

Employment and Skills: The Role of Regeneration in Supporting Communities

Introduction

From Chris Evans, Director, SLIM



Our new Learning Theme looks at how we can get the best jobs and skills benefits from regeneration. Government has defined regeneration as, “a set of activities that reverse economic, social and physical decline in areas where market forces will not do this without support from the government”. Whilst the focus of this Learning Theme is on the link between regeneration, jobs and skills, there are clear lessons for the ways in which local areas can benefit from wider economic development activities.

The new Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) Regeneration Framework highlights the importance of creating jobs and training opportunities for local people before, during and after regeneration projects. The question is just how is this best achieved, particularly in the context of the recession? As a recent All Party Report on Urban Development conceded, “using regeneration to boost local employment not only speaks to worklessness, but also to the growing political and policy interest in raising UK skills”.

The recession has seen a return to a focus on how to tackle worklessness. Regeneration can be seen as having the potential to not only rekindle the local economy but to also lower levels of

worklessness overall. Yet the public funding squeeze is likely to slow the pace of regeneration, and it is thus more critical than ever that the resources available for regeneration, jobs and skills are effectively aligned so as to maximise their impact.

The drive towards better funding and planning alignment is a clear focus of a range of recent policy developments. As our lead article highlights, the Single Integrated Regional Strategy, the requirement for Local Economic Assessment and Work and Skills Plans all are geared to ensuring that there is better alignment between broader economic development activities, jobs and skills. A key resource available to the region is European funding through the European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Our Learning Theme supports the work of the South West Regional Employment and Skills Partnership (SWRESP) and the delivery ESF. We are thus particularly interested in how to get better alignment between ERDF and ESF in this context.

The Learning Theme will produce up-to-date research reviews, a review of good practice and a workshop. Through this you'll be able to share ideas, develop recommendations, and network. We are also keen to hear your experiences.

So, if you have an interest in better linking regeneration, jobs and skills, then please do take this opportunity to get involved, have your say and influence policy in the region. Just complete the attached form and send it back to us. I hope you will be joining us for what promises to be a stimulating and timely discussion.

The Learning Theme workshop will be held at the Sandy Park Conference Centre, Exeter, on Tuesday, 23 March 2010.

Chris

In this, our nineteenth SLIM Learning Theme, we investigate how well regeneration policies, practices and funding streams are linking together to support communities, in terms of employment and skills. A renewed focus in recent years on 'place based' approaches has highlighted the need to better understand how regeneration activities bring benefits to communities in terms of jobs and skills. The impact of the recession and the increased emphasis on the worklessness agenda has reinforced this for local government and its partners. The SLIM Learning Theme explores practice in linking regeneration, employment and skills, the lessons that are emerging and recommendations for future practice.

Introduction

The impending General Election aside, a range of current and emerging Government policy developments are highlighting the need for greater alignment between economic development and regeneration, employment and skills. These include:

- ◆ the forthcoming Work and Skills Plans (proposed by the Houghton Review) which will seek a more localised and planned approach to jobs and skills, strengthening collaboration between local authorities and Local Employment and Skills Boards (LESBs);
- ◆ the Single Integrated Regional Strategy which will require employment and skills issues to be more visibly integrated with economic development and wider infrastructure developments;
- ◆ Regional Priorities Statements for skills and the development of a Regional Skills Strategy which will more clearly link skills to regional and local economic development;
- ◆ the need to improve alignment between ERDF and ESF funded initiatives;
- ◆ Local Employment Partnerships and the formation and development of LESBs; and
- ◆ the anticipated cuts in public finance which will call for improved efficiency, integration and effectiveness of resources.

Policy and funding developments

In 2006¹ the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) study of the economic factors impinging on deprived neighbourhoods concluded that:

What constitutes the local labour market varies by skill level, but most people's jobs, even at intermediate and higher skill levels, are within five kilometres of their homes. Interventions to help workless people into work need to recognise this.

The National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy, agreed between central and local government in January 2008, committed local authorities and Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs) to work on 'improving economic and neighbourhood renewal leadership capacity' in local government.

The cross departmental Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR)² in mid 2007, presented proposals on how to improve sub-national economic development and tackle deprivation by bringing together regional, sub-regional and local partners.

The resulting Community and Local Government (DCLG) strategy *Transforming places, changing lives*³ acknowledged that needs of local residents and businesses drive regeneration. Investments should be linked to other key areas like health and well-being which have a direct relationship with regeneration and its outcomes. It stressed the need for public, private and third sector partners to cross institutional boundaries to work together. Local authorities are empowered to develop partnerships through Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and Multi Area Agreements (MAAs) which help to align sub-regional and regional interests. This has been complemented by the

¹Dep't for Communities and Local Government. The Economies of Deprived Neighbourhoods: summary of research. 2006. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/151003>.

² HM Treasury, Dep'ts of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform and Communities and Local Government. Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration. July 2007.

³Dep't for Communities and Local Government. *Transforming places, changing lives: taking forward the regeneration framework*. May 2009.

establishment of employer led LESBs seeking to identify local employment and skills priorities.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) works with central and local government and regional partners (RDAs, GOSW) to deliver tailored regeneration investment for communities. The 'single conversation' integrates arrangements through Multi Area Agreements, city and sub-regional partnerships, urban regeneration companies and others. It aims to align and integrate regional strategy with local agreements, such as LAAs and MAAs, based on the national indicator set (NIS).

The Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF), announced by DCLG and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in late 2007⁴, gives councils extra resources to April 2011 to respond to long term worklessness in deprived areas⁵.

The New Deal for Communities (NDC) focuses on three 'place-based' issues: crime, the community, and housing and the physical environment. It also addresses three 'people-based' considerations: education, health, and worklessness. Evidence from the evaluation report⁶ identifies three major barriers limiting community engagement with the labour market:

- ◆ *supply-side factors* - including lack of generic skills, inadequate English, poor childcare facilities, and limited job search patterns
- ◆ *demand-side factors* – local residents' hard and soft skills, levels and type of jobs, employer recruitment, entrepreneurship in the local economy

⁴ DCLG/DWP. Working Neighbourhoods Fund. November 2007.

⁵ Other targeted support at neighbourhood level is available through the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) and New Deal for Communities (NDC), the community builders fund, and supporting local government partnership capacity with advisers, resource centres and RIEPs.

⁶ DCLG. Understanding and tackling worklessness: lessons from the New Deal for Communities programme. October 2009.

- ◆ *institutional factors* - the dynamics of the housing markets and the effects of the benefits system.

Six case study NDC Partnerships were selected that demonstrate models of good practice. These have supported three types of interventions on the supply side:

- ◆ combined job brokerage and Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) projects to help workless individuals access employment and training opportunities
- ◆ recruitment and job matching services with local businesses, often with dedicated employment liaison officers
- ◆ skills development projects, sometimes with a sector-specific focus.

On a more limited scale, NDCs' demand side projects covered:

- ◆ Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) projects creating short-term jobs, and providing participants with the skills and experience to gain sustainable employment
- ◆ initiatives seeking to create jobs for local people through section 106 agreements
- ◆ business support projects to promote enterprise within the NDC area.

The physical development of NDC areas also provided opportunities for training and employment in construction. NDCs have worked to align their worklessness programmes with other strategies operating within the wider local authority.

Policy reviews and recommendations

The Houghton Committee's 2008 *Tackling Worklessness Review*⁷ examined:

- ◆ how local authorities and their partners were tackling worklessness;
- ◆ how Government departments could better support local partner delivery of employment and skills services;
- ◆ how the private sector, social enterprises and third sector, and RDAs could help local partners; and
- ◆ how stakeholder agencies can better tailor their services to meet needs of the most disadvantaged areas.

Local authority funding for employment and skills provision is seen as crucial for 'wraparound' services to engage and build on mainstream activity. The report recommended a strengthened role for local authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and partners in tackling worklessness. Three immediate steps were proposed:

- ◆ All upper-tier authorities should, as part of their wider economic assessment duty, provide local labour market worklessness assessments, enabling shared performance monitoring by local partnerships.
- ◆ Identifying priority areas for an integrated response to local labour markets and economic conditions (using DWP programmes, LSC and WNF), building on LAA delivery and review, to develop a 'Work & Skills Plan' - incorporating a 'Work & Skills Integrated Budget' for co-commissioning between DWP and skills bodies.
- ◆ Setting up a national task force, reporting to the National Economic Council, to respond to unemployment in priority areas and for priority groups.

A Work & Skills Plan enables direct and flexible responses to local economic conditions. It should: bring local partners together to decide how best to

⁷Houghton, S et al. *Tackling worklessness: a review of the contribution and role of local authorities and partnerships*. Interim report to DCLG. November 2008.

tackle worklessness, increase skills, and boost levels of enterprise; align existing mainstream and local activity and funding; update national agreed and local LAA targets; and channel new resources to address increasing unemployment, including LEGL funds to stimulate enterprise at local level.

The report pointed out that local partnerships would need additional investment to build capacity to analyse their labour market, produce Work & Skills Plans, and manage new project delivery. RIEPs should help partnerships develop worklessness assessments and Work & Skills Plans as part of their responsibilities for building the economic development capacity of local authorities. More support for social enterprises and a greater role for JobCentre Plus in sharing claimant information and LMI data and analysis would be useful to local partnerships. Within the South West the RIEP is supporting a range of projects to support local government's capacity to address issues of worklessness, including the development of Work & Skills Plans.

The All Party Urban Development Group (APUDG) is a cross party Parliamentary body progressing UK wide urban renewal and sustainable development. Although focussing on urban areas, the Group's findings on regeneration also apply to initiatives in more rural communities. Following evidence submitted to a 2008 Inquiry, the APUDG identified⁸ the obstacles to linking local people to regeneration jobs, including: lack of appreciation of the benefits of using regeneration to get local people into work; the cost of training and recruiting local people; barriers such as the benefits trap that cannot be solved at the local level, or that require a more holistic approach to getting people into work; and the perceived discrimination involved in specifically targeting local residents.

According to the Group, five factors can help link regeneration to employment opportunities for local people:

- ◆ using section 106 planning agreements to secure commitment to local employment objectives;

⁸ All Party Urban Development Group. *Building local jobs: ensuring local communities gain employment through regeneration*. APUDG, 2008.

- ◆ building partnerships between local authorities, employment agencies, further education and employers at the pre-development stage;
- ◆ forecasting all possible employment opportunities during planning, construction and post-development phases;
- ◆ matching training to employer demand and labour market needs and using targeted employment strategies; and
- ◆ ensuring that regeneration leaves a positive employment legacy by creating long-term opportunities, jobs with career prospects, and ongoing support for employees.

The report recommended that joint working for sustainable communities should ensure that local residents can capitalise on the employment legacy of regeneration projects by ensuring that: training schemes are linked to employer demand; focussed careers advice is available; exit interview guidance is used; and job starts and retention rates are monitored. It also suggested that it would be beneficial to LESBs for Government to devolve control over adult skills budgets to local employers who can link residents to regeneration jobs through bespoke training programmes in construction, facilities management, housing and retail.

Regeneration research findings

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has been researching regeneration and the needs of individuals living in disadvantaged areas for many years and are national experts in the field. The research findings set out below are drawn from studies undertaken over the past ten years and largely based on evaluations of government regeneration initiatives.

In their response to the DCLG consultation⁹, the JRF compiled results from selected studies which

⁹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Transforming places, changing lives – a framework for regeneration. Submission by JRF, October 2008.

identified key issues for developing a regeneration framework:

- ◆ Research evidence supports a focus on economic inclusion while also highlighting the current gap between social inclusion and economic development agendas.
- ◆ Understanding of poverty and place underpins interventions that target individuals and area regeneration: each has a part to play in improving education and employment outcomes.
- ◆ Regeneration is complex and requires not only collaboration across a wide range of agencies, but also the ability to link actions at neighbourhood level to broader local, regional and national policies.
- ◆ Tackling child poverty effectively requires improvements in a range of other areas besides worklessness, including pay, benefits and tax credits, childcare, job flexibility, parental skills and qualifications and transport.
- ◆ Flexible and comprehensive approaches to address many problems simultaneously have the best chance of engaging communities for lasting impact.
- ◆ Evidence suggests that neighbourhoods and local authorities require support and mentoring to design policies and practices to address deprivation, regeneration, and place shaping. Mentoring could be provided by: government offices; the Academy for Sustainable Communities; third or community sector infrastructure bodies; experienced community anchor organisations; and registered social landlords.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation Work and Opportunity Research Programme studied success factors proven by community level activities. Within the context of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund, Meadows¹⁰ researched emerging good practice from local initiatives supporting workless people across a range of elements: delivery capacity and institutions; partnership working; engagement and access; meeting individual needs; retention and progression; and the role of employers.

¹⁰ Meadows, P. Local initiatives to help workless people find and keep work. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, June 2008.

Evidence from projects showed that the following features were important: bridges into work and barriers to entry; the distribution of work between different groups in the population; the need for evidence from real initiatives to improve local job prospects; and employers' policies and behaviour.

One common issue was the importance of local labour markets and local delivery systems. Most people seek work within a limited geographical area, which in the report covered urban centres and their 'pockets' of low skills in inner cities. However, the report also recognised the complex interplays between high levels of worklessness and area deprivation more generally. Linkages between place and worklessness often arise through an inadequate social and economic infrastructure in disadvantaged areas to support people in work, especially in education and transport.

In a 'typical' local area, different strategies, roles and approaches to tackle worklessness can be led by the local authority, Jobcentre Plus, the Regional Development Agency, Business Link, further education colleges, voluntary and private sector providers of employment and training support, and housing associations. All may have distinct priorities and agendas.

The move towards more localised approaches also needs to take account of the fact that areas differ in their capacity to deliver effective interventions, the skills of those directly involved in delivery, the experience and capacity within local communities to get involved in partnership working, and in the relationships between collaborating organisations and with local employers

Meadows referred to systems functioning at 'intermediate' levels which can help to fill gaps in both development models and measurement of progress. ILMs are social enterprise organisations producing socially useful goods and services while employing disadvantaged groups facing multiple barriers to work. They offer experience in a real work environment to help develop work habits and also support job search and basic training with a high staff-client ratio, combined with a holistic emphasis on helping participants deal with all their problems. ILMs' outcomes and cost effectiveness compare favourably with other initiatives for the same target groups, although costs per client are relatively high.

To underpin impact assessment, other studies have developed 'intermediate' indicators of distance travelled to determine progress in projects where outcomes are not jobs or formal training. Rather than putting forward a list of specific indicators, a set of principles was suggested on which funders and project managers should base their indicators. These were: identifying barriers to learning/personal development; focussing on variables that can lead to changes in behaviour; developing valid reliable measures so that similar results can be produced in similar situations; including multiple variables and multiple sources of information to get an even balance of indicators; being part of a wider evaluation process, building on existing assessments and information and contributing to existing plans; and being relatively simple and cheap to administer.

Effective sustainable area based regeneration was researched by the JRF in 2000¹¹. Although based on urban studies, selected findings with relevance to our varied region include:

Developing innovative partnerships – among all stakeholders, including local residents. Strong leadership is vital: LSPs could play this role, with a harmonised funding system and long term strategy.

Empowering neighbourhoods – area regeneration requires neighbourhood management, together with: new local governance structures, community development, experimentation, joined-up service delivery, flexible work practices, and a supportive local authority. Community planning links local councillors and communities in a common agenda.

Local data analysis – is hindered by over-reliance on favoured area-based policies, due to four factors:

- ◆ targeting of worst areas always misses a significant proportion of deprived households;
- ◆ owner-occupiers and private renters also make up deprived households, so programmes focusing on social housing are never sufficient;
- ◆ regional disparities in deprivation remain untackled; and
- ◆ application of different indices of deprivation gives substantially varying definitions of what is a deprived area.

¹¹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Key steps to sustainable area regeneration. Findings, November 2000.

Sustainable regeneration - must be driven by strategic objectives, regionally and locally, enabling local involvement in planning, implementation and management. This needs to be backed up by: coordinated action at national, regional and local levels; inclusive forms of neighbourhood management; and adequate resources for community development.

Regional agencies - in assessing regeneration bids and monitoring the work of partnerships, there needs to be an emphasis on development of partners' relationships. Monitoring systems of regeneration outputs should reflect local needs, as well as central government's requirements.

Local employment plans – must address underlying problems of joblessness and inequality within area regeneration. Variations in local labour markets require a local dimension in policy design and delivery; and need to link limited transport availability (for example) with economic inactivity.

Methodologies for analysing the impacts of regeneration expenditure were explored in a paper¹² from an international development perspective. Drivers of deprivation were identified as: a weak economic base particularly in relation to the skills base and business support facilities; poor housing and social environment; and poorly performing public services. Both appraisal and evaluation of regeneration activities should be based on the extent to which it is able to make value for money improvements in these areas, and identify and evaluate the benefits in a way that allows value for money to be assessed.

¹² Potts, D. Assessing the impact of regeneration spending: lessons from the UK and the wider world. Bradford Centre for International Development. April 2008.

Issues for the SLIM Learning Theme

During this Learning Theme we will be seeking to explore exemplar case studies and delivery models that already exist at more local level. This may include:

- ◆ Local good partnership practice linking work and skills, including ERDF and ESF funded initiatives.
- ◆ Social enterprise and third sector led activities, including ILM type projects.
- ◆ Areas which have developed methodologies for measuring the economic and social impact of regeneration on the labour market.
- ◆ Section 106 negotiations between local authorities and service providers, introducing leverage into procurement practice (as highlighted in the recent National Skills Strategy).
- ◆ The relationship of universities and higher-level skills to enterprise activity and employment as showcased at regional level (e.g. Knowledge Escalator SW, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, Great Western Research).
- ◆ Ensuring that economic developments are recognised in the strategy and planning processes for skills and employment, which are presently underway in developing Work & Skills Plans and the Regional Skills Strategy.
- ◆ Developing links between locally-led health services and housing provision and the new Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

For this Learning Theme we welcome examples of good regional and sub-regional practice in aligning regeneration strategies that draw on partnership experiences of stakeholders and practitioners. We invite contributions across all the above and related areas to showcase the full breadth of urban and rural community initiatives within our region.

If you have any practice you would like to highlight, then please contact Jo Pye, J.Pye@exeter.ac.uk.

Abstracts

P Meadows, Local initiatives to help workless people find and keep paid work, June 2008, Lessons for Policy and Practice, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008

This is the report of a study which reviews the evidence on the interventions which help workless people into paid employment. The evidence comes from the JRF Work and Opportunity and Area Regeneration programmes, updated in the light of more recent research and evaluation evidence, including the evidence derived from the JRF Neighbourhood programme. The review concludes with lessons for policy and practice.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/local-initiatives-help-workless-people-find-and-keep-paid-work>

Economic and Community Regeneration Briefing, Learning from Inspection, Audit Commission, September 2003

Local authorities have a duty to produce a community strategy that addresses economic, environmental and social well-being. Councils take very different approaches to their role in regeneration: some focus on physical regeneration while others prioritise economic regeneration. This briefing sets out the Commission's current knowledge based on over 60 inspections of local authorities' economic and community regeneration activity.

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/Pages/economicandcommunityregeneration.aspx>

Building Local Jobs, Ensuring Local Communities Gain Employment from Regeneration, All Party Urban Development Group, 2009

This is the report of an inquiry by the All Party Committee, which draws on evidence received from regional development agencies, urban regeneration companies, local authorities, developers, construction companies, retailers and other relevant stakeholders. It considers the

benefits of using regeneration as a vehicle to deliver jobs for local people, best practice in the field and what the barriers are for such initiatives. The report: lists the national, local, individual and business benefits that can be gained by linking employment opportunities for local residents to regeneration; section 2 sets out the five key prerequisites to delivering local employment opportunities from regeneration; examines the key barriers that explain why regeneration does not always deliver jobs for local residents; and proposes four recommendations aimed at local authorities, national government, developers and all key regeneration stakeholders.

http://0301.netclime.net/1_5/1bb/3e5/3ba/APUDG-BuildingLocalJobs%20FINAL.pdf

Understanding and tackling worklessness: Lessons and policy implications Evidence from the New Deal for Communities Programme, Department for Communities and Local Government, October 2009

The New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme aims to reduce the gaps between some 39 deprived NDC neighbourhoods and the rest of the country. This is a report of the national evaluation. This NDC evidence base is an important resource through which to inform debates surrounding the role which tackling worklessness is likely to play in future regeneration policy. The report examines emerging lessons from the NDC Programme that are also timely.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1338723.pdf>

C Glossop, Inclusive Growth in Bristol: The Role for Housing, Worklessness & Skills Policy Centre for Cities, February 2009

This report was produced for Bristol City Council and sets out policy analysis and recommendations to help Bristol achieve inclusive growth. It considers how the creation of mixed communities can regenerate deprived areas. It also considers the worklessness and skills policy to ensure that, when the upturn comes, Bristol's most deprived communities are included. The analysis and recommendations are particularly applicable to the regeneration of South Bristol, but will have relevance to other deprived parts of the city.

<http://www.centreforcities.org/index.php?id=775>

Interview with Dominic Murphy, from Creating Excellence



Hi Dominic, please can you introduce yourself and tell us a little about your background?

I am the Executive Director of Creating Excellence, the regional centre for excellence for sustainable communities in the South West. Prior to my current appointment I was employed by the South West Regional Development Agency as development manager for the emerging centre of excellence. Before that I was a senior policy adviser to the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in London.

At present I am Chair of the Sustainable Communities Excellence Network, the national network of Regional Centres of Excellence for Sustainable Communities and also Chair of the Board of Management of 'Community at Heart', Bristol's New Deal for Communities' partnership. I've very recently been taken on by the Audit Commission as an Affiliate to support their work on Comprehensive Area Assessments.

Can you tell us a little more about the work of Creating Excellence?

Creating Excellence encourages cross-sector working to find sustainable solutions to development and community issues and offers support to all professionals and communities who are involved in these processes. At present our main areas of work are in the fields of Design and

the Built Environment and Community Engagement and Empowerment.

Are Creating Excellence involved in any new initiatives that you would like to draw our readers' attention to?

Yes, we are very busy at the moment with the Connecting Communities work which actively links skills and learning into local community empowerment and community engagement. It is aimed at frontline workers and decision takers and links to the Government's new 'Duty to Involve' which is statutory and is impacting across the region.

We are also involved in 'Building for Life', the national standard for well-designed homes. The theory behind it is that good quality housing design can improve social wellbeing and quality of life by reducing crime, improving public health, easing transport problems and increasing property values. It promotes design excellence and celebrates best practice in the house building industry.

Local Authorities will need to report to Government on the quality of new housing – so there has been a big need to get new assessors accredited. The work isn't just about design, but touches upon community and concepts such as 'liveability'. Ultimately the aim is to drive up house design as part of a bigger push to enhance the built environment and is a response to a recognised need for multidisciplinary planning teams. In addition to the Building for Life work we have put together a 'Design Review Panel' which offers a 'peer review' of design proposals that are likely to have some significance to the region and a Design Enabling Panel which can provide the kind of expertise that many smaller planning departments may not have internally on an 'as needed' basis.

Our Learning Theme is focussed very much upon Skills and Employment initiatives - have you come across any interesting good practice in this field in the South West?

There is lots of good practice in the region, but I do have fears about how sustainable that will be should public funding cuts become the order of the day. I chair the New Deal for Communities in Bristol and within Bristol there has been plenty of excellent innovative work, including work using ESF to supplement community work.

An issue with community work around skills is that it cannot be taken in isolation. We've seen that, though we work with communities and may see people progress into qualifications and employment, what tends to happen is they then leave the area and others with significant issues and barriers come in. So the area itself doesn't 'regenerate' simply by these means. You need to tackle community regeneration on a broad front, but it is very, very, tough and needs to include schools, housing, learning/skills, how people perceive an area, plus, of course, community safety. The New Deal for Communities is spending a lot of money trying to tackle these areas.

In light of the potential Public Sector funding cuts, what are the likely challenges for those engaged in Regeneration work?

My big concern is how we are going to maintain continuity. There are bound to be cuts to frontline services and, in turn, to the voluntary and community sector bodies working in communities. A big criticism of community regeneration has always been its 'stop – start'

nature and we could be heading for another 'stop'.

The non-statutory work is almost certainly going to be the focus for cuts, and sadly that includes community work as well as all the non-statutory planning work which is often design related. At least the 'duty to involve' is now statutory and therefore will have to continue in some form or other. Youth-work is another area I fear may see cuts.

In your opinion what is the best way to integrate skills into Community regeneration?

You need to go into the communities themselves to deliver the training and ensure that you fit the training around people's lives. Even people who are out of work have pressures upon their time. They may be carers or may have mobility issues along with many other barriers.

I think there is more to be done in linking the intelligence that exists on what employment might reasonably be available with what is being provided on the ground. ESOL is a big issue in many areas, there simply doesn't seem to be enough of it – especially when you consider the potential benefits. Many schools remain an under-utilised community resource – often they can be used instead of having to build a new centre or resource. There are excellent examples in the region of where schools have been used very successfully to support communities.

Contact:

dominic.murphy@creatingexcellence.org.uk

Telephone: 01823 250803