



Ladders to regeneration

Summary report of the
RENEW Northwest Innovation Taskforce

RENEW Northwest is the region's centre for regeneration excellence in sustainable communities. Established by the Northwest Regional Development Agency in conjunction with Government Office for the North West, RENEW Northwest has been tasked with identifying innovation in regeneration and encouraging its adoption in mainstream practice.

In early 2006 RENEW Northwest established an Innovation Taskforce of experienced regional practitioners drawn from a variety of disciplines and sectors to focus on 'ladders to regeneration'. We were charged with discovering what needs to be done if people who are disadvantaged and come from areas being regenerated are to find work in the regeneration 'industry' and become more actively involved in governance of regeneration programmes.

The taskforce was asked to focus on current innovation and on barriers that prevent local people from taking up employment or governance in the regeneration of their area. In particular, RENEW Northwest asked us to concentrate on practice within the region and on areas where there is a realistic prospect of identifying achievable actions as a result of our work.

We were asked to address the following questions:

1. Why are so few residents of deprived areas undergoing regeneration finding jobs in regeneration or involved in regeneration governance?
2. What are the barriers that stop such employment and involvement increasing? How can they be overcome?
3. What factors particular to regeneration employment and governance affect local black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, disabled people and women? How can they be overcome?

We were also asked to make practical recommendations for action. Our full report, with links to case studies, can be read at:

www.RENEW.co.uk/innovation



As taskforce members, we had a wide range of experiences and expertise. In our early discussions we noted that local projects, such as social enterprises and community organisations, were often more diverse than the governing board of a wider programme or its core regeneration workforce.

A key question for us was to understand how far governance and employment in regeneration reflect the demography of the local population. A baseline study (see next section) led the taskforce to concentrate primarily on the representation of BME, women and disabled people in the governance of regeneration. We also decided to look at barriers to involvement of young people.

In looking at good practice, we strongly felt that a common success factor was the **positive attitude to risk as an opportunity** taken by key players when a programme or project is being established.

Most organisations in the 'regeneration sector' have a written equalities policy, and many public sector partner organisations and accountable bodies have legal duties to produce diversity strategies and action plans. Yet there is still a need to encourage organisations to implement these policies creatively and to adopt a positive attitude to risk.

During our early discussions we identified some key themes that shaped our ensuing work. These were:

- The realisation that statutory processes are not in themselves necessarily sufficient to ensure more diverse employment and leadership;
- The need to be aware of the wider context, such as national policy;
- The key role played by recruitment processes, including external recruitment consultants;
- The roles and skills demanded of board members, which often militate against local people's involvement;
- The potential for procurement to encourage local jobs in regeneration – for example, by developing local supply chains and social enterprises;
- The attitude to risk of key individuals;
- Inadequate feedback loops in the relationship between policy and practice;
- The continuing challenges of stereotypes, pejorative approaches, ignorance and lack of awareness;
- The difficulties in measuring good practice;
- The importance of networking widely to share experience;
- The importance of publicising and acting on good quality research;

■ The need to focus on outcomes, with a careful evaluation of the impacts of projects.



Baseline study

Our starting point was a study by Ekos Consulting for RENEW Northwest of current representation in regeneration governance and employment. Published in July 2006, it also identified current good practice and innovation. It can be accessed at <http://www.RENEW.co.uk/Pages/Resources.aspx?id=88>

The study showed that while disadvantaged groups live disproportionately in areas with the most regeneration activity, they are under-represented in the work and governance of that regeneration.

Disabled people in particular showed very low rates of representation. Indeed, it was almost impossible to find any information about the involvement of disabled people in regeneration employment, leadership and governance.

While a majority of organisations surveyed did employ local people, few were able to say what recruitment methods they used. Very few locals held senior posts.

Organisations were asked whether any barriers were specific to women, BME groups or disabled people. Some were predictable, such as poor accessibility to premises. However, a common barrier experienced by all three groups is a perceived lack of skills, qualifications or experience. This transcends the barriers unique to each group.

The baseline study of regeneration boards also showed that disabled people and women are under-represented, particularly in leadership positions. Although the Northwest does better than the national average, this is also true for people from BME communities.

Case studies and good practice

Various examples of good practice are described in the full report. These are the main lessons learned:

1. Regeneration employment: entry and progression

The full report describes two pilot employment actions developed by Carlisle Renaissance and by New East Manchester. These showed that local recruitment is a challenging process and requires commitment, resources and staying power.

2. Board recruitment and development

Our discussions with boards, consultancies and recruitment agencies demonstrated that only a relatively small number of people from regeneration areas already have an interest in applying for board positions. It is crucial to raise awareness of these positions and to dispel myths that there are no opportunities. There is scope to work with recruitment agencies to address under-representation.

3. Procurement and regeneration projects

We found that creative use of public sector procurement had not been fully developed as a means of providing access to regeneration jobs for local people, despite the presence of many community businesses, development trusts and social enterprises in the region. We feel there is a danger that public bodies are forgetting the value gained (the 'local spend multiplier') through sourcing supplies and services locally.

Conclusions

Our taskforce was commissioned to examine why, despite much innovation and good practice, regeneration organisations and partnerships in the Northwest are generally still failing to create adequate ladders to regeneration.

If we had to highlight just one finding, it would be that the **mainstreaming** of good practice has yet to take place on a significant scale. We propose to work with a number of partners in the region to explore this failure in the light of research findings showing the necessary criteria for successful mainstreaming.

We believe there are well established approaches and techniques which can help regeneration leaders and practitioners make often rapid progress. We have seen many of them in action. Equally we recognise that some initiatives will take years before a noticeable change is seen, and many more will require vision, tenacity and resilience.

Our work shows that improving the representation of local people within regeneration is possible. Our message is hopeful and realistic. Some practical follow-up actions are described overleaf.

Proposed follow up actions 2007-2009

1. Regeneration employment

We will co-produce and disseminate a case study with Carlisle Renaissance and Carlisle Housing Association on their Bringing Regeneration Home employment project. We will similarly co-produce with New East Manchester a good practice guide on their Regeneration Apprentices project.

We plan to run a procurement masterclass in Liverpool, exploring the lessons learned from Merseyside's development and capital investment programmes in terms of contracts and employment for disadvantaged groups.

We will co-produce and disseminate a good practice guide on Connexions Cumbria's work to engage young people in the regeneration of Carlisle.

2. Regeneration leadership

Working with Lancashire Economic Partnership, we aim to develop the strategy-making skills of potential board members, and influence the diversity of future board nominations.

We plan to work with the North West Housing Board Advisory Group to develop representation. In Carlisle, we intend to work with the Local Strategic Partnership, with a possible focus on engaging young people, and with disabled people.

We will work with National Trust North West to engage a wider range of potential advisory committee members, transferring innovations from the trust's local projects.

3. Ladders to regeneration

We will co-produce an intelligence report with the Oxfam ReGender project, highlighting new research on the role of women within regeneration programmes.

Working alongside Veredus Executive Search & Selection we will co-evaluate the feasibility and robustness of a national diversity standard to apply in the region.

In partnership with the Northwest Regional Development Agency we aim to ensure that learning from the taskforce's findings is taken forward as part of the agency's statutory duty in relation to race, disability and gender.

We intend to work further with regional partners to maintain strong links with the North West Equality and Diversity Action Plan to support the wider implementation of these findings.

We commend these findings to all engaged in the regeneration of the Northwest and wish you every success in building ladders to regeneration for local communities.

All publications resulting from the work of the taskforce will be published at www.RENEW.co.uk.

RENEW Northwest is the Regional Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Communities. We develop dynamic and responsive learning opportunities to provide practitioners with the skills and knowledge required to deliver sustainable communities.

One of our main aims is to gather good practice and help make it accessible to all in a way

that helps others to benefit. Our series of publications is one way in which we do this.

To find out more about RENEW Northwest and our activities please register with us. Visit www.RENEW.co.uk and complete an online registration form. You will then be added to our contacts database and receive regular updates.

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