academic Robert Putnam, has gained significant traction in both social policy and practice. Strong social networks that span ethnic, class and cultural divides are seen a vital component for the development of successful mixed communities. The evidence suggests that communities that are high in social capital are more likely to feel positive effects such as low crime rates, less grime, better educational achievement and better health.<sup>i</sup> In addition, strong social networks are an important factor in determining feelings of belonging to a community; those that have family and social networks living close by are more likely to feel as though that place is where they belong – their home.

Both social capital and a sense of belonging are important concepts in the emerging literature surrounding wellbeing, or happiness. Research by the Young Foundation reinforces the view that having friends and family locally contributes to belonging to a place, and to consequent feelings of wellbeing.<sup>ii</sup> However, social networks and a sense of belonging can also have a negative effect on people’s wellbeing and the wellbeing of communities, as proponents of the ‘neighbourhood effect’ claim. Our research supports these assertions; the existence or absence of local social and family networks has profound effects – both negative and positive – on the wellbeing of residents in all three of the estates.

Across the board, residents with friends and family close by mentioned them as the best thing about living in the area. In Lower and Upper – estates with a high volume of intertwined family networks – strong family networks are seen as a major source of support and social life for local people and are consequently central to residents’ sense of belonging. The abundance of multiple generations of the same family is testament to this.

On the estate, social networks offer similar comforts to local people. Two young people we spoke to stated that they were happy in the area and had no desire to move away both because of family and, more importantly, because of the friends they had grown up with who would always stick up for them. Social networks based on ethnicity and religion are an important part of everyday life for the estate’s close-knit Arab community. One elderly Yemeni resident who had recently moved out of the area told us of his dissatisfaction at being further away from his community. He now walks two miles a day to visit the mosque on the estate and his main sources of support, such as transport to the hospital, are still provided by local residents. His

main desire for the future of the estate would be for the dwindling Arab community to be as strong as it once was.

Our research highlights the importance and benefits of strong social networks to the daily lives of residents and their sense of belonging to their communities. However, our research also demonstrates the drawbacks that high levels of social capital can have when it is concentrated in a homogenous community, social capital that does not cross class, ethnic or cultural divides.

Many of the estate's residents have strong local social networks akin to those described above. However, these social networks appear to create a sense of exclusivity that makes life difficult for newcomers to the neighbourhood. Harassment targeted towards any kind of newcomer to the estate was a common thread through our interviews with residents and agencies. One woman who moved to the estate from a nearby neighbourhood had young people knocking on her door and throwing stones at her window when she first moved in. She felt that there were a couple of longstanding extended families on the estate that felt they "owned the place and no one could say anything to them".

People who are 'different' – whether it be in terms of disability, ethnicity or religion – are not welcomed onto the estate by most long-standing white families. Black and minority ethnic (BME) families have not created strong social networks locally. Most stay in their homes and do not interact with other residents, and parents are often too frightened to let their children play outside. These households lack the protection that social networks afford other residents, including those perpetrating the harassment. One family, which moved to the estate for four years, liked living there and believed that the local relationships they had built acted as a shield against the harassment others experience.

The 'exclusive' nature of local belonging is also seen in Kent. The estates' established and intertwined extended family networks do not always welcome newcomers – especially if their behaviour does not conform to local norms. These norms do not just adversely affect newcomers. A dominant estate culture has emerged that is built on a strong sense of family obligation and local belonging. This culture appears to limit aspirations and the hostility towards newcomers minimises the influence their different values and lifestyles may bring.

In addition, the intensity of local networks and obligations can be a source of tensions. Agencies report of family allegiances changing frequently; we were told of a family that was forced to move from the estate because of harassment from their own extended family. The family being harassed had refused to get involved in a dispute between their neighbours and members of their extended family.

### **3.3 *Local economic influences***

Unemployment is a significant issue for residents on each estate, although the local circumstances are different in each case. In all three areas, the decline in local industry has impacted on the residents of the estates. This appears to be more prominent in both Coventry and South Shields, where once dominant local

industries – car manufacturing in Coventry and the mining and maritime industries in South Tyneside – have disappeared, with long-term social and economic consequences.

Out of the three areas, unemployment has been most strongly felt in South Shields and Coventry. Most of the older residents we spoke to told of a history of employment, either in the main local industries or in neighbourhood businesses that served those industries. In contrast, the younger generations of these residents' families were often unemployed and looking for work. Older generations acknowledged that employment was scarcer and expected their children and grandchildren to struggle finding jobs. On the estate in Coventry and the wider neighbourhood there is a sense that the decline of the car industries has undermined the purpose of the estates, which were originally built for workers at the main manufacturing plants.

Aside from the obvious economic hardship of having a very low income, long-term unemployment affects individuals, families and communities in other ways. Unemployment is linked to loss of individual social networks and self-esteem, but when these effects are amplified across a community, the impact on neighbourhood businesses and social life can be devastating. Many older residents of the estate talked nostalgically about the local shopping area and how it had once been a hub of local activity; today many of the shops are boarded up and empty, awaiting demolition.

More work is needed to look at these three estates in relation to economic patterns in the wider area, and in particular to consider the local impacts of the economic downturn.

### **3.4 *Estate culture, childhood and aspirations***

When residents talked about their experience of early childhood, school, family and local social networks, it was clear how influential these factors are in shaping their aspirations and choices about where to look for a job or where to live.

The opinions of service providers and frontline staff echoed these findings. Many felt that family instability and parenting problems play a part in perpetuating deprivation in these neighbourhoods. Specifically, agencies identified the following issues:

- parents have low aspirations for their children and low levels of involvement in formal and informal education, which translates into poor educational outcomes for young people
- children often start school lacking communication skills or the ability to play, which agencies suggest is linked to limited parenting skills
- parents from these estates are reluctant to engage with services like Sure Start, because they are not seen as accessible by residents
- play areas and youth services are either very limited or non-existent for children on these estates
- children are reported to have very low self esteem and low aspirations.

Parental involvement in formal and informal education is reported to be low in all three areas. Agencies frequently spoke of their frustration at trying to get parents to return consent forms for visits and activities. Workers described how many parents need assistance to complete consent forms and that they may not complete forms as a way to avoid this situation.

Residents and agencies on each estate painted a picture of children who are self-reliant from an early age. Examples frequently cited, include very young children feeding and dressing themselves for school and caring for younger siblings. For example, a 15-year-old going to the library or the park with a "two-year-old brother in tow" was described as "not uncommon" by agencies and residents from the Coventry estate.

In a sense, this resilience helps young people deal with the daily difficulties they face, but it does not provide them with the life experience, confidence or self-esteem to challenge the estate culture or local norms of behaviour in a way that would enable them to improve their quality of life.

In all three areas, residents described Sure Start as a service for "more aspirational" or "more middle class" families. In Kent, where the Children's Centre is at the heart of the estate, most parents who use it do not live locally. Agencies reported that new parents from the South Shields estate generally prefer to use another local community facility rather than Sure Start.

These stories suggest there is an estate culture or neighbourhood effect that reinforces social and economic problems for people living on the three estates. Local social networks are exerting strong pressure on people to stay local, limiting their horizons and opportunities for development. On the estates in Coventry and Kent there is a distinct culture that is derived from the strength of the most well-established families on the estates and their ability to resist, or at least limit, change brought by newcomers. As one resident of the Coventry estate said, "these families coming into the area are making it better, because they just want a decent life. Before all you had were the problem families".

### **3.5 *Local Housing Policy***

Local housing allocations policy appears to play a role in aggravating some of the problems on these three estates.

In South Shields there is a specific problem with the concentration of single person's accommodation in one block on the estate. Many of these young people lack the skills needed to clean and manage their homes, look after themselves or resist pressure from friends to use their flats for parties. The concentration of chaotic tenants in one place creates problems for their more settled neighbours and reinforces the estate's reputation as housing of last resort. South Tyneside Homes and the local authority have acknowledged problems with the single person's block and are looking at various options for change, including partial demolition. If this were to happen, it would not be for at least two years. Some kind of interim solution is needed that does not simply shift the problem to another estate.

Housing allocations policy appears on the surface to have less severe consequences for the other two areas, although both Kent and Coventry have a reputation for being the least desirable estates in their local area. In all three areas, the estates' undesirability means that only people who are most in need, or are unfamiliar with their reputation, will choose to live there. Generally, the tenants with the most pressing problems are concentrated in the worst areas of housing on these two estates. These tenants often find it difficult to move on to better housing once they have a home, even if it is unsuitable for their circumstances, because they are no longer a priority in terms of housing need.

In Coventry there is a perception that the estate is used disproportionately to house homeless families or those in temporary accommodation. Whether or not this is true, it causes concern for some residents. While the council continues to house families from a refugee background in the area, this perception will fuel tensions and create difficulties for newcomers to the estate. This problem is not unique to the Coventry estate but it does illustrate the importance of agencies understanding very localised social dynamics and the myths and rumours that underpin these relationships.

More work is needed to understand how housing allocations policy impacts on these three estates, in particular for Coventry and Kent. Arguably, it is not policy on choice-based lettings that is the cause of problems with the single person's block on the estate in South Shields, or for BME families on the Coventry estate, but the way the policy is implemented locally. A variety of approaches exist to manage, or at least minimise, the problems associated with vulnerable tenants. However, in many cases the resources required to tackle very localised problems are simply unavailable.

### **3.6 *Design and environmental issues***

Each estate has problems with the local environment that impact on residents day-to-day quality of life. These include issues with poor design or landscaping, and in the case of Coventry, with poor estate management.

Local agencies are aware of the problems on the estates in South Shields and Kent. In South Shields plans are in place to deal with landscaping that makes the estate feel claustrophobic and makes residents feel unsafe. However, there is evidence that some of the problems with poor management are influenced by the negative attitude of some frontline staff towards residents of the estate in Coventry. Here, size becomes an issue because it is easier to mask poor performance in a very small area of housing, especially if that housing already has a bad reputation.

### **3.7 *Service delivery***

In all three areas there was a significant difference in opinion between residents and agencies about the scale of local problems. Broadly speaking, all the agencies, practitioners and elected members interviewed for this study felt the estates had complex and entrenched problems that create difficulties for residents and limit their opportunities. Some residents identified the same problems as local agencies, but

often did not agree about their severity or long-term consequences, while others did not identify parenting or family issues as local problems. This can be explained in part by deprivation being the norm on these estates, but on the South Shields estate it is also influenced by feelings of pride and belonging that are rooted in the neighbourhood.

Differences in opinion between service providers and users are not surprising. But in these three areas the differences appear to create specific local problems. First, agencies struggle to get residents to use services from which they would benefit, such as Sure Start or school trips. Engaging residents is an issue for local agencies but there appear to be other, more significant barriers to residents using services offered, such as the perception that services are not relevant or not accessible to people like them. These feelings are likely to be reinforced by the way all local agencies deliver services and treat residents on these three estates, not only services that are seen as being for aspirational families, like Sure Start, but also street cleaning, landscaping, lighting or parks, where the results of neglect are immediate and highly visible.

Second, the three estates have suffered longstanding difficulties and, arguably, neglect by agencies and politicians. Each estate has its own history of loss: industries decline and disappear; pubs and post offices close; and attempts at regeneration are promised by national and local politicians but not delivered, or even worse, not promised at all, and estates are left to themselves. Invariably, there are stories and experiences of broken promises, mistrust and misunderstanding.

In Coventry, continuity emerged as an important theme in relation to services. Continuity of staff helps build relationships and trust between services and residents. Importantly, it allows people to voice problems and feel that they are being listened to by someone who has an interest in the area and will be accountable for local problems.

### **3.8 *Neighbourhood working and community capacity***

Approaches to neighbourhood working are relatively new in Coventry and South Shields, and in the former, the neighbourhood management team is serving a very wide area so has limited resources to focus on the estate in this study. However, it is clear that there are environmental and estate management issues that could be addressed through better co-ordination between agencies. This would go some way to improving relationships between services and residents and in the long term, encourage residents to get more involved in local decision making.

Arguably, more targeted and better resourced neighbourhood working could provide a model of collaborative working to tackle some of the underlying issues identified in this work. Neighbourhood working is often limited to dealing with rubbish, recycling, street lighting or grime, and is frequently criticised for its inability to tackle wider social issues. However, it is an approach to partnership working that could just as effectively bring together agencies to focus on local wellbeing or worklessness programmes, assuming there is the political will to support this work locally. There is considerably interest in local government on how the

neighbourhood working agenda could evolve beyond cleaner and green issues, and this work presents an opportunity to explore this.

However, advocating neighbourhood approaches raises questions about the capacity of residents from these and other small estates to engage with services. In all three cases, there are very low levels of resident engagement with local agencies, councillors, neighbourhood management where it exists or other community-based organisations. On the Coventry estate there have been attempts in the past to establish a residents association, but these have been abandoned reportedly because people were suspicious or disinterested. In South Shields, there are strong social networks built around the mosque and Yemeni community; local church and other voluntary sector organisations operate from nearby estates.

### **3.9 *Being small: how does size affect these estates?***

'Does size matter?' is a central question for this project.

Our definition of small estates as areas of predominantly social housing with less than 500 households is somewhat arbitrary. It is worth noting that residents and agencies of the Kent estate do not think of it as small, despite it meeting our criteria for a small estate.

However, size does appear to make a difference for the three estates in this study. First, the official picture of deprivation as reported in ward-level or super output area statistics often masks the true picture of deprivation as understood by local people and local agencies. For Coventry and Kent the problem lies with more affluent households neighbouring the estates that skew the overall picture of disadvantage. As a result, resources and, in Coventry's case, significant regeneration investment, are redirected to other areas of apparent greater need. Official statistics, but of a different kind, are also a problem for the South Shields estate. Here, low levels of engagement with services mean that many residents do not report problems, in particular, crime and anti-social behaviour, which gives an inaccurate portrayal of local problems.

Size also matters in relation to services. Routine problems like grass cutting, street lighting, basic repairs or rubbish collection are much easier to ignore in a small area of housing, especially if households have a reputation for being difficult or troublesome.

For these three estates the negative effects of housing allocations policy appears to be more concentrated because the areas of housing are so very small. The proportion of vulnerable or chaotic tenants as a percentage of the overall number of households is, or appears to other residents to be, significant. The high rates of churn associated with the single person's block in South Shields Estate or refugee families in Coventry create instability and anxiety for established residents.

The most complex issue related to the smallness of these estates concerns mobility and aspirations. It appears that the estate cultures in Coventry and Kent that focus on well-established family networks and preserving localised norms of behaviour are influenced by size and location, both of which help to separate residents from

other neighbourhoods and therefore preserve their inward-looking nature. Of the three estates, the South Shields estate seems to be least effected by a dominant estate culture, although aspirations and educational achievement are still low. Arguably, this is partly due to its location, with good transport links to the town centre, and its position as one of a number of small estates in the neighbourhood, and it is also partly due to the diversity of the neighbourhood, with its longstanding Yemeni community. However, it is difficult to substantiate these claims.

#### **4. Concluding points**

We recognise that this fieldwork does not answer all the questions the project set out to address. Over the coming months we will be continuing conversations with residents, local agencies and in some cases, national agencies, to fill these gaps.

In the next stage of the project we will explore these problems with residents, community groups, local agencies and councillors through a process of local action planning. We have two aims for the local action planning process: first, to inspire residents and local agencies to think differently about the causes and symptoms of entrenched deprivation for the South Shields, Coventry and Kent estates. And second, to encourage them to develop practical, effective and, where appropriate, radical solutions to these problems. Despite the project's emphasis on seeking out radical or transformative approaches, we recognise that 'radical' does not have to mean experimenting with new or high-risk interventions. It can mean applying thinking, experience and initiatives from other sectors or other parts of the world in a new context. It can mean addressing political and cultural issues, for example, to enable local agencies to work together in new or more effective ways, or designing neighbourhood working programmes that target local wellbeing or health issues, rather than focusing on the cleaner, greener agenda.

## Appendix A: Case Studies

### Case Study: South Shields

#### 1. Introduction

This estate is one of three distinct estates in the most deprived neighbourhood in South Shields, the largest town in the metropolitan borough of South Tyneside.

It has less than two hundred households ranging from one-bedroom flats to four-bedroom maisonettes. Of the housing on the estate, 74 per cent is rented social housing, 21 per cent is privately rented and 5 per cent is owner occupied. This compares with figures for the borough of South Tyneside of only 38 per cent social rented housing, 6 per cent privately rented and 56 per cent owner occupied.

#### 2. Context

##### *2.1 The borough of South Tyneside*

To some extent, the reputation of this estate and the neighbourhood it sits in mirror perceptions of the borough as a whole. South Tyneside has suffered from the significant decline in major local industries, such as shipbuilding and coal mining, which has left a legacy of economic inactivity and severe social consequences. The population of roughly 150,000 has fallen from approximately 157,000 in 1993. People are leaving South Tyneside, with fewer coming into the borough; the population is forecast to be approximately 145,000 by 2020.<sup>iii</sup> Rising numbers of older residents and lower numbers of children and young people are compounding the falling population.

Nearly half of the borough's super output areas are in the top 20 per cent most deprived in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Unemployment is currently 7 per cent – higher than the national and regional figures of 4 per cent and 5.3 per cent respectively.<sup>iv</sup> In recent years the borough has had some success in attracting jobs in the service industry. Other successes include improvements in the proportion of pupils obtaining at least 5 GCSE's grade A\* to C (from 51.7 per cent in 2005 to 55.5 per cent in 2006), and the second highest reduction in teenage pregnancies in the country in recent years.

Acknowledging and reflecting these and other major issues in the borough, South Tyneside's Local Area Agreement focuses on six priority themes:

- promoting a sense of place, cultural opportunities and wellbeing
- helping every child and young person achieve their potential
- making communities safer and stronger
- helping people to live independent and healthy lives
- helping people into jobs and encouraging enterprise
- building a sustainable environment with great housing and transport links.

## 2.2 *Deprivation in the neighbourhood*

The problems facing many of the areas in South Tyneside are felt on a more acute scale in this neighbourhood. It has a population of c. 1,200 people, split up into 618 households situated around the main road in and out of South Shields. The area borders the Tyne River and is in close proximity to South Shields town centre; to walk there would take less than 20 minutes and buses are frequent.

According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, the neighbourhood is in the top 2 per cent most deprived super output areas in England. The area has the highest child poverty and older people in poverty figures in the borough (64.3 per cent and 45 per cent respectively) and suffers from higher levels of worklessness than the borough as a whole. In 2006 there were 13 per cent on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) compared to 11 per cent in the borough as a whole. Thirty-two per cent of the population have a long-term illness, health problems or illness which limits their ability to work.

## 3. **Our Findings**

The estate was built in the early 1970s. There are 269 residential properties on the estate with a mixture of one, two, three and four bedroom homes. Some are street level houses while others are flats or maisonettes. Of all of them, 182 are managed by the council's arms length management organisation (ALMO), South Tyneside Homes; 14 properties are privately owned on leasehold from South Tyneside Homes, 57 are privately rented and 16 are owned by another social landlord, NomadE5.

The estate has the highest concentration of single person's accommodation in the borough, which is, according to local housing officers, prone to high rates of population turnover. Despite this, the small number of right-to-buy households alongside tenants who have lived there for a long time create a settled feel on much of the estate.

The estate appears to play two contrasting roles for local people. In one sense it is seen as a desirable place where people choose to live because of good transport links, the availability of a better property or to be closer to friends and family. Most of the people who choose to live on the estate are happy to raise their children there. On the other hand, it is a place people move to because they have no other choice. These are largely people who move into the single person's accommodation, but also include families that have been designated as homeless. Those in the latter category, specifically those living in the single person's accommodation, come under intense scrutiny when local residents talk about local problems.

These problems generally fall into two categories, which are described in more detail below. First, there are the surface issues: the anti-social behaviour, drinking and drugs associated with the single person's block, as well as low levels of engagement with local services and civil society. Second, are the more deep-rooted issues, concerns which relate to self-esteem, aspirations, parenting and family life.

The estate and the surrounding areas are described by some as friendly and others as scary. Those who have family and social networks locally find it a pleasant place to

live, aside from day-to-day annoyances such as the design of the estate or nuisance caused through anti-social behaviour. Residents who have had little choice but to move to the estate are more inclined to feel trapped, wanting to get out to more peaceful accommodation. One individual we spoke to, who had no choice but to move to the estate, suggested that the local culture was not friendly; she did not interact with others and was afraid to let her children out to play.

### **3.1 *What people say about... the design of the estate***

The design of the estate is best described as claustrophobic. The estate looks in on itself, with the focus of properties and pedestrian routes being through the centre of the estate. There are several paths which serve as entrances and exits to the centre of the estate, which cause problems for policing and patrolling the area, as well as emergency services access. In addition, open spaces are filled with bushes, trees and other forms of shrubbery, some of which are in specially designed planting areas. The planting was done with good intentions; however, in combination with the many paths through the estate they impact negatively on residents' perceptions of safety. Some residents are unwilling to walk through the middle of the estate, even in the daytime.

These design issues are recognised by local agencies and in particular, South Tyneside Homes. Some work has been done to remove shrubbery from one part of the estate, which has been highly approved by the residents. South Tyneside Homes are planning to remove more, but this is dependent on budgets. The majority of local residents highly approve of these plans.

### **3.2 *What people say about... the single person's accommodation***

The single person's flats on the estate are the main source of complaints by local people and a burden on local agencies. The accommodation is not desirable and those who choose to live there via the Choice Based Lettings system are often those who are desperate to leave their parental home. Most of these residents are young and have no experience of managing their own household; basic skills, such as paying bills, cleaning and maintaining a property are scarce.

Lots of these young people follow a similar pattern of behaviour. They start off by inviting their friends around to drink and smoke marijuana. The combination of drink and drugs in such a concentrated environment results in a lot of anti-social behaviour. This behaviour ranges from parties with other residents in the flats, to criminal damage and intimidation – particularly of others living in the blocks of flats that choose not to conform to this pattern of behaviour.

Friends eventually overwhelm the property and tenants will typically break their tenancies in order to get out, often within nine or 10 months of moving in. These kinds of tenants can leave the property needing significant repair and are in rent arrears. This will eventually become a burden for them if they re-enter the housing system and are asked to repay arrears to be considered for another property.

Reports of anti-social behaviour rarely come from within the single person's blocks. It is usually the more settled residents who report to the police, local wardens or the estate officer. The general impact of those living in the single persons accommodation on the more settled residents is far from positive. The anti-social behaviour and intentional or unintentional intimidation exacerbates fear of crime and perceptions of safety.

Local agencies have responded to the problems caused by the single person's accommodation through more intensive management, which proved unsuccessful at changing the behaviour of tenants. There is a perception among agencies that Choice Based Lettings has resulted in housing officers no longer having control over who moves into the properties, in particular vulnerable tenants. However, this was not the intention of Choice Based Lettings policy. Experience from elsewhere indicates that there is still scope for agencies to set the terms of the scheme, thus retaining an element of control.

Vulnerable tenants who need to move out of their flat because of safety or health reasons are given priority by South Tyneside Homes. There are discussions taking place over the future of the single person's flats, considering the option of demolishing some of them. If this were to happen, it would not take place for at least two years.

### **3.3 *What people say about... parenting and family life***

Some of the issues described above are symptoms of underlying issues relating to parenting and family life. The issue of parenting came up frequently throughout our research, mainly from the perspective of agencies, which described how the problems families are dealing with could be categorised by the age of the children.

#### *Early Years, 0- to 5-year-olds*

There are a number of factors that emerge during pregnancy and early years for some residents of the estate and surrounding estates that are worrying for local agencies. According to professionals, there are high rates of pre-pregnancy depression amongst young women alongside high rates of post-natal depression. The stress and strain on young single mothers is compounded by their living arrangements. On the estate, new mothers living in the single person's accommodation quickly request moves to an alternative property, which can take up to a year. The waiting time causes significant distress and compounds the problems for mothers with post-natal depression.

More widespread concerns emerged over general parenting skills, which were seen by almost all agencies to be the root cause of many local issues. Most professionals described experiences of parents neglecting the health of their children, for example, not treating head lice or taking children to the doctor. In the worst examples, parents were described as prioritising their own needs, such as spending money on large flat screen televisions rather than on food or clothing for their families.

Local agencies reported how there is “little understanding about what good parenting is” and how, in the worst cases, children receive very little emotional warmth. This is described as “learned behaviour passed on through the generations”, which suggests strong differences in opinion and values about what constitutes good parenting between agencies and residents. The results of what agencies describe as ‘poor parenting’ are reported as some children lacking the ability to play or interact and communicate properly with other children – a factor that is compounded by a complete lack of play facilities on the estate for young people of any age.

In addition, local agencies report that Sure Start is seen as being for ‘more middle class’ families and not for those living on the estate.

Most parents involved in our research did not necessarily articulate the views expressed above regarding parenting. Instead, their concerns were about safe areas for play in the immediate areas surrounding their homes and the complete lack of play facilities on the estate for children of any age. One resident we spoke to did express concern about the nature of local children and their effect on her son, who is easily led astray by others. When asked what she would like to change, she stated “more morals”.

#### *Primary School Age*

The issues highlighted above are more visible when children progress through primary school.

Teachers at the local primary school describe a struggle to engage parents with both the school and their children’s education, and report that books and the Internet are not used for educational purposes at home. The diets of most young children are poor and they are not capable of making good choices when feeding themselves, although the school has recently developed its own small allotment, which is making a small difference.

Those working with young people either in a school or community setting report that the world inhabited by young people and their families is small – something which starts at an early age. Few children will go on holiday during school breaks and rarely will they go to the beach, which is just 15 minutes bus ride away. According to those working in the primary school, this can be seen when pupils talk about how they spent their summer holidays. As they grow up, children seem happy with the area, as they have very low aspirations, something which emerges more during their adolescence. This view is shared by some of the residents we spoke to; one man, who had travelled the world as a seafarer, felt the minimal experience that young people had of other areas meant that “some of them did not have a clue”.

### *Secondary School and teenage years*

The most striking impact of problems during childhood on adolescents and young adults living on this estate and in the neighbourhood is low self-esteem, low expectations and, consequently, low aspirations.

Most young people in the local primary school go to the local comprehensive. Young people, rather than parents, often make the decision to go to the comprehensive because it is where their friends go. The school has a mixed reputation amongst residents but has made impressive strides in recent years, and last year received its highest ever GCSE pass rate. The secondary school has defined low self-esteem and low aspiration as a major concern and is taking steps to address the problems.

According to staff at the comprehensive, very few pupils want to go to university. Some go on to college or straight into work; others are happy to leave school and claim benefits. Most young people are happy to stay in the area, either living at home or preferably in their own property. This is where the cycle potential returns to the kinds of issues described in the single person's accommodation section.

Through the Young Foundation's Local Wellbeing Project, the school is trying to raise self-esteem and build emotional resilience – in the hope that it will help young people react constructively to the challenges they face. Anecdotally, these efforts are having an impact, and these findings are reinforced by a recent early evaluation conducted by the London School of Economics. The school is also in the process of restructuring, following a model devised in the United States that encourages a greater sense of community in the school and responsibility amongst students for each other's welfare.

### **3.4** *What people say about... the assets of the estate*

Despite all of the problems that have been mentioned, many local residents state that they are happy with their lives. They do not like to be described as poor and the older residents in particular exhibit a sense of pride and belonging to the area. There is a lot of casual neighbourliness: people saying hello on their way to and from the local high street or sitting in their front gardens and chatting over a cup of tea or can of beer. This does not regularly translate into more meaningful relationships but is an indication of the values and levels of civility that some local people fear is being lost in younger generations.

The settled nature of many of the inhabitants of the estate and local family and social networks are an asset for the area that helps generate the kinds of community spirit hinted at above. While community involvement in neighbouring estates is strong and continuously improving, there is little community activity within this estate and residents rarely get involved in events and activities in the adjacent neighbourhoods. Given the right support, resources and opportunities, there are residents who would put themselves forward to be involved in tangible change. The area's close-knit Arabic community and the mosque around which they congregate are very much part of this picture.

Tangible opportunities exist to involve residents in change, in particular in conversations about an unused park to the west of the estate. The park is owned by the church and was identified by most residents involved in this research as something that should be transformed into a resource for the estate. Some local officers saw the ownership issues as a barrier to development; however, the enthusiasm of local residents to see the park's development merits further discussions between the owners and local agencies.

The other main assets of the estate are the primary and secondary schools. The secondary school is community-orientated and tries to involve parents wherever they can. There is a desire within the school to turn the site into a lifetime area, bringing in new mothers and babies early on, encouraging them to become comfortable within the school. The secondary school is an asset to the area for similar reasons, but also for the schools' experience of delivering classes to build self-esteem and emotional resilience. Staff members are trained to deliver school-based classes that build emotional resilience, something that could be translated into the wider community setting.

#### **4. Summary**

Some of the issues described above are specific to this estate, whilst others apply to other parts of the neighbourhood, South Tyneside as a whole and other, similar estates across the country. The problems associated with the single person's blocks, while being a symptom of deeper issues, are of significant concern to local people and local agencies. They are caused by a high concentration of single person's accommodation that are unattractive to all except those that are desperate or forced to move out of their parental homes. These blocks, combined with the design of the estate and external factors, such as media hysteria over knife crime, raise fear of crime and effect perceptions of safety.

An in-depth look at local circumstances reveals a picture of low self-esteem, low expectations and low aspirations. These issues manifest themselves in a variety of ways, including low parental involvement in education, an acceptance of worklessness and a lack of exploration of lifestyles that differ from the local norm. These issues relate to both the circumstances of family life on the estate and a local culture which has established norms of behaviour that do not create opportunities for young people to flourish. These deep-rooted issues reinforce the cycle of disadvantage that, in some cases, keeps several generations of the same family rooted in poverty.

These issues are related to the local economy and the lack of local job opportunities since the decline of traditional industries. As some older people observed, there is no pride left in the area.

The scope of this project is very limited so it would be unrealistic and unfair to local residents to promise local jobs as a result of the action planning. However, there is scope for local agencies to work together to tackle some of the underlying issues.

## Case Study: Coventry

### 1. Introduction

This estate contains a total of 606 homes, of which approximately 290 are included in this study. Of the 606 homes 42 per cent are rented social housing, 15 per cent are privately rented and 43 per cent owner occupied. This compares with figures for Coventry as a whole of 18 per cent rented social housing, 13 per cent privately rented and 69 per cent owner occupied.

The estate is a small group of streets in a much larger estate and neighbourhood that is amongst the top 20 per cent deprived areas in England. The neighbourhood has a poor reputation in Coventry. It is viewed by people outside the area as run down and not a desirable place to live.

### 2. Context

#### 2.1 *The city of Coventry*

The combination of Coventry's geographical position and the precision engineering skills of its workforce put the city in a position to take advantage of the huge expansion of the auto industry in the post-war era. The large factories with production line assembly that grew during the 1950s and 1960s generated a seemingly inexhaustible demand for semi-skilled labour and tens of thousands of workers migrated to Coventry and the relatively well-paid jobs on offer. These came from all across the UK and Ireland, with later migrants arriving from South Asia.

The city spread out beyond its historical boundaries as large areas of both council and private housing were built. The rapid growth of the city resulted in phenomena that, while not completely unique, were and remain particularly 'Coventry' in their effect. The city's 'aristocracy of labour', i.e. the skilled engineering tradesmen, became owner occupiers to a greater extent than occurred in many industrial cities and much of Coventry appears to be a large suburb of semi-detached houses with a garage and good sized gardens. The semi and less skilled aspired to owner-occupation but initially at least took the council housing available, and this, perhaps reflecting the confidence and comparative affluence of the people they were built for, was usually built on a similar pattern to the private housing.

#### 2.2 *The neighbourhood*

The estate is in a highly polarised ward in terms of deprivation. In 2007, three of the top 10 areas in terms of household income in Coventry were in this ward. Conversely, two of top 10 lowest household income levels were also in the ward. Mean household incomes in the neighbourhood are 85 per cent of the Coventry average whilst for the ward as a whole they are 99.9 per cent. House prices in the neighbourhood before the current recession were 78 per cent of the city average while in the ward as a whole they are 102 per cent.<sup>v</sup>

The neighbourhood itself has a population of approximately 5,500 residents and is in the top 20 per cent of deprived areas in England, showing above average rate of most of the factors correlating with deprivation, such as living in private rented or social housing, and with below average rates of car ownership and economic activity. It has an above-average population of young and older residents with 44.1 per cent being either below 17 or above 65 years of age, compared to the Coventry average of 39.1 per cent. The single parent household rate is 12 per cent, compared to the Coventry average of 8 per cent, and the population is predominantly white, comprising over 93 per cent, compared to the Coventry average of 77 per cent.<sup>vi</sup>

### **3. Findings**

Our findings are roughly split into two categories. First, there are issues over routine services delivered on the estate, mainly relating to housing and environmental services. Second, there are issues regarding community cohesion, family life and parenting. This section begins by discussing the latter set of issues.

#### **3.1 *What people say... about local people***

The neighbourhood in general and the estate in this study in particular have a poor reputation. In interviews for this project the neighbourhood was described as “inward-looking”. However, residents and agencies also expressed the view that people acted tough in their own small patch but did not go far afield and lacked confidence outside their neighbourhood.

It was repeated often in interviews that people didn’t go far from the estate. As a result, opportunities for people to broaden their horizons were felt to be limited. This is reinforced by the design and layout of this small area of housing. It has a feeling of isolation from the rest of the estate because of the roads and open areas that border the houses. This appears to reinforce a very localised sense of difference and exclusion that combined with tight-knit, but not always supportive, social networks has a strong influence over local attitudes and patterns of behaviour. Residents and agencies described how neighbours relied on each other for casual help with childcare or shopping but at the same time talked about how quickly relationships sour over relatively minor disputes and become a source of tension.

Unsurprisingly, the estate’s most well established households have a strong influence over relationships and set the tone and pattern for much local behaviour. Residents described how social networks that appear on the surface to be strong and positive play a role in offering protection to new or more vulnerable families. However, this only applies to the families that are accepted locally.

In recent years, the estate, a previously homogenous, white working class area, has seen an increase in the number of BME families moving to the estate, some of whom are refugees. The perceptions of newcomers varied amongst residents, ranging from displeasure at their reluctance to engage with their neighbours to an assessment that BME families are improving the area through their desire to live a peaceful life. What did emerge from most residents’ interviews and all agency interviews is evidence of

racism, ranging from occasionally name calling to more unpleasant harassment resulting in families having to move away, often into private accommodation.

One experienced worker said the levels of racism on the estate were among the highest he had encountered in his career. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most of the harassment is perpetrated by children and teenagers, but the view was expressed that they were encouraged by their parents. Agencies reported concern about the impact of racism on children, describing how BME families are frightened to let them play outside and how some children have to walk alternative routes home to avoid abusive youths at the local shopping parade.

Agencies describe high levels of distrust towards local agencies. They report reluctance among residents to get involved with neighbours and general cynicism toward community activities. Agencies and residents described how people who cooperated with the council or other agencies had been stigmatised as informers. One resident involved in this project had been labelled as a 'grass' for her community activism, but had stood up to her accusers and was eventually left alone.

In 2008, a group of residents and agencies organised a street party but few people chose to take part on the day. Some left the neighbourhood altogether because they were concerned about conflict. Some agencies also felt that distrust and suspicion were factors in parents' reluctance to sign consent forms so that children can get involved in extra-curricular activities and outings.

### *3.2 What people say... about children and young people*

Interviews with agencies identified issues with parenting, young people and self-esteem as underlying problems that reinforce poverty and disadvantage for the estate's residents.

Agencies reported how parental expectations of children's ability to achieve much at school are very low. Teachers at the local school talked about a culture of low ambition and children were disconcertingly open about not being interested in higher education. Some described how parents frequently expressed the view that there was no point in education, that "it hadn't done them any good". Attitudes to parenting and childcare on the estate were described by agencies as 'casual'. Anecdotes about young teenagers having to care for small siblings at home or out on the street were cited frequently. There was a perception among agencies that local children do not have boundaries set for them by parents and are prone to disrupt any organised activity.

There was criticism from residents about there being nothing for young people to do. A youth club in the centre of the estate suffered increasing levels of vandalism until it was effectively beyond repair. As a result, it was demolished and a basketball court built in its place, with youth work moved into schools instead. A youth worker previously based in the area told us she had done outreach work and used sports facilities and pitches at the university and elsewhere for activities, but she believed that a steady level of locally-based work was needed.

A sports facility 15 minutes' walk from the estate has been open since June 2008 and offers a wide range of sports activities. There was a perception among some residents that the centre was too expensive and that some young people thought it was too far away or just "not for them". On the other hand, we also heard from one mother that children's swimming classes were expensive and were difficult to access as they were in high demand.

Some parents also felt that services like Sure Start were "not for them". The Children's Centre is on the site of a newly built primary school, which serves children from the estate. However, the Centre struggles to engage parents from the estate, reporting that most parents come from "the middle or top end" of the neighbourhood. The consequences may well exacerbate the divide within the neighbourhood, especially as anecdotal evidence from the school suggests that they have noticed a positive difference in those children that have come through the Centre.

Agencies talked about problems with alcohol abuse and how this frequently leads to disputes within extended family groups and neighbours. There is a high reported incidence of young people and pre-teen children regularly drinking alcohol. Young people reported they knew of several cases of children being intimidated by older children and fears of reprisal stopped anyone from reporting issues.

### *3.3 What people say... about services*

Residents of the estate have lost important local services in recent years including a post office, local school and youth centre. There are perceptions among residents of broken promises by local agencies and a lingering feeling of neglect, something which some agencies expressed themselves.

As a consequence, continuity emerged as an important theme in relation to services. Continuity of staff naturally helps build relationships and trust between services and residents, and the neighbourhood medical centre is a good example of this. The centre is run by a team of doctors, health professionals and administrative staff who have worked in the area for some time, up to 12 years in some cases. The centre is trusted by local residents and, alongside the library, it has been a consistent, locally based service.

Some interviews revealed how the estate's reputation influenced the attitude of local agencies to residents from the estate. Interviewees reported that a small number of staff have "written off the estate", which shapes their willingness to address problems on the estate.

Residents consistently voiced concerns about housing management on the estate, which suggests there are problems and not simply unrealistic expectations in the community. Only one resident expressed a reasonable level of satisfaction and that person was frank about needing to know whom to ask, how to ask and what to ask for.

Residents are also concerned about the council's housing allocations policy. The city council retains nomination rights to 70 per cent of the housing with Whitefriars

having the right to the remaining 30 per cent. Whether or not it is true, there is a perception that the estate is used disproportionately to house homeless families or those in temporary accommodation.

### **3.4** *What people say about... the estate's assets*

Those services that do operate out of the estate are strong assets to the community. The library and medical centre have provided continuity to the area even though they will potentially move to the new 'community hub' development in a few years. In addition, the shopping parade, although dilapidated, could be turned into an asset for the area.

The access to green space for residents of the estate is good. The field and play area could be turned into a valuable and much requested local facility. Finally, the potential for building on the existing relationships between neighbours, friends and families is there on the estate.

Levels of social capital are relatively high for an area of just a few streets. Although social networks on the estate exert both positive and negative influences on residents, there is latent opportunity to build on these networks as part of a wider programme of work in the neighbourhood.

## **4. Summary**

Some of these issues relate to administration and management, while others are connected to deep-rooted family and community-based issues. Basic issues with street cleaning, for example, are capable of resolution but do require a commitment by management across the range of services.

However, there are other much more complex problems facing residents that are much harder to tackle. These include very localised attitudes to education and achievement that have a strong influence on young people on the estate and appear to be compounded by low self-esteem and the estate's bad reputation for disorder.

## Case Study: Kent

### 1. Introduction

The households in this study form two small, adjoining estates that are part of larger estate in a village in Kent. The village has two distinct parts; to the south is the more affluent village, and to the north is the estate. The estate is split into three small areas of housing with distinct identities. The two estates involved in this project have 300 and 229 properties respectively.

The larger estate has the highest concentration of social housing in the borough. Approximately 50 per cent of the properties on the estate are socially rented, while the remaining 50 per cent are under private ownership through Right-to-Buy. This can be compared with the figures for the borough where 16 per cent of properties are rented social housing, 8 per cent are privately rented and 76 per cent are privately owned. The estate has a poor reputation locally.

### 2. Context

The two adjoining estates neighbour a village of the same name. The village contains more affluent households and the estates tend to house people on lower incomes. This division is not reflected in official statistics. Ward-level data hides the true picture of deprivation on the estates. However, data on health and incapacity benefit points towards local problem areas: mortality rates are higher than the borough average. 27.30 per cent of the ward's population is considered to be obese, compared with the borough average of 22.5 per cent and the national average of 20.49 per cent. The rate of smoking (26.9 per cent) is also above the national average of 24.18 per cent. The number of incapacity benefit claimants is high at 56 residents per 1000, compared to 36.83 per 1000 in the borough.

The ward has a relatively young population, with 22.86 per cent being 15 and under – one of the highest proportions in the borough and above the national average of 19.66 per cent.<sup>vii</sup> In addition, the proportion of residents aged 30 to 44 is 24.45 per cent, almost two per cent higher than the national average.<sup>viii</sup> The proportion of residents aged 45 up to the retirement ages is lower than the national average.

In terms of household size, the 2001 census showed that the ward had the highest proportion of lone parent households in the borough, at 12.17 per cent. The population is overwhelmingly of white origin, with just 1.53 per cent of black or minority ethnic origin. This figure mirrors the borough's ethnic diversity as a whole. There is also a long-standing tradition of Romany traveller communities either passing through or settling in and around the village. Over time a number of Gypsy traveller families have settled on the estates and married into local families.

Historically, local employment relied upon the agricultural sector, including the production of hops and fruit growing, such as apple and cherry orchards. Residents in Kent were employed in these industries and some also worked within a local research facility, as well as local grain and paper mills. The decline or mechanisation of much of this work has impacted on the local population; however, the ward in

Kent has a high proportion of workers employed as agricultural and manufacturing labourers, cleaners and labourers in the building trade. The proportion of residents working in skilled occupations is low in comparison to the national average.<sup>ix</sup>

As with many other parts of Kent, it is served by a parish council, which is responsible for a range of services including parks, allotments, and managing various community halls.

### **3. Findings**

The two adjoining estates have distinct identities. For the purpose of this report the two estates have been described as Upper and Lower. The Upper is generally considered by residents and agencies to be poorly designed. It has narrow streets and alleyways that are reported to make effective policing difficult. Residents described how they often find their neighbours' behaviour intrusive because public and private boundaries are not well defined. For example, passers-by overlook back gardens and one resident complained about young people sitting on his garage roof. By contrast, the neighbouring Lower estate is more spacious, which residents see as an asset.

Each of the three areas of housing fulfils a different role for residents. Upper has a more transient population than either Lower or the other nearby estate. Broadly speaking, it is where newcomers to the area are housed. If they decide to stay they are likely to try to move to Lower, which is seen as having better accommodation and less anti-social behaviour. Interviewees described Lower as a place where people settle and raise their families. However, even settled residents prefer to move to the other nearby estate, which is most desirable, if they have the opportunity. Many older residents also move there because of more suitable accommodation.

Broadly speaking, Lower and Upper are not seen as desirable areas of housing. Tenants who choose to move to either of the estates do so because they are either young people leaving home, young families who need more space or people who grew up on the estate and want to return to be close to family and friends. The estates also attract people who are relocating from London or other urban areas to have access to the surrounding countryside.

#### **3.1 *What people say about... living on the estate***

Residents and agencies described how many residents from Lower and Upper live most of their lives on the estates. As a result the estate has very close-knit and well-established family and friendship networks. Lower in particular, is seen as a very settled community with strong networks that have grown through marriages between local families. These relationships were described by residents as hugely important to local people as a source of practical and emotional support. As an example, agencies and residents reported on the number of grandparents who play a central role in caring for their grandchildren, who also live on the estate. Many people described how this role is more significant than simply providing childcare.

Grandparents are important in helping raise their grandchildren, so have much influence over family values and practices.

Lower and Upper's strong social networks undoubtedly provide a stable base for local people and feelings of attachment to the estate are strong. However, residents and agencies also described some of the more negative effects that strong networks create. Continuity and tradition appear to be important, especially for the most well established families and for the older generations on the estate. This is evident in frequent descriptions by residents and agencies about "how things are done" on the estate, particularly in relation to family and social life. These strong views appear to restrict opportunities for difference on the estate, which in turn limit people's aspirations. Agencies describe how success is discouraged on the estates, but this appears to be because the emphasis on continuity of family life and relationships is stronger than the desire for change. Most agencies and some residents interviewed said the only way aspirational young people will achieve their goals is to leave the estate, but many return describing the pull of family relationships as their reason for coming back.

As mentioned earlier, many grandparents are actively involved in childcare. Agencies describe how grandparents are very dominant in shaping attitudes to family life by "passing lessons through the generations". Some young parents describe how grandparents (their parents or parents-in-law) impose their views on families, leaving the parents little scope to make decisions for themselves.

Residents and agencies describe how the Lower and Upper estates feel relatively isolated from the rest of the village, "cut off" from local shops and pubs and other areas of housing by the playing fields. This boundary appears to have an important psychological effect on residents of the estate, reinforcing their sense of difference. Agencies and residents acknowledge that difference is often the source of problems on the estate, citing examples of newcomers to the estate, residents with disabilities or 'non-traditional' lifestyles, are harassed and in extreme cases, re-housed.

Day-to-day problems for residents on Lower and Upper appear to revolve around anxieties about crime and anti-social behaviour. Upper has higher levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB) than Lower, which agencies suggest is related to its more transient population and poor design. Overall, the feedback from agencies working on the estate was that fear of crime was greater than actual levels of crime and ASB on the estates. However, there is also anecdotal evidence that much crime goes unreported locally because residents prefer not to involve the police or other agencies in local problems. Residents' concerns appear to be rooted in a generalised fear of young people, especially for older people. A long-term resident felt this attitude had developed over time because there was less for young people to do on the estate today, and young people were discouraged from playing football or games outside because they might disturb people.

Residents and agencies talked about organised crime on the estates involving drugs, weapons and stolen goods. Only one or two families were known to be involved but this caused a disproportionate amount of concern in the community. There was wide spread support from the community last year when agencies worked together and,

using recent crack house closure legislation, evicted a household that was dealing drugs.

### **3.2 *What people say about... parenting and families***

The perceptions of both the agencies and residents involved in our research was that many households and families lacked the skills they needed to create better conditions for themselves. These range from knowledge of basic life skills like managing budgets and paying rent, to eating healthily, maintaining and cleaning properties, and dealing with conflict in a constructive way. In this context, many people talked about issues with poor parenting as one of the factors making it difficult to tackle entrenched deprivation on the estates. They describe how parents have low expectations for their children and how this has implications for young people's educational achievement, aspirations and broader life skills.

An absence of routine or boundaries for children and young people is reported by agencies to be common on the estates. Stories of young children having to wake themselves for school, feed themselves and care for younger siblings are not uncommon. Stories of young people being thrown out of the family home are also common.

Frequent conflict and disagreement within and between families emerged as a consistent source of difficulty for people living on the estate. This appears to be a downside of the strong social networks on the estate. Several people reported how arguments become long-term feuds, which can spill over and result in children being bullied by other young people because their parents have fallen out.

The estate's Sure Start is well used by parents from Lower and Upper. However, differences of opinion about parenting skills between local families and local agencies providing parenting support are reported to have caused some tensions.

### **3.3 *What people say about... young people's aspirations***

People with experience of working with young people and some local residents paint a picture of young people with limited aspirations and low self-esteem, talking about how few young people want to leave the area, travel or go to university.

Teachers report the local primary school is struggling to draw in the children of more aspirational families on the estate, which prefer their children to go to schools outside the estate. Teachers and other local agencies report a high proportion of children from Lower and Upper who start primary school with poor communication skills.

Agencies describe how teenagers act tough but are essentially insecure and lacking the self-confidence to negotiate life outside the estate. Workers describe how young people from the estate struggle to adjust when they are taken to unfamiliar places. Some agencies and people working with young people suggested these problems stem from the limited opportunities for young people to experience life beyond the

boundaries of the estate. Few families are able to afford days out or holidays and these are limited activities for young people.

The school site is currently being redeveloped and will be finished at the end of 2009. There is hope that conditions at the local primary school will improve once this happens. The new site will also host a Sure Start Children's Centre, a community centre and a community cafe.

### **3.4 *What people say about... services***

Generally, residents said they were satisfied with their social landlords and were complimentary about the level of voluntary sector support, especially Age Concern's drop-in session for older people and the Beat Project. The neighbourhood police team has had some success in building relationships with people, as have the Community Wardens. However, other statutory services such as Sure Start and local schools have struggled to engage residents who are most in need of support.

### **3.5 *What people say about... the assets of the Lower and Upper Estates***

Family and social networks are assets to the community, in spite of the fact they exert positive and negative pressure on residents. There are high levels of neighbourliness and acts of mutual support on the estate. Mothers with young children on the estate support each other by arranging visits to Tesco together, collecting each other's children from school or looking after them when they are sick. As one resident told us "I can call on a neighbour and they can call on me". At the same time, relationships between adults on the estate are also described as fickle and residents talked about how people fall out over relatively minor disagreements and find it hard to deal with conflict.

The estate has community development and voluntary sector resources. The Beat Project, a voluntary sector organisation, has been successful at engaging residents and works with local agencies. There is also a Safer Neighbourhoods Team, Kent County Council Wardens and a local church.

The location of the estates is also an asset, in particular, good transport links to London and access to the local countryside and nearby coast. The open spaces surrounding the estates, such as the recreational field that divides them from the village, are also an asset.

#### **4. Summary**

Overall, there is a sense among agencies and residents that Lower and Upper are troubled estates. Agencies describe how residents present themselves as happy with their lives, but under the surface there is a sense of discontent that they do not know how to articulate. Local agencies suggested that many residents wanted to improve both the estate and their own circumstances but did not know how to achieve this. Agencies also identified an estate culture that dominates people's experience of life. The importance of family relationships appears to be emphasised over individual choice and development, which seems to have a strong, negative influence on the aspirations and expectations of young people who grow up on Lower and Upper.

## 5. Research approach

Our approach to this project is to carry out research with residents, professionals and practitioners to identify some of the underlying causes of deprivation on the three estates and then to bring these stakeholders together to tackle local problems in practical ways.

Often, neighbourhood regeneration initiatives are criticised for not tackling underlying social issues and focusing on quick wins such as improving the local environment. The main aim of this project is to identify the underlying causes of deprivation that trap neighbourhoods in poverty for many years. To explore these issues with residents we have focused our conversations on important life transitions such as starting and leaving school, further education, looking for work, starting a family and parenting, exploring how their local social networks, experience of the neighbourhood and housing, and access to local services all interact and influence their lives.

We have used qualitative research methods, including one-to-one and paired discussions, focus groups and ethnography, to develop a picture of life on the three estates. This has involved discussions with a group of residents from each estate about their experience of living in the neighbourhood, focusing on the problems they encounter both day-to-day and over time and the positive aspects of living on the estate. These perspectives have been compared with the views of service providers, professionals, community development practitioners and elected members who work in the estates. We acknowledge that residents and professionals and service providers will have different views on local problems, depending on their own experiences and professional responsibilities. We also recognise that residents' perspectives will be influenced by their age, where they come from and how long they have lived on the estate.

Overall, 84 people have taken part in the scoping fieldwork. We recognised the scale of the research carried out to date is limited; however this group is not intended to be a representative sample of residents. Rather, we want the research to provide a picture of what life is like for some residents to live on the three estates and how these experiences feed into daily life and shape people's aspirations and expectations to help practitioners and professionals to think differently about developing options for tackling entrenched deprivation and poverty in these neighbourhoods. The insights gained from this work will be deepened and enhanced by further research in each area and the local action planning process.

The process of resident participation in the research is also an important element of this project – enabling residents to voice local concerns, to engage their family, friends and neighbours in the research by inviting them to take part in discussions, and creating a local network of residents who will be invited to get involved in the action planning phase of the project. Participation in the next phase will be open to any resident who wants to get involved and will not be limited to those who were involved in the scoping fieldwork phase.

A full description of the research questions and methodology is included in Appendix C.

### *5.1 Scoping Fieldwork - Research Questions*

The research questions for the overall project fall into three broad categories: policy impacts, practice impacts and understanding the local context. Our intention with this project is to understand what function the small estates play within the wider area (for example, as housing of last resort), and therefore to understand why there may have been problems in tackling entrenched deprivation in these neighbourhoods in order to develop new and radical approaches locally.

The research questions for this phase of the project, the scoping fieldwork phase, are as follows:

#### *Residents:*

- their experience of living on the estate, including relationships with neighbours and local people, access to services and facilities
- what residents liked and disliked about living on the estate and their thoughts on local assets that could be built on
- why they moved to the estate and whether they wanted to stay or move to another area
- what they felt about the identity and reputation of the area and what these perceptions were based on
- what they felt about neighbours and local social networks, in particular do people trust and look out for each other on the estate – and how welcoming is the estate to newcomers
- aspirations and expectations for their own lives and their family
- their views on the kind of problems that effected people on the estate
- opportunities or interest in local decision making and discussions about regeneration or neighbourhood working.

#### *Service providers and elected members:*

- their experiences of working on the estate
- perceptions of quality of life on the estate
- views on the problems affecting the estate and the root causes of these issues
- views on the identity and reputation of the estate and how this affects residents and agencies
- how the estate differs from other neighbouring areas, and how their service or role adapts to these differences
- their opinions on the physical, social and emotional assets of the estate
- levels of community engagement with their service or role.

## 5.2 *Criteria for selecting estates*

Our criteria for selecting the small estates for this study are as follows:

- estates of less than 500 households that can be described as neighbourhoods suffering from entrenched deprivation, understood as long-term deprivation and poverty that has been resistant to previous attempts to improve quality of life for residents.

In addition to these basic criteria, we selected estates with different characteristics:

- a small estate within a generally deprived urban area, where there may be other social housing. It is likely that the estate in this category may have benefited to some extent from Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), or even Housing Market Renewal (HMR) pathfinder funding in the past (e.g., South Shields)
- a small estate within a more affluent area, where the majority of neighbouring homes are owner-occupied. This estate may have benefited from SRB funding at some stage, though this is less likely (e.g., Coventry)
- a small estate which may appear relatively large in or at the edge of a rural settlement (e.g., Kent).

## Appendix A

Location	Coventry	South Shields	Kent
<b>No of households</b>	290 from estate of 606	269	559
<b>Tenure and management</b>	<p>42% of properties are rented from a Registered Social Landlord, 15% are rented privately and 43% are privately owned.</p> <p>Coventry as a whole has 18% rented social housing, 13% privately rented and 69% privately owned.</p> <p>The city's largest RSL is Whitefriars Housing Group, which manages approximately 16,000 properties, which is approximately 69% of the city's social housing stock.</p>	<p>198 homes are rented social housing, the majority from the council's ALMO South Tyneside Homes.</p> <p>57 properties are privately rented and 14 are owned under leasehold.</p> <p>The borough of South Tyneside has 38% social rented housing, 6% privately rented and 56% privately owned.</p> <p>The borough has a social housing stock of 23,604 properties. South Tyneside Homes manages 80% of these.</p>	<p>Just over 50% of the housing is socially rented with the remainder largely privately owned as a result of 'right to buy'.</p> <p>In the borough as a whole 16% of properties are rented social housing, 8% are privately rented and 76% privately owned.</p> <p>Russet Homes is the borough's main RSL, owning 6,415 properties, which is approximately 82% of the boroughs social housing stock</p>
<b>Socio-economic data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neighbourhood is within the top 15% most deprived areas nationally</li> <li>-21.3% of people in the area have a limiting long term illness</li> <li>- 22% of people in the area claim a key benefit, compared to 14% nationally</li> <li>- In 2001 over 39% of people aged 16 -74 and living in neighbourhood had no qualifications</li> <li>-11.4% of people in neighbourhood live on less than £5,000 a year (Sources: Index of</li> </ul>	<p>The Super Output Area is in the top 2% most deprived in the country.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The area has a significant BME population (3 times the borough average)</li> <li>- 2007 estimate of children under 15 in neighbourhood – 21% compared to 19.3% in borough</li> <li>- 2007 estimate of retirees in neighbourhood make up 19.6 % of the population compared to 17.3 % in Coventry</li> </ul>	<p>The area is within the 10% most deprived in the county of Kent. Worst deprivation score in the borough for Income, Employment, Education and Skills and Crime, and the second-worst for Health. The area suffers particularly from low levels of educational attainment and skills ranking within the most deprived 10% nationally. (Source: Index of</p>

	<p>Multiple Deprivation 2007 and the 2001 Census, Office for National Statistics.</p>	<p>- 1 person households account for more than half of all households (51.9%) (Sources: 2001 Census, Office for National Statistics and Participatory Appraisal- Laygate Neighborhood Survey).</p>	<p>Multiple Deprivation indicator 2007).</p>
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## Appendix B: Research methodology

### Research Questions

The research questions for the overall project fall into three broad categories: policy impacts, practice impacts and understanding the local context. Our intention with this project is to understand what function the small estates play within the wider area – for example, as housing of last resort – and therefore to understand why there may have been problems in tackling entrenched deprivation in these neighbourhoods in order to develop new and radical approaches locally.

#### *Policy impacts:*

- to what extent do housing allocation policies locally and nationally compound the problems of small estates by tacitly or explicitly increasing concentrations of disadvantage?
- are national and local policies and practice creating perverse incentives to sustain disadvantage, for example through the housing benefit regime?
- what can be learnt from the experience of developing mixed communities?

#### *Practice impacts:*

- what can be adapted from the neighbourhood renewal experience to the needs of a small estate?
- given the changed context of the regeneration framework, what other resources could be mobilised to tackle the problems of small estates, looking beyond the usual regeneration funding options?
- how can other mainstream services, for example children's services, be targeted more effectively?
- what is the potential in the community empowerment White Paper to develop new approaches to local empowerment and accountability?
- what can be learnt from the experience of neighbourhood management – both formal *and informal initiatives*?
- are there lessons that can be learnt from the experience of social enterprise?

#### *Understanding the very local context:*

- what is the impact of local patterns of spatial segregation, and the movement of residents in and out of the estate?
- what is needed to support concentrations of deprivation and vulnerability?
- how could vulnerable, deprived and 'difficult' tenants be housed or re-housed in other areas of the local authority, diluting their concentration in the most deprived areas?
- what is the role of housing benefit policy as a deterrent to taking up work?
- what is the balance between interventions that target vulnerability and individual problems versus those that tackle geographically-based problems?
- what will be the impacts of the recession and declines in public sector spending at the very local level?

- how to preserve the interests of the long-term unemployed versus a different group of more recently unemployed people?
- how to continue the intention of creating mixed communities against a background of rising housing need?

We acknowledge that many of these questions have not have not yet been fully explored and will not be answered until much later in the project. The research questions for this phase of the project, the scoping fieldwork phase, are as follows.

*Residents:*

- their experience of living on the estate, including relationships with neighbours and local people, access to services and facilities
- what residents liked and disliked about living on the estate and their thoughts on local assets that could be built on
- why they moved to the estate and whether they wanted to stay or move to another area
- what they felt about the identity and reputation of the area and what these perceptions were based on
- what they felt about neighbours and local social networks, in particular do people trust and look out for each other on the estate – and how welcoming is the estate to newcomers
- aspirations and expectations for their own lives and their family
- their views on the kind of problems that effected people on the estate
- opportunities or interest in local decision making and discussions about regeneration or neighbourhood working.

*Service providers and elected members:*

- their experiences of working on the estate
- perceptions of quality of life on the estate
- views on the problems affecting the estate and the root causes of these issues
- views on the identity and reputation of the estate and how this affects residents and agencies
- how the estate differs from other neighbouring areas, and how their service or role adapts to these differences
- their opinions on the physical, social and emotional assets of the estate
- levels of community engagement with their service or role.

**One-to-one in-depth interviews with residents**

Interviews were held with residents from each of the estates either in their homes or in a local community building. Interviews lasted an average 45 to 50 minutes, covering the topics listed above in an unstructured manner.

## Focus groups

One focus group was held in South Tyneside with participants of a course at a local charity building. The group was attended by six people from the wider area. The focus groups lasted an average of 45 minutes.

## One-to-one in-depth interviews with service providers

Forty-one semi-structured interviews have been held with service providers across the three areas. These were held in a variety of places, including council and housing association offices, medical centres, schools and community centres. The interviews across the three areas included practitioners from Sure Start, primary and secondary schools, the Church, Mosque, social services, Primary Care Trust, Registered Social Landlords, elected members, fire service, police service, neighbourhood officers, community development workers, voluntary sector workers, a hate crime officer, neighbourhood wardens, youth workers and anti-social behaviour officers.

## Ethnography

In Kent, a researcher spent time talking to participants of an older people's drop-in centre.

## Desk-based research

There is a wide range of literature exploring the relationship between place and deprivation, in particular, the impact of neighbourhood poverty on educational achievement, health and economic prospects.

We have drawn on this body of work to shape and develop the small estates project and will critique the overall findings from the scoping fieldwork and action planning phases of the project against this work.

A literature review is included in the next section of the report.

## Participants

In total 84 people were involved in the scoping fieldwork (see figure 2) in April and May 2009.

*Figure 1: Participants and research methodologies used in the overall study*

Participants	Research Methods	Unstructured Interviews	Semi-structured Interviews	Discussion Groups	Total Number
Residents		26	0	8	34
Ex-residents		4	0	0	4

Councillors	0	5	0	5
Practitioners and Agencies	0	41	0	41
<b>Total Number</b>	30	46	8	84

Figure 2: Participants and research methodologies used in Coventry

Participants	Research Methods	Unstructured Interviews	Semi-structured Interviews	Discussion Group	Total
Residents		8	0	0	8
Ex-residents		2	0	0	2
Councillors		0	0	0	0
Practitioners and Agencies		0	17	0	17
<b>Total Number</b>		10	17	0	27

- Figure 3: Participants and research methodologies used in Kent

Participants	Research Methods	Unstructured Interviews	Semi-structured Interviews	Discussion Groups	Total
Residents		7	0	0	7
Ex-residents		0	0	0	0
Councillors		0	2	0	2
Practitioners and Agencies		0	12	0	12
<b>Total Number</b>		7	14	0	21

- Figure 4: Participants and research methodologies used in South Shields

Participants	Research Methods	Unstructured Interviews	Semi-structured Interviews	Discussion Groups	Total
Residents		11	0	8	19

Ex-residents		2	0	0	2
Councillors		0	3	0	3
Practitioners and Agencies		0	12	0	12
<b>Total Number</b>		13	15	8	36

## Appendix C: Context – Policy and practice

### 1. Social housing: changes in role and ownership

#### *Diversifying tenure*

Since the 1970s, the role of social housing has shifted from providing working class housing for a range of incomes to acting as a safety net for poor and vulnerable households, many of whom, for a variety of reasons, are not economically active. The change in role has been fuelled by a change in ownership. Between 1980 and 2007, 1.85 million local authority and former local authority homes were sold under the Right to Buy. This exceeded the number of new local authority and housing association homes being built, which left social housing stocks heavily depleted. The homes sold under the Right to Buy were often the most desirable – either because of their design or size, or because of their location in popular geographical areas. The Right to Buy has had a particular impact on the supply of affordable housing in rural areas.

Another major change in ownership has been from the large-scale transfer of local authority stock to housing associations. In some local authority areas the ownership of the stock has been retained by the council but the responsibility for its management has been transferred to Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). Since the 1990s, around half of England's four million social homes have been either transferred outright or are now managed by an ALMO. The incentive has been the need to raise the funding required to tackle housing renewal and improvements, in particular to bring social housing up to the Decent Homes Standard, a legal requirement by 2010.

The overall effect of these trends has been that even small, originally homogeneous council estates now have a varied pattern of ownership and tenure.

#### *Increasing concentrations of deprivation*

The impact of changes the Right to Buy has been to concentrate social housing, and therefore social housing tenants, in the most deprived neighbourhoods. As the overall supply of available units has shrunk, competition for social housing has grown, with scarce resources being allocated to those with the highest needs. The residualisation of social housing, and increased levels of vulnerability amongst social housing tenants, are further compounded by social housing allocation policies that indirectly, or directly, push those with most acute needs into the least desirable housing.

New approaches to allocations, including choice-based lettings, have tried to increase options for people in housing need and given landlords more local flexibility in allocations. However, the reality is that those who are most desperate for housing are still most likely to move into the least popular housing because they do not have the option of waiting for a better offer. Levels of housing need remain high and will increase during the economic downturn with rising numbers of repossessions and

falling household incomes. The National Housing Federation predicts that the effects of the recession coupled with the under-supply of homes will lead to over 1.9 million households on waiting lists by 2011; a rise from 1.77 million in 2008.<sup>x</sup>

Research funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government found that tenants generally welcomed the change to choice-based lettings. Tenants reported feeling more satisfied with their house as they had some element of choice and the policy had encouraged applicants to think more flexibly about their housing choices.<sup>xi</sup>

## **2. Mixed communities and the neighbourhood effect**

Since the late 1980s, academics and policymakers have debated whether deprived neighbourhoods with high concentrations of poor households in turn generate greater levels of deprivation through the 'neighbourhood effect'.

The 'neighbourhood effect' is a term used to describe the independent effects on individual social and economic behaviour arising from living in a particular neighbourhood.<sup>xii</sup> Underlying assumptions of the 'neighbourhood effect' are:

- where people live in relative isolation from other geographical areas they have little context through which to view their surroundings, and therefore poverty and deprivation become the norm
- where few residents have paid employment or positions of responsibility, communities do not have the kind of social networks that can help individuals in finding paid employment
- in workless, isolated communities, cultural and behavioural norms can emerge that sanction low expectations and achievement, and condone behaviour that is more often deemed unacceptable in wider society
- in areas of high worklessness, the breakdown of social relationships and tolerance of anti-social behaviour generates additional costs for those managing the area, and management standards and landlord responses are less effective than in less deprived areas.

Thereby, deprived neighbourhoods with high concentrations of poor households and persistent and acute poverty generate even greater levels of deprivation because a certain level of deprivation becomes the norm for the community, resulting in a lack of positive role models, low expectations and aspirations, and anti-social behaviour being implicitly endorsed.<sup>xiii</sup>

Comparisons between deprived and more socially mixed neighbourhoods have found that the poorest in deprived neighbourhoods are relatively socially isolated and lack social networks beyond the boundaries of their estate. In deprived areas people who work and have higher incomes often choose to leave the neighbourhood.

### ***Building mixed communities***

Developing mixed communities has been seen as a solution to the concentration of poverty in particular neighbourhoods. Changes are thought to be fostered by the

increased interaction of residents of different tenures, which promotes 'conversion by conversation', where different ideas are exchanged and shared attitudes fostered.<sup>xiv</sup> It is also proposed that more socially diverse interaction increases collective action and enhances social capital, exposing residents to better quality help so they can 'get on' rather than just 'get by'.<sup>xv</sup> Interaction usually refers to direct communication. However, some researchers have measured interaction by looking at use of shared facilities such as shops<sup>xvi</sup> but the value of this has been queried.<sup>xvii</sup> The theory that mixed communities generate positive neighbourhood effects assumes that owner-occupiers have different and more responsible attitudes and behaviours in relation to their environment than those that rent.<sup>xviii</sup>

Policy for the last decade and more has encouraged the building of mixed developments, with a range of housing type and tenure, and through various new low-cost home-ownership initiatives. However, new social housing is still disproportionately built in the most deprived neighbourhoods and in those areas owner occupation has not provided the expected recipe for success or stability. Houses and flats originally bought under the Right to Buy are often let or sublet to people on low incomes, and high turnover amongst this group generates further instability for local communities.

As a policy idea, mixed communities has been central in New Labour housing policy. It has been seen as a tool for tackling disadvantage, creating more stable communities<sup>xix</sup> and enhancing educational achievement and employment opportunities.<sup>xx</sup> The theoretical and political claims for the outcomes of developing mixed communities are: <sup>xxi</sup>

- improved community reputation
- improved community cohesion and increased participation
- increased local support for neighbourhood facilities
- reduction of negative peer group effects
- better educational outcomes
- more stable communities with a reduced flux of tenants
- better working housing markets
- lower maintenance costs
- enhanced access to employment and employment information networks
- exposure to the social norm of employment.

### *Do mixed communities work?*

Evidence of the benefits of mixed communities is as yet inconclusive. Research has shown that tenants consider living in mixed communities a 'non issue'<sup>xxii</sup>, although research by Kearns and Parks showed that owner-occupiers appear to prefer living in neighbourhoods where their type of tenure dominates.<sup>xxiii</sup> Some research has shown that mixed tenure increases stability as measured by intention to stay, housing authority perceptions and moving patterns.<sup>xxiv</sup> However, other research shows repossessions and voluntary re-sales caused high turnover.<sup>xxv</sup> Some research has provided evidence that increasing the mix of housing tenure enhances an area's reputation.<sup>xxvi</sup> There is also consistent evidence of the positive physical effects on neighbourhoods brought about by developing mixed communities, <sup>xxvii</sup> particularly

in relation to housing design which masks tenure differences.<sup>xxviii</sup> But evidence about mixed communities bringing positive influences on employment is minimal. Lower-income households do not necessarily experience better employment outcomes than their counterparts in single tenure communities.<sup>xxix</sup> This is thought to be because positive effects on low income are more influenced by family circumstances and demographics than neighbourhood.<sup>xxx</sup> Kling et al were able to show evidence of a reduction in crime but there is no available evidence to support the claims that costs were reduced by improved 'self management' of neighbourhood.<sup>xxxi</sup>

There is little evidence to suggest that developing mixed communities fosters the formation of wider social networks. Most research demonstrates that they do not.<sup>xxxii</sup> In fact, a number of researchers contend that this element of mixed communities is overstated and that the importance of differing lifestyles in influencing interaction is understated, as is the importance of ethnicities.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Critics of the 'neighbourhood effect' raise questions about the difficulty of measuring any neighbourhood effects, given the range of factors that impact on individuals within the home, the community and the wider area.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Some claim that the neighbourhood effect is less important than other social and economic factors. Cheshire argues in *Segregated neighbourhoods and mixed communities* that communities of similar people naturally develop in, as he terms, 'specialised neighbourhoods' and that these can offer many benefits to those living there. He argues that the most efficient use of public money is to target resources to support the education and skills development of people living in deprived neighbourhoods, enabling them to settle elsewhere if they so choose.

It has also been suggested, controversially, that not only is there a 'neighbourhood effect' but a 'social housing effect' – that the experience of living in social housing itself causes poverty. Social housing, the Centre for Social Justice has argued, rather than being an 'aid' to social mobility has become an 'anchor', and that 'many of the stable and prosperous working class communities of the 1960s and 1970s have degenerated into sink estates trapping their tenants into lives on benefits from which few ever escape'.<sup>xxxv</sup>

For the government, the advantages of promoting socially mixed communities have, until the recent collapse in the housing market, been practical as well as theoretical. Government has been able to ride on the back of booming private sector housing construction and ensure that social housing is built within new housing developments, or other contributions made to local infrastructure, using Section 106 agreements. The private sector has also been seen as an answer to the regeneration of large council estates. Through demolition, and sale of land to private developers, new, better quality affordable housing can also be funded and built, thereby creating both socially mixed communities and good quality social housing. The downside is prolonged disruption to existing communities, making it more likely that those who can will move out, and also further reductions in the stock of social rented housing as new developments typically include high proportions of various forms of home ownership. Another unintended consequence has been the further concentration of those in the most severe housing need in the most disadvantaged places, as those

who can wait choose the better quality new housing, and those who cannot, or who are not offered housing in new developments, gravitate to the housing of last resort.

There is strong agreement that 'one size fits all' policies are inappropriate and there is subsequently little consensus on the 'best way' of developing mixed communities although Meen et al conclude that big projects are likely to be more successful than smaller projects.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Areas must be at the right point for development. Research by Glaser et al has shown that the poverty rate in a neighbourhood can be used to predict whether interventions will be successful.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Less scientifically, there is wide acknowledgement that sufficient infrastructure such as schools and good quality neighbourhood management must be in place for changes to succeed.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Much of the research addresses the issue of whether 'pepper-potting' tenures is more successful than clustering tenures.<sup>xxxix</sup> There is no clear evidence on this from UK research, although US evidence shows that 'pepper-potting' can act to reduce likelihood of ASB in new developments, although this can make them less marketable.<sup>xl</sup> In addition, 'pepper potting' may be useful in providing a bolster against the propensity of neighbourhoods to become more segregated over time.<sup>xli</sup>

Despite its predominance in policy and practice, there are serious questions about whether mixed communities can be sustained over the long term.<sup>xlii</sup> They argue that government policy may be trying to change a deep-seated way of life and propose that neighbourhoods will always gradually return to a dominant form of tenure.

### **3. Neighbourhood Identity: Place, social networks and aspiration**

#### *Neighbourhood Identity*

Research indicates that neighbourhood identity is established at early stages of each neighbourhood's development and history, and once established is very resilient to change. This has local implications. Housing allocations policy that clusters vulnerable or very deprived tenants in one small estate may concentrate problems in one place and reinforce the poor reputation of a specific area. This is the experience on the South Shields estate, where one single person's block of flats has become the source of local problems and anxieties for other residents and reinforced the area's poor reputation. Reputation also influences the way local services are organised and delivered and how frontline staff interact with residents.

Pre-existing attitudes about the social make-up of neighbourhoods can be immensely powerful and exert significant influence on residents and local service providers, for example, determining the social ambitions set for a neighbourhood, the housing constructed and, therefore, what sort of residents are considered appropriate.

Research claims that neighbourhood identity is defined in different instances according to housing type, style or tenure, social class and status, on historic male employment or inward migration patterns; even though they have altered they still influence perceptions of the neighbourhood.<sup>xliii</sup>

External perceptions, which are often reinforced by local media, are often stronger than peoples' internal perceptions of their own neighbourhood because they lack the subtle understanding of neighbourhood identity that is reflected in very small differences. Residents often perceive greater internal social diversity than the homogeneity that was portrayed by 'outsiders'.<sup>xliv</sup>

### *Place, belonging and social networks*

There is wide ranging evidence to connect the strength of local social networks to a sense of community and also to local wellbeing. Everyday social interactions give people a powerful sense of attachment, belonging and security in their neighbourhoods. Communities rely upon the familiar, often mundane everyday interactions that occur between local people – from talking at the school gate to gossiping in the queue at the convenience store. However, this sense of community is also found to be very fragile and relatively small changes in a neighbourhood, such as the closure of a post office, can have profound effects on local wellbeing.<sup>xlv</sup>

Research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2007) looked at the connection between place, social networks, mobility and the labour market. This study of 180 young people at NDCs in Hull, Walsall and Wolverhampton, identified that place is highly influential in determining young people's life choices and is powerfully connected with their identity. The research found that local social networks are particularly important in shaping young people's aspirations and expectations of work.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Local social networks provide much needed support and encouragement for young people to pursue opportunities, especially if they include connections within the employment networks and role models who can provide help and advice. However, there was also evidence that over-reliance on local networks like family support can reduce ambition and limit choices to familiar options and locations. Some young in this study had very localised outlooks. While some young people appeared content to trade off a reduced set of opportunities in favour of proximity to family and friends, others were not aware of the broader opportunities outside the neighbourhood. In Wolverhampton and Hull most young people in the study viewed getting on in the labour market and getting out of the area as being implicitly linked.

One of the conclusions from this study is the importance of encouraging policymakers to recognise the way in which local, place-based social networks affect aspirations and behaviour in both a positive and negative way, and to provide young people with access to opportunities beyond their immediate neighbourhood.

## **4. Regeneration policy: tackling disadvantage**

### *Area-based approaches*

Since the 1960s, successive governments have sought to ameliorate disadvantage through area-based programmes, variously targeted at cities, districts, neighbourhoods and estates – some issue specific, others more comprehensive in their approach to physical, economic and social disadvantage. The Single Regeneration Budget SRB Programme was one of the longest lasting, funding a huge variety of both public service and community-led activities. Some small deprived neighbourhoods within wealthier areas benefited from SRB.

Since 1998, area-based programmes have been more geographically targeted. The Labour government's most comprehensive and strategic intervention has been the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, launched in 2001 with the aim that "no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live within 10 to 20 years". Under the strategy the 88 local authorities with the most deprived neighbourhoods received significant additional annual NRF funding. The emphasis was on using NRF to instigate change in the delivery of mainstream services. All councils in receipt of NRF had to establish local strategic partnerships (LSPs) – bringing together the public, voluntary and community and private sector. Besides the allocation of NRF, the designated local authorities benefited from advice through the government's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU), received additional funding and support to build community capacity and became the seed bed for a range of new area-based programmes designed to tackle particular issues, such as Sure Start centres and parenting programmes.

Other relevant initiatives have run alongside this, such as the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) pathfinders, designed to revive local housing markets rather than regenerate particular areas. Although these covered large geographic areas, delivery focused on small estates.

One of the unintended consequences of government policy has been the twin tracking of local authorities and communities. Those in receipt of NRF, most of them urban areas, have been in a much better position to develop new forms of local accountability and experiment with innovative ways of delivering services than other areas.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy overall has not been evaluated; however one element of this, the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme, a 10-year £2 billion programme ending in 2008 directed at 39 of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, has been subject to a longitudinal evaluation. The programme was designed to tackle education, health, crime, housing and the physical environment and economic problems in the neighbourhoods. The mantra was that residents would be 'in control', forming the majority on local partnership boards responsible for allocating the funding and running the programmes. The evaluation of NDC has shown some successes particularly in housing, the physical environment and crime, with a moderate impact on education, less so on health and economic activity. This could be partly due to the resident-led boards as they have revealed an enthusiasm for 'safe and clean' quick wins on projects such as environmental clean-up schemes and have less interest in longer-term commitments such as health and education. Other difficulties faced by residents, such as lack of

confidence, lack of perceived skills, declining interest and reactionary decisions rather than rational ones, also tend to undermine longer-term commitments to health, education and economic activity (Lawless, 2004). It should be noted that health and education outcomes take years to unfold and assess (Lawless, 2004).

The NDC promoted local community engagement rather than a more top-down approach but there has been a subtle managerial tightening of the reins that reflects doubts as to the ability of all partnerships to deliver effective programmes of change (Lawless, 2004). Overall, it remains a relatively small scale instrument in attacking social deprivation as the total population in all NDC areas is about 430,000, whereas the Social Exclusion Unit argues that at least four million people live in deprived neighbourhoods (Lawless, 2004). However the government's unpublished analysis of the Index of Multi Deprivation (IMD) still shows that 'patterns of concentrated deprivation have remained largely the same for the past 25 years'.

The NDC was intended to attack problems in small areas of between 1,000 and 4,000 dwellings and also over longer periods of time than is currently the norm (Lawless, 2004).

### *The new regeneration framework*

Since 2007 there has been a shift in government policy from area-based approaches to a focus on the economic aspects of disadvantage – taking as its central premise that 'weak economies are at the heart of poor outcomes for communities' and 'work is the route out of poverty'. This underlay the move from the broad approach of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to the concentration on economic issues in the working neighbourhood fund and regeneration framework. The government's new Regeneration Framework<sup>xlvii</sup>, also recognises and seeks to address one of the acknowledged problems of area-based programmes – that local economic growth cannot be engendered in isolation from the regional and national economy. The new framework will focus regeneration investment on tackling the underlying economic challenges that hold back deprived areas, linking local action more effectively to macro-economic policy at the regional level. However, this approach may marginalise the needs of particular isolated concentrations of disadvantage that fall outside larger concentrations of deprivation. The indications are that the responsibility for such areas will fall on the local authority rather than any initiatives emerging from the new national framework.

### ***Empowerment and engagement***

Community empowerment has been a thread running through interventions to tackle deprivation since the community development projects of the early 1980s – sometimes appearing as government policy, sometimes providing a platform for opposition to those policies. The latest incarnation is in the Community Empowerment White Paper *Communities in Control: real people, real power*, published in July 2008. This paper focuses on all active citizens rather than on people living in deprived areas; the aim is to reinvigorate and strengthen local democracy. While the aims are broad the paper supports many approaches which are of value in building residents' participation in deprived neighbourhoods.

Many of the most enduring and dynamic examples of community engagement have emerged outside the control of agencies, driven by residents' efforts to tackle their grievances and improve their lives. Some of these have involved a strong social enterprise focus, developing trading initiatives or assets for community benefit, sometimes running alongside grant-funded activities, sometimes free-standing.

National policy such as Communities and Local Governments' (CLG) publication *Transforming Places, Changing Lives* 2008 places a firm emphasis on economic outcomes as a key driver for regeneration and reaffirms the government's commitment to devolving decision making and funding to local authorities in regards to this area of policy making. They see this devolution as the best way to strengthen partnerships and give communities strong voices. A minority of the consultation responses to this publication felt that the report should take greater account of the physical, social and environmental benefits of regeneration rather than purely emphasising economic outcomes; for example, the indicator list is predominately economic indicators. This concentration on economic outcomes and improvements might be at the expense of more complex underlying issues. Within this report is the identification of an established link between concentrated areas of deprivation and areas of concentrated social housing and the acknowledgment that residents of deprived areas should benefit from economic opportunities in the wider sub-region. This report has gone some way to provide the private sector with greater confidence by providing clear government investment priorities and greater transparency of decision-making.

### ***The contribution of mainstream budgets***

While small pockets of deprivation are unlikely to get additional regeneration funding, local county and district sustainable community strategies linked to Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets are more likely to provide that focus – not so much in respect of the place but targeted on the people who live there. Many LAA targets focus on improving people's prospects – whether through increased educational attainment, better health or less crime. To achieve those improvements, attention is being given to those populations with the worst prospects – people living in the most disadvantaged areas.

From April 2009 the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will change the way the performance of local authorities and their public service partners is

measured. The new assessment will look at performance against the LAA and national indicator set, and there will be much more emphasis on how local people assess the public services they use. The CAA will also bring a renewed emphasis on effective partnership working. Taken together (the LAA, strategy and CAA), this new structure will make it more difficult for local authorities to ignore the problems that people face in areas of deprivation. However, they will still need to address those problems within main service budgets that are likely to decline sharply after 2010.

## **5. Recession**

### *The impact on people who are already in poverty*

Recent and unforeseen events in the global economy will have a significant and lasting impact on local neighbourhoods. Although the pattern of recession is still unfolding, we know that life for many residents of deprived areas will be shaped by increased worklessness and falling household incomes.

However, this recession is going to impact on different groups than previous recessions, and the characteristics of newly unemployed people will be different from the long-term unemployed, often the long-standing casualties of previous downturns. The 'new unemployed' are more likely to be professionals or from higher-paid jobs. All will have recent experience of work and more job-ready skills than those who have been in no or marginal employment in recent years. Competition for support from the variety of agencies that support people back to work may emerge, pitting the new cyclical unemployed against those who have been jobless for a number of years. Agencies will find it easier to get newly unemployed people back into work – it will be easier to find work for a recently employed financial services employee than someone who has been out of work for a decade.

### *What does it mean for agencies*

A number of factors come into play that will, separately and cumulatively, hamper agencies' efforts in deprived areas. Housing and regeneration agencies working at the local level will be affected by the slowdown in house building, and problems with private finance may hamper their ability to act and deliver services. Voluntary agencies are being hit by the reduction in corporate and trust income, and decline in individual donations. The decline in public spending after 2010 will affect agencies across sectors.

### *Rising housing need*

Increased repossessions and falling household incomes are already increasing levels of housing need and putting a larger burden on housing waiting lists. Against this backdrop, initiatives encouraging balanced and mixed communities may well be scrapped in favour of finding ways to house people quickly, in significant numbers.

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## THE YOUNG Y FOUNDATION

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