

JRF BRADFORD PROGRAMME: Working in Neighbourhoods Project

Liz Richardson, University of Manchester

June 2011

The JRF Bradford *WIN* project and research

- 10 year commitment to Bradford made in 2004
- Range of programmes, e.g. voices of Muslim women, social isolation (talk to John Low)
- *WIN* is about working in neighbourhoods
- Action Learning Network (ask Jenny Lynn)
- Plus supporting research e.g. interviews and area visits

Localism is already happening

- Depends how you define localism, central-local relationships still fraught
- Coalition Agreement: to promote decentralisation and democratic engagement and to “end the era of top-down government by giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals”.
- Focus here on localism as devolution within local authorities to localities and/or neighbourhoods
- Devolved decision making has evolved in Bradford, the UK, and internationally over at least 20 years

International example

- Rotterdam: 13 City-Districts with 70,000 residents; delegated budgets (€30m/yr)
- Management of national regeneration budgets for district; 300 staff/City District
- District policy programmes & budgets negotiated with city government
- Facilitated more localised delivery of services, e.g. 'public space behaviour rules'; commissioning local employment & youth services; HAs NAPs; renovating derelict homes in partnership with residents
- Politically driven- city districts are lowest administrative level in the municipality
- City District Councils are democratically elected,
- Acts as local extension of the Rotterdam municipality government
- No formal role for residents (except voting & consultation)
- PB for Neighbourhood & Resident Budgets - 'Delfshaven Duiten'
- Resident initiative - Opzoomeren – for 'gezelligheid' (cosiness) through street activities
- Co-opted city-wide – now is Opzoomer-office and funds activities
- Paid neighbourhood co-ordinators, & funded by city government
- 18% of all Rotterdam citizens now participate in Opzoomeren activities

What is neighbourhood working?

- Extensive discussion about what neighbourhood working means:
 - Spatial anchor at the sub-local level
 - Devolution of power and authority
 - Site for policy interventions and service delivery
 - Space for decision making and participation
 - Developing, delivering and monitoring the vision for the area
- Many different forms of devolution!
- But usually decision-making and service accountability rather than full decentralisation of services a la Rotterdam (LB Tower Hamlets)
- Lots of different aims: dealing with diversity between places; taking account of neighbourhood need and priorities; partnership working across agencies; active citizenship; strengthening democratic roles
- And therefore different forms

What is neighbourhood working for?

Rationale	Civic	Economic	Political	Social
	Opportunities for direct citizen participation and community involvement	Focus on efficiency & effectiveness gains in local service delivery Tax/spend bargain	Improvements in accessibility, accountability & responsiveness of decision making Enhanced role for elected members	Holistic and citizen centred approach to delivering services; designing services around the citizen
Form of democracy	Participatory democracy	Market democracy	Representative democracy	Stakeholder democracy
Institutional design	Neighbourhood empowerment	Neighbourhood management	Neighbourhood governance	Neighbourhood partnerships
Citizen role	Citizen: voice, co-production	Consumer: choice	Elector: vote	Partner: loyalty, problem solving
Link to Coalition policy	Big Society	CSR; Community Budget pilots	Localism	Community Budget pilots
Comparable typology	Self reliance: DIY community action	More market: private sector led	n/a	More state: strengthen welfare and reduce inequality

How neighbourhood working is organised in Bradford

- Half a million people, very diverse
- 26% BME, some wealthy rural areas, other deprived inner urban
- Differences in existing levels of community capacity , activity and infrastructure
- History of neighbourhood working from 1990s
- Structures:
 - 5 Area Committees each with 100,000 population & 6 wards. 9 Cllrs out of 18.
 - Area offices, with Neighbourhood Services teams for each area: Area Co-ordinator, Ward Officers & Neighbourhood Wardens
 - Ward Officer Teams each with 15,000 population, for each ward, for multi-agency working, co-ordinated by the Area Offices
 - Ward and Area action plans
 - Parish and Town Councils
 - Neighbourhood Forums

Devolved decision making and activity needs organising and co-ordinating

- Many areas have been back and forth on neighbourhood and locality working
- Why do they come back to it?
- Area co-ordination as a way of making devolution a reality
- E.g.s of services and agencies focusing in on tough neighbourhood issues, and partnership working
- Supports the Area Committees e.g. with data for Area Plans
- Organising neighbourhood-based consultation e.g. 10,700 people attended Neighbourhood Forums in 2009-10

Neighbourhood working helping community empowerment & activity

- Council consultation thru parish council meetings
- The engagement grape! Outreach, fun days, door knocking
- Area Committees give ££ to support local clubs, associations, community projects and groups Ward officers support community groups, & help set up new groups.
- Neighbourhood wardens and the 'eco warriors'
- Joint work with voluntary orgs to set up social groups for older people,
- Developing new projects, in line with ward and Area plans e.g. community orchard

Tensions between aims of neighbourhood working?

- Stakeholders (roughly) want the same things:
 - Active citizens, engagement, community development
 - Service and neighbourhood improvement
- Making services better seems obvious, but questions:
 - It doesn't automatically make residents be more responsible
 - Providing services might *stop* people being responsible
- Not about reducing services, but working in a different way
- Enforcement & education has not increased responsibility long term
- New things are being tried
- But there isn't an across-the-board approach, and there is scope for more innovation

Neighbourhood working in better off and less well off places

- Places are all VERY different
- Is neighbourhood working needed in better off areas?
- But because of history of funding
- People feel like everywhere has to get the same
- Not talked about openly, but everyone talks about it!
- Neighbourhood working needs strong centre to broker between neighbourhoods in the interests of the whole authority area.

Neighbourhood working in more active and less active communities

- Some places have strong communities ‘organically’
- But they are not inclusive of everyone (e.g. younger people, newcomers, ethnic minority households)
- Other places are trying hard in difficult circumstances
 - Hard to get people active
 - Some are active but just to help ‘their own’
 - Some feel community groups & centres aren’t always open to new people and activities
- Not enough being done to bridge between different cultures
- Some people are scared of talking about this problem

Relationships between public and community & voluntary sector

- Small-scale, informal activities are most attractive to the majority; only minority want to take large-scale delivery of services.
- But, where VCS is willing, still lingering reluctance from some in the public sector to hand over control.
- Not helped by lack of 'hard' evidence for VCS effectiveness, & perceptions of lack of inclusiveness in some community centres
- Key role for neighbourhood working in brokering within the public sector to overcome barriers to community activity – the tap example!

Councillors' roles

- ☺ - Cllrs care a lot and know their areas
 - Cllrs sign off on action plans via area committees
 - Some parish plans & NAPs are linked
 - V. good relationships between members & officers
 - Cllrs active in own wards e.g. school governors, Village Societies
 - Funding for community projects from area committees

- ☹
 - Who will guard against the 'barracudas'?
 - Are Cllrs really taking the bigger view and being in charge?
 - Are Cllrs always adding something others can't?
 - Criticisms when Cllrs give out £
 - What else can Cllrs do if there is no £
 - Some Cllrs feel can't get officers to sort problems
 - Some Cllrs scared to say difficult things and be a leader
 - Does it enhance citizen perceptions of members?

More information

- Liz Richardson, April 2011 *Working in Neighbourhoods in Bradford*, published by JRF
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/working-neighbourhoods-bradford>
- Catherine Durose, Jonathan France, Liz Richardson and Ruth Lupton, forthcoming *Towards the 'Big Society': what role for neighbourhood working? Evidence from a comparative European study*
- Catherine Durose, Stephen Greasley and Liz Richardson, 2009 *Changing local governance; changing citizens*, published by Policy Press – COPIES AVAILABLE FOR NW LAs
- Liz.richardson@manchester.ac.uk
- John.low@jrf.org.uk