

REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

BRIEFING PAPER: ‘JOINING-UP’ GOVERNANCE – THE CO-ORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF ARRANGEMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a powerful evidence base of disjointed working in the UK. The fragmentation of planning and delivery systems, accentuated in the 1980s by the institutional proliferation of the Thatcher governments, but reinforced in the 1990s by the Labour Government's pursuit of special initiatives, has weakened both the local capacity to deliver integrated services and the ability of the centre to control. Failure to close the emergent implementation gap in the public policy system allows agencies at central and local level to follow their own priorities. This pursuit of singular and frequently conflicting goals manifests itself to citizens in the form of disjointed decision-making and service provision.

The challenge of 'joining-up' governance activities has taken on a different character in the 21st Century as globalisation, multi-level governance, new public management and the emergence of 'wicked issues' have combined to make co-ordination and integration at once more pressing and more difficult to achieve. In the prevailing environment action to 'join-up' decision making and implementation needs to take place at different levels and across policies and programme areas with an emphasis upon securing interaction vertically as well as horizontally. One way of conceiving this complex set of inter-relationships is to understand them as part of a 'whole system' concerned with the effective design, management and delivery of public policies and programmes although this approach must be adopted in a sensitive manner given the inherent complexity and therefore unpredictability of the public policy system.

Drawing on available research we have identified 8 key features of 'joined-up' governance:

- **Partnership** – institutionalising collaborative mechanisms to harness the joint efforts of public authorities, the private sector voluntary organisations and the communities they serve in order to tackle complex policy problems.

- **Process** – emphasising the development of new ways of working rather than setting up new structures to tackle complex problems.
- **Problem solving** – developing a common identification of ‘what is the problem’ rather than working through professional channels or following ideological imperatives in order to better understand ‘what works’.
- **Prevention** - allocating resources to focus on the prevention of future problems without coming up against departmental and political interests.
- **Prescience** – building human and communication capacity to better anticipate and respond to changes in an uncertain environment.
- **Public participation** - facilitating effective engagement in decision taking and the establishment of lines of accountability that operate downwards as well as up.
- **Polycentred leadership** – generating leadership at a number of sites and levels to support whole systems culture change.
- **Power to act** – designing systems that are flexible in terms of resource allocation and exhibit shared rather than centralised control.

Our documentary and empirical research suggests that disjointed working is a feature of the Northern Ireland governance context. A number of factors have contributed to this including:

- The status and nature of the Northern Ireland Assembly Executive
- The large number and wide variety of ‘arms length’ bodies involved in service delivery
- The growth of partnership relationships
- The dominance of functional organisation at all levels
- The limited role and capacity of local government
- The continued existence of deprived and divided communities

To achieve a more ‘joined-up’ approach to governance action is needed in the following areas:

- The development of mechanisms that link vertically combined with a greater consistency in the nature of relationships between central organisations and their peripheral delivery arms.
- Influencing mainstream change, particularly moving beyond the contribution of exceptional individuals towards system change. Recent experience suggests that notwithstanding some successes there are considerable difficulties associated with the practical application of mainstreaming. We suggest that conceiving mainstreaming as ‘the application of learning and new behaviour into core activities of organisations’ would be a helpful starting point (Maddock, 1999).
- Providing a local strategic framework for planning and co-ordinating local action and building strategic capacity. This requires consideration of the level at which the framework should operate, the identification of a lead body and the development of mechanisms to measure achievement and give account to local communities. English LSPs and Scottish Community Planning Partnership provide useful templates. Creating the capacity to think strategically requires investment. This could be achieved via the development of a collective learning programme across all agencies and at all levels of government.
- Building community capacity and complementing the involvement of communities in neighbourhood partnerships with mechanisms to build community perspectives into other layers of governance in appropriate ways so as to balance the interests of communities and strategic players.
- The development of more co-ordinated approach to Europe so as to maximise the impact of the region without stifling local enterprise. This will require improved vertical relationships and more visible horizontal co-ordination at the strategic centre.

INTRODUCTION

There is a powerful evidence-base of decades of disjointed working in the UK. Indeed demands for better co-ordination and even integration of the public policy system have been a feature of governmental life since the Haldane reforms (1918) established public administration on the basis of functional organisation. The persistence of disjointed working and the environment that feeds it can be understood in the context of the dynamics of central-local state relations, the nature of policy implementation, and the interactions of organisations.

Much of the literature on central-local relations in the last twenty years has focussed on the centralisation of state functions and on the dilution of local autonomy and democracy. This literature has emphasised the extent to which local government was weakened by the loss of statutory powers and duties and by a reduction in financial autonomy, matched by an increasing role for the centre in terms of planning and control. A related theme is the 'hollowing out' of the nation state- the loss of functions to other tiers or delivery agencies leaving the centre more reliant on others for implementation. So while the institutions of local governance have lost their autonomy, central government has lost some control. The field has become more unmanageable and less susceptible to consistent management from either centre or periphery. In this changed environment of central/local relations the traditional mechanisms of control and compliance model do not work.

At the same time, new models of implementation have emerged with a greater diversity of delivery systems relying on a mix of market, hierarchy and network. There is a large literature which argues that the 'implementation gap', i.e. the difference between intention and outcome, emerges for a host of reasons. The top down flow from policy is imperfect involving poor communication, inadequate resource allocation and/or poor policy specification. However implementation gaps may also arise because of a separate implementation culture which derives from the bottom-up. This is a function of the inevitable freedom of action and scope for discretion which lies with those who

implement and who are beyond the reach of the centre. Thus implementation structures, street level bureaucracy, and the discretion open to front line staff, may all distort policy intention. These factors may all be amplified in a complex environment where very many delivery mechanisms are employed.

Organisational sociology emphasises power in organisations and looks to structure rather than agency as the determinant of organisational behaviour and hence successful implementation. Organisations are endowed with the power of their key interests (professional, political, administrative, occasionally users) and the delivery of policy is a function of the power struggles which flow through the 'circuits of power'. Indeed the structure of government departments supported by a body of permanent civil servants, headed by government ministers who represent their departments in Cabinet has been criticised for facilitating too close an association between the prosperity of ministers' careers and that of their departments. In such an environment where political 'weight' and survival is measured by success in securing greater advantage and resources for the department there may be little impetus for either ministers or civil servants to consider the opportunities for combining resources even if this may offer the optimal solution. The problems are similar at local government level where notwithstanding their multi-functionality, their organisation (until recently) around service focused departments supported by bodies of professionals, headed by elected members making decisions through service based committees, produced much the same effects as those described in relation to central government. Indeed there is an argument that central and local professional and departmental interests conspire to create a single silo which excludes interorganisational or interdepartmental working and reinforces the power of those at the centre and in the localities to maintain their position. In both central and local government the dynamic towards departmentalism has been maintained by the management of public expenditure which frequently penalised departments that under-spent or 'offered up' resources for corporate priorities by reducing their overall budgets for the following year.

The ambition to overcome the legacy of disjointed working provided impetus for the New Labour programme of 'modernisation' post 1997. The perceived failure of previous governments to deliver effective as opposed to merely efficient policy outcomes was analysed in terms of both policy content *and* the operation of the public policy system. In terms of the latter attention focused on the organisation and management of domestic public policy development and delivery in central and local government and a number of commissioned studies pointed to an absence of capacity within government to co-ordinate resources effectively throughout the policy system (Richards et al, 1999, Stewart et al, 1999). The need for this synergetic capacity was rooted in the structures and cultures that characterised the workings of the political and policy machines and oriented them towards the aforementioned functional specialisation resulting in a series of parallel streams of activity that were resolutely separate and often in tension with each other.

There is a significant literature on co-ordination. Webb (1991) identified three broad drivers for co-ordinated action - rational/altruistic drivers, mandated or imperative drivers, and bureaucratic political drivers. Rationality and altruism produce voluntary collaboration, and the conditions under which such collaboration can emerge, and collaborative advantage extracted, have increasingly been researched in the context of partnerships, coalitions and strategic alliances (Huxham, 1996). Voluntary collaboration relies in large respect upon trust, however, and where trust does not exist more formal methods to ensure co-ordination need to be employed. In practice recognition of the problematic nature of functional organisation has inspired many attempts to induce co-ordination and/or integration in the system with mixed success. For example, the *JASP* initiative of the mid 1970s sought to use co-ordination to change the culture of central government decision making in relation to social policy, specifically to replace competition between Ministers with co-operation, although the obstacles to achieving this were acknowledged (Challis et al, 1988).

The challenge of 'joining-up' governance activities has taken on a different character in the 21st Century as globalisation, multi-level governance, new public management and the emergence of 'wicked issues' have combined to make co-ordination and integration at

once more pressing and more difficult to achieve. In this paper we examine the various forces at work, consider their implications for the governance of Northern Ireland and draw on available experience to offer insights for policy and practice. The paper is split into four sections. In section one we explore the specific motivations for ‘joining-up’ governance activities and relationships in the 21st Century, examine what exactly needs to be ‘joined-up’ and propose a delineation of the key features that would characterise a ‘joined-up’ approach. In section two we consider the specific context of Northern Ireland reflecting on local conditions and experiences and identifying key factors that require attention in order to ‘join-up’ government. In section three we draw on relevant comparative experiences and highlight the key issues arising from them. Finally, in we conclude our discussion with a review of the key lessons for those pursuing a more ‘joined-up’ future.

DESIGNING A ‘JOINED-UP’ APPROACH

There are three important developments that frame the discussion of ‘joined-up’ governance in the 21st Century. These are:

- The legacy of new public management (NPM)
- The development of multi-level governance
- The emergence of ‘wicked issues’

The legacy of new public management

The critiques of traditional governmental institutions as ill suited to the needs of global and dynamic economies and diverse societies e.g. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) paralleled considerable reform of these institutions within western liberal democracies, often involving the importation and application of new public management techniques (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Characteristics of New Public Management

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rational management through strategic management• Revising organisational structures to separate policy from administration and delegating responsibility for service delivery• Individualising performance and Responsibility• Applying human resource management | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achievement through efficiency, economy and effectiveness using performance indicators• Focusing on consumers, customers and citizens, not dominated by professionals• Organisations which are demand rather than supply led• Changing value bases to more market oriented values |
|---|--|

Farnham and Horton (1996:260)

In the UK, the Conservative Government's approach to NPM was influenced by 'public choice theory' which purported to explain why public sector organisations were always likely to be less efficient than private sector ones, emphasised the potential contribution of market mechanisms to public sector services and highlighted the opportunity for liberated public sector managers to engage in 'bureau shaping' so enhancing the strategic capacity of the organisation (Niskanen, 1971, 1973; Dowding, 1996; Dunleavy, 1991). The NPM took effect in all areas of public service during the Conservative administrations 1979-1997 (Ferlie et al, 1996) although its impact on local government was particularly significant.

For some e.g. Peters and Savoie (1995) there was an inherent tension. On the one hand was an empowerment offered to public servants and others through the devolution of decision making and the promotion of entrepreneurialism contained in NPM. On the other hand came a need for co-ordination implied by the fiscal challenges facing developed economies combined with the value of fairness that was imbued in the

tradition of public service. In the UK the Conservative's pursuit of efficiency through the application of NPM was argued to have reduced public organisations' capacity to co-ordinate and integrate, both by reducing their autonomy through increased central control and by reducing their available resources through the application of market mechanisms (Richards et al, 1999).

Much of the literature, therefore, points to the difficulties surrounding joint working. Provan and Millward (2001) emphasise that individual public service organisations may participate in mechanisms to aid co-ordination but that they have specific stakeholder constituencies who will judge agencies individually notwithstanding the achievements of the co-ordinating mechanism. A different way of expressing this is as 'isomorphism' – the ways in which organisations are structured by their external environment, incorporating into their behaviour elements which are legitimated externally to the organisation itself. These may include resource providers, user groups, fundholders and the external agencies which set performance standards (e.g. the Audit Commission). The current climate of performance management and service delivery that has evolved through the New Public Management thus poses a threat to joint working as accountabilities, regulation, inspection and performance management demand focussed and targeted behaviour from a range of public bodies. Considine (2002:37), in assessing accountability argues that 'we must expect accountability to undergo a dynamic process of evolution, adaptation, and - in some cases – crisis' while James (2002:45) points to the 'effects of agency structure in exacerbating the problems of joined up government' in the Benefits Agency.

There were substantial problems of 'vertical' organization separation between the sections of the DSS HQ responsible for policy and those in the Agency responsible for implementation...organisational separation exacerbated difficulties in horizontal working with other delivery bodies through different working conditions. The performance system exacerbated problems of horizontal working by encouraging staff to focus on their own work to the substantial exclusion of considering the effects on other organisations' activities'.

The development of multi-level governance

Multi-level governance has been defined as ‘negotiated, non-hierarchical exchanges between institutions at the transnational, national, regional and local levels....[which] do have to operate through intermediary levels but can take place directly between, say the transnational and -regional levels, thus bypassing the state level’ (Peters and Pierre, 2001:132). This bypassing has been interpreted as the hollowing out of the state (Rhodes 1994; Jessop 1995). While this may be plausible in an upwards direction, with the interests of the British nation state struggling to assert themselves in Europe, it is less plausible downwards as the central state has moved to occupy regional space, e.g. through the setting up and later enhancement of Government Offices for the Regions and the establishment of the Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU, 2001).

Nevertheless, the increasing complexity of governance relationships at different levels means that decision making takes place at a multiplicity of locations involving a range of actors, so requiring a broader focus (Pierre and Stoker, 2000). The evolution of multi-level governance may have acted to loosen the taut central-local relationships in the UK by providing opportunities for localities, sub-regions and regions to operate beyond the central state. Evidence of this is provided via examples of global-local relationships exemplified by Local Agenda 21 environmental programmes and EU- regional/local relationships manifest in the Committee of the Regions established following the Maastricht Treaty of 1991.

The UK the central state has retained considerable influence in shaping the development of multi-level governance most obviously through the establishment of new institutions such as the Scottish Parliament and Assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland. However, through the devolution programmes of the 1990s including the creation of ‘Next Step’ Executive Agencies and local quangos to deliver a variety of local services, the state also precipitated the need for horizontal relationships to be developed to mobilise resources and overcome fragmentation.

The emergence of ‘wicked issues’

The term ‘wicked issues’ (Rittel and Webber 1973) is reserved for those policy problems which cannot be addressed within the structures, processes and cultures that conventionally manage public policy. ‘Wicked issues’ challenge conventional approaches in a number of ways: they are issues that do not appear to belong to any single organisation, they represent problems that are difficult to define and even more difficult to link to causes, and they are intractable in that there do not appear to be readily available solutions at hand. ‘Wicked issues’ that exercise public policy makers include environmental sustainability, crime and community safety and social exclusion. Perhaps of greatest significance is the challenge of uncertainty that ‘wicked issues’ present to politicians and officials, requiring them to provide a response when they have limited intelligence about how to respond (Clarke and Stewart, 1997). In trying to govern or manage this uncertainty politicians and officials are urged to adopt holistic rather than linear thinking, which is ‘capable of grasping the big picture, including the inter-relationships between objectives’ (Clarke and Stewart, 1997:4).

Increasing attention is being given to 'whole system' approaches to governance (Stewart et al, 1999, Wilkinson and Appelbee, 1999). These approaches, drawing on ecological models of interaction and interdependence, offer an alternative way to understand and plan intervention within a complex set of interactions. They are based on the premise that complex systems need to be understood in terms of the interactions between parts of the system and its environment. These interactions involve feedback loops, whereby elements in the systems feed influence and information to each other over time. Outcomes are the result of the interaction of a large number of organisations and agents each of which is attempting to respond to a changing environment, by adapting behaviour and by shaping the environment itself. The system is ‘open’ in the sense that there is constant interaction between each organisation or agent and all the other agencies that make up the environment they find themselves in.

Holistic thinking thus acknowledges the complexity of the public policy environment and recognises that on many occasions there will be competing objectives that will need to be balanced. To achieve this Clarke and Stewart draw on the work of Vickers (1995) to argue for the development of ‘governing relations or norms’ that will refocus politicians and officials away from the limited (and in the case of wicked issues often futile) pursuit of exclusive objectives towards the development of governing capacity that is relationship based and thus able to facilitate reconciliation across policy areas.

One wicked issue that has attracted a great deal of attention since 1997 is social exclusion. The UK Government’s Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy specified that action to tackle social exclusion needed to be ‘joined-up’, in order to tackle its’ multi-faceted nature effectively. The related Policy Action Team report on ‘Joining it up locally’ (PAT 17 SEU, 2000; Stewart 2002) identified a lack of ‘joined-up’ action at all levels of government as one of eight reasons why regeneration policies had consistently failed to deliver sustainable improvement in the poorest areas. The report highlighted the significance of place, i.e. neighbourhoods as an important site for action but emphasised the need to ‘join-up’ vertically as well as horizontally in order to achieve sustainable change. The report also drew attention to the potential contribution of the public to the tackling of ‘wicked issues’ like social exclusion, highlighting the need to empower and involve local communities in regeneration programmes.

The above analysis has suggested that ‘joining-up’ governance activities has taken on increasing importance in the 21st Century as a consequence of a combination of factors that have given rise to a more complex, dynamic and diverse policy environment in which governmental institutions with reduced capacity are faced with policy challenges of greater enormity. The task for government is to find ways of drawing together the myriad of stakeholders in order to assemble the requisite capacity to design and deliver a ‘joined-up’ approach. This necessitates an appreciation of what exactly needs to be ‘joined-up’ in the current environment.

What needs to be co-ordinated and integrated?

Recent research suggests that co-ordination and/or integration needs to take place at a number of different levels in the governance environment including neighbourhood, locality, sub-regional, region, national level and supra-national e.g. the European Union (Stewart et al, 2002). However this research also indicates that co-ordination/integration at these different levels serves different purposes and these purposes need to be understood, as they will dictate the ways in which different stakeholders need to be engaged at each level. For example the PAT 17 report highlights the significance of the locality (local authority boundary) for the delivery of a 'joined-up' response in neighbourhoods. The local authority level is critical as in England it is at this level that 'many core public services do their operational planning and at which many decisions about allocations of resources are made' (2000:9). The PAT report recommended the establishment of a local co-ordinating mechanism that would bring together the key service deliverers for the locality to act as a forum for shared operational planning and resource allocation. These mechanisms were subsequently established as Local Strategic Partnerships.

Meanwhile another PAT report focusing on neighbourhood management (PAT 4, 2000) specified the need for a specific mechanism at the neighbourhood level – the neighbourhood management board – to help ensure that local authority and other services are designed and delivered in a manner appropriate to the needs of the communities in the neighbourhood. The emphasis here is not on resource allocation but on monitoring the application of resource allocation and its contribution to community well being. There is greater expectation that local people will be members of the neighbourhood management arrangements and that they will sit alongside professionals and other officials on the neighbourhood management board to monitor and review the coherence of local service delivery in practice.

In addition to the need for co-ordinating and integrating mechanisms to be appropriate to their purpose, they also need to take account of the different obstacles that exist to 'joining-up' at different levels of governance. For example Stewart's review of regional

capacity to lead the co-ordination of area based initiatives in the UK found significant structural barriers to the realisation of regional capacity including the fact that many regional organisations, i.e. government departments, were not consistent with each other and so could not relate to the region in the same way (Stewart, 2000). The idea of the region as a defined entity was more developed in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, than in England where there remained limitations to regional identity.

Evidence from a range of studies since 1997 also suggests that while the co-ordination and/or integration of ‘special projects’ e.g. regeneration schemes is important (and becoming more so given the plethora of new area based initiatives fostered by New Labour), more important is the co-ordination/integration of mainstream activity, both across functional silos and also with the short life ‘special projects’ (Richards et al, 1999, Stewart, et al, 1999, Stewart, et al 2002).

So ‘joining-up’ needs to take place at different levels and across policies and programme areas with an emphasis upon securing interaction vertically as well as horizontally. Conceiving this complex set of inter-relationships as as part of a ‘whole system’ Stewart et al (1999) described each of the key elements in the system in order to increasing understanding about the contribution of each of the elements and their interaction with each other. They identified the key elements of the system as:

- Agenda setting and initiative direction – how problems are defined and described
- Stakeholder involvement – the ways and points at which different actors are engaged in the system
- Structures and networks – the various ways in which opportunities and obstacles present themselves
- Systems and procedures – with specific reference to financial management and information systems
- Culture, organisation and capacity – the values, reward systems, incentives and skills necessary for the system to function
- Indicators and evaluation – how to identify, record and learn from ‘what works’

- Learning structures – how does learning really happen in the system and what kinds of human and social capital are necessary to support co-ordination.

In this analysis, the complexity of the public policy system means that different elements interface and feedback in often unpredictable ways. While it may be possible to improve intelligence about each element and to build up patterns of interactions, it will never be possible to predict exactly the outcomes of different interactions. Therefore improved understanding of the system can help with the management of uncertainty referred to earlier but it will not be able to remove it entirely (Barnes, Matka and Sullivan, forthcoming). Indeed certain commentators suggest that the nature of the challenge is such that it cannot be met within the existing policy system but instead requires an entirely new approach (6, 1997).

The key features of ‘joined-up’ governance

Drawing on the material discussed above it is possible to suggest what the key features of a ‘joined-up’ system of governance might be¹. These are briefly described but not weighted or prioritised, below.

1. Partnership

In an era of collaboration, the most familiar form is the multi-organisational partnership, ‘a formal expression of shared commitment to act in the common interest’ It is a way of ‘sharing responsibility and overcoming the inflexibility created by organisational and even national boundaries’ (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002:1). It is considered integral to the delivery of programmes to address complex policy problems and is certainly not unique to the UK (see for example Osborne ed. 2000).

Overcoming the challenges of complex policy problems requires interventions that cut across the conventional boundaries of national and local governance and can only be realised through the joint efforts of public authorities, the private sector, voluntary

¹ These features have been developed and extended from an initial core body of features used to describe the New Labour approach to policy making in Sullivan et al (2002)

organisations and the communities they serve.

2. Process.

‘New Labour’ has emphasised the need to find ‘new ways of working’ in order to tackle complex problems and secure effectiveness in the public policy system. This requires an emphasis on the development of new *processes* rather than *structures* among and between the various sectors to deliver change. This was illustrated in new policy initiatives such as Health Action Zones via the emphasis on sustainable mainstream service and policy change. The experience of HAZ and other Area Based Initiatives (ABIs) suggests that while the interests of key groups are strong they are also permeable supporting the view of Richards et al that ‘professional practice is not a given but can be changed’ through action (1999:125).

3. Problem solving.

Focusing on the common identification of ‘what is the problem’ rather than simply working through established and separate professional channels or following ideological imperatives is a key feature of the current preoccupation with evidence based practice and learning from and replicating ‘what works’ (see for example Davies et al, 2000). This is linked to a change agenda that understands communities as key agents in both problem identification and solution and front line workers as vital catalysts for the generation of creativity and innovation necessary to support this process (6 1997, Barnes and Prior 2000, Leadbeatter 1999).

4. Prevention.

Balancing short-term pressures against long-term need remains a central tension for public policy. One of the effects of a preoccupation with the former in the UK has meant that resources remain targeted at the effects rather than the causes of public policy problems. A ‘joined-up’ public policy system would need to be able to allocate resources so as to focus on the prevention of future problems without coming up against departmental and political interests. There is some evidence that ABIs have engaged in finding ways to develop longer-term thinking and to begin to propose

strategies for addressing the causal factors of core ‘wicked issues’.

5. Prescience.

Within the ‘New Labour’ agenda is an implicit message about the increasing speed and complexity of change in public services. A ‘joined-up’ system of governance would need to be able to demonstrate the human capacity to anticipate and be proactive in determining appropriate change strategies in an uncertain environment. This would require the identification and development of relevant skills amongst staff at all levels of partner organisations as well as investment in the development of data collection systems that would enable more holistic decision making to be undertaken.

6. Public participation

The contribution of the public to a ‘joined-up’ system of governance is vital, although the role that they play may vary according to policy area and level of implementation. While public participation initiatives have been underway in the UK since the early 1970s there is still evidence that their impact remains limited. Making public participation meaningful requires sufficient access to resources to support involvement, the development of community/organisational capacity to help facilitate effective engagement in decision taking and the establishment of lines of accountability that operate downwards as well as up.

7. Polycentred leadership

Leadership needs to emanate from a number of sites and levels to support ‘joined-up’ working. It needs to be generated from the bottom up with front line workers in the field mobilising their deep knowledge of implementation to focus on integrated delivery. However, it must also be present at the strategic level with organisational leaders offering vision and direction particularly to middle and junior managers. Collectively, leaders must facilitate organisational cultures and systems of incentives and rewards that reinforce new attitudes and behaviours towards cross boundary working.

8. Power to act

Finally for a system of governance to be genuinely ‘joined-up’ requires that it exhibits the necessary ‘power to act’ at different points in the system. This requires specific attention in two linked areas – resource allocation and centralised control. Without more flexibility in how resources are allocated any ‘joined-up’ system will find it difficult to orient itself towards prevention and act quickly to address identified problems. Similarly, without a system of shared control in the system, effective ‘joining-up’ will remain limited by central regulation and direction, thus stifling individual innovation and creativity, limiting the potential contribution of the public and reducing the capacity to learn.

THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONTEXT

In addition to our searches of the literature and of relevant experiences elsewhere we undertook a short series interviews with actors in order to ground our review in the specifics of Northern Ireland. We spoke with actors who operated at the centre of Northern Ireland administration as well as those who were based at the front line of service delivery and partnership working. We also spent time with three organisations which reflected in different ways the capacity of the system to collaborate and co-ordinate. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive operates as a non-departmental public body with a province-wide strategic responsibility for housing but with a decentralised delivery matching the local authority structure. The Employment and Learning Department, working directly to the Northern Ireland Executive, also has a province wide responsibility for a range of functions but again operates through a decentralised system which divides Northern Ireland into a western and eastern division and thereafter into local offices. The Belfast Education, Libraries and Learning Board has responsibilities for schools and libraries in Belfast as well as the overall responsibility for youth services in the city.

Each organisation appeared to us to display different characteristics dependent upon its political and administrative history and the nature of its current role. These characteristics affect the capacity of the separate organisations to join up, and it seemed clear to us that whilst all those with whom we spoke appeared committed to co-ordinated planning and implementation, their ability to deliver integrated services was less than it might be.

Taking into account, therefore the totality of the structures and processes of public administration, the governance context in Northern Ireland contains a number of characteristics that illustrate the need for interventions to ‘join-up’ government while at the same time posing a considerable challenge to their likely effectiveness.

- **The status and nature of the Northern Ireland Assembly Executive**

Although currently suspended the Assembly and Executive are considered important symbols of the possibilities for accountable and democratic government in Northern Ireland. At the same time a number of factors, including the need to accommodate multi-party perspectives in the Executive, the ‘newness’ of Executive members to government and the seductive capacity of government departments to foster ‘silo’ mentalities have arguably combined to create an institution that is relatively ill-equipped to ‘join-up’ policy areas and services. This tension was acknowledged within the Executive and efforts made to address it, e.g. specific cross-cutting issue Programme Funds were set aside for departments to bid into to engage in collective action. Nonetheless there was evidence of ministers and departments acting alone, of policy areas being split across departments, e.g. planning, energy policy, and of confusion about the appropriate remit for government i.e. balance between policy making and delivery.

- **The number and variety of ‘arms length’ bodies involved in service delivery**

Greer (2001) identifies Northern Ireland’s ‘arms length’ bodies to include quangos, agencies, boards and trusts. Prevalent in Northern Ireland since the 1970s these different ‘arms length’ bodies have responsibility for delivering most public services.

Service areas can contain different kinds of 'arms length bodies' e.g. health services are delivered through health boards and trusts. Service areas are rarely coterminous meaning that communities will receive services from a number of different 'authorities' often in an un-co-ordinated way, e.g. one oft cited example is in relation to a flooding incident where at least 6 different bodies had some jurisdiction but none was prepared/able to take overall responsibility to meet residents' needs. In such circumstances the preparedness of professionals to work together can be frustrated both by the difficulty of finding time and space to meet and by a mind set that emphasises the limits of individual agency jurisdiction. Attempts to 'join-up' activities are in evidence though often it is as important to achieve co-ordination *within* service areas as well as between them. For example the recent proposal by the North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust to 'reconfigure the delivery of all of the community health and social services which it provides, along a 'Life Events' model' (North Belfast Community Action Project, 2002:90). The aim is to match service delivery to need through the development of an integrated system with single source sites for public access.

- **The growth of partnership relationships**

Partnership activity in Northern Ireland is evident at: the neighbourhood level e.g. URBAN II programme for inner North Belfast, the sub-local level e.g. area based partnerships that cover several neighbourhoods, the local level e.g. the 26 District Partnerships for Peace and Reconciliation, the sub-regional level e.g. the local authority cross border network and the strategic level e.g. North/South Ministerial Council. The role of the EU (in its various guises) is considered by many commentators to be pivotal in stimulating the development of partnership relationships in Northern Ireland at all levels and across borders (Anthony and Evans 2001, Greer 2001, McCall, 1999). It has achieved this primarily through the allocation of Structural Funds to Northern Ireland for the purposes of revitalisation. While certain of these funds e.g. Peace and Reconciliation Funds, are additional to existing resource streams, many others are not. However, advocates at the local level argue that while the funds may not increase the totality of resource to the area they do place resources

in the hands of those closest to the problem, rather than in the hands of ‘distant’ government departments. While partnership is regarded as an important instrument in ‘joining-up’ activities at all levels there is little evidence that the capacity of existing arrangements is fully considered prior to the setting up of new partnerships resulting in the need for partnerships to spend time networking with each other. At the same time there is limited evidence of learning from partnership activity informing mainstream service delivery decisions. A similar situation in England contributed to the establishment of the above-mentioned Local Strategic Partnerships whose overarching co-ordination function renders them distinct from the Northern Ireland LSPs established primarily to deliver the Peace Programme (although there is evidence from these latter partnerships of an intent to develop a wider ranging strategic capacity e.g. the Belfast Local Strategy Partnership)

- **The dominance of functional organisation**

Despite the growth of partnership working there remain significant forces driving departments and public bodies into vertical silos. Many organisations are adopting the new management mechanisms of targets and indicators, and as elsewhere this reinforces a concentration on the internal management of the organisation rather than its relationship and interaction with others. Our interviews and documentary analysis illustrated a number of the obstacles and opportunities facing departments and public bodies in their attempts to ‘join up’ as well as their capacity to target resources onto excluded or disadvantaged communities.

- **The role and capacity of local government**

Local government in Northern Ireland has a far more limited role than that of local government in England, Scotland and Wales although since 1992 it has gained new powers and resources in relation to local economic development and community relations. These new powers combined with the introduction of the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in 1995 which required the establishment of 26 districts cross sector partnerships, brought local councillors into partnership relationships with local community and voluntary organisations, business

organisations and other public service bodies to develop local action plans. For Greer (2001) these developments precipitated the need for a ‘strategic co-ordinating role’ which in his view could be filled by local authorities as they ‘have the potential to establish linkages and formulate a strategic framework for development’ (2001:249). Others consulted in our research for this study acknowledged the need for co-ordination but were less convinced of local government’s current capacity or even desire to take on this role.

- **The continued existence of deprived and divided communities**

The sectarian nature of much of Northern Ireland society provides the greatest imperative to ‘joined-up’ action but also presents a fundamental challenge to it as past experience has shown. The inability of traditional governing institutions to deliver services equitably to communities was one of the reasons for the reallocation of services to a plethora of other bodies. One consequence of this was that individual citizens were often left to find their way through the service delivery maze. A combination of factors including institutional failure, limited community capacity and the incidence of ‘wicked issues’ resulted in certain communities and parts of Northern Ireland being subject to endemic disadvantage and deprivation. The multiplicities of partnership arrangements (described above) seek to work with communities to address deprivation and division and to do so via community empowerment and development. This is potentially very important in relation to the achievement of wider goals for Northern Ireland as ‘a properly rooted settlement must involve people working out details of how they want to live among themselves, and establishing the basis of participation and democracy’ (Morison, 2001:274).

Given the above contextual feature of the governance environment in Northern Ireland we would suggest that the following issues are the most significant in terms of achieving ‘joined-up’ governance:

- **Mechanisms that link vertically.** While there is considerable evidence of mechanisms that seek to link horizontally from neighbourhood to Assembly Executive

level, there is little evidence of mechanisms that link different levels together. Consequently policy-making and service delivery/implementation are experienced often as separate and unrelated activities and those at the 'front line' e.g. Partnership co-ordinators, professionals and service users feel unable to engage in dialogue with policy makers about the efficacy or otherwise of new policies or services.

A greater consistency in the nature of relationships between centre and periphery is also needed. Our interviews – albeit brief – suggested that organisations adopted varying approaches to their relationship with their peripheral local agency arms, and that these differences inhibited co-ordination between programmes. The education, housing and training services each have different flexibility in the use of resources, work towards different targets, have differing accountabilities, and this leads to diversity of approach. In housing there appeared scope within a resource framework which allowed the centre to exercise some flexibility within a programme which reflected capital as well as revenue expenditure. For the Employment and Learning service, co-ordination involved the attempt to secure efficiency in resource use and thus to avoid duplication of effort (through the creation of new employment initiatives). For the Education and Libraries Board, the management of resources through highly devolved school budgeting and reliance upon school based management, meant that co-ordination was best pursued through joint working at local community level through community partnerships. The Communities in Schools evaluation (Quaesetum 2002) appears to illustrate well this form of joint working and highlights the collaborative style adopted in the health and education functions.

- **Influencing mainstream change.** Evidence of 'success' in relation shifting mainstream priorities, budgets and human resources are apparent but remain relatively small scale and are too dependent upon the qualities of key individuals in the system e.g. the willingness of chief executives to get involved and be influenced. While such individuals are vitally important in stimulating and delivering change, additional mechanisms are needed to ensure that the component parts of the public policy system move in a complementary not contradictory way.

- **Providing a local strategic framework and building strategic capacity.** One way of facilitating complementary change is through the proactive development of a strategic framework that can identify key priorities, blend together specific service plans and monitor progress towards shared goals. The level at which the framework operates (its geographical coverage), the identification of a lead body to establish the process (e.g. local government) and the mechanisms that are used measure achievement and give account to local communities are all issues that need to be addressed here. To achieve a strategic framework requires investment into the creation of the capacity to think strategically. This involves the development – through training action learning, networking and experience exchange – of the necessary knowledge and skills. The tools are well known including information collection and presentation, problem solving, options analysis, risk analysis and risk management, resource planning and financial management, project management and control, monitoring and evaluation. A collective learning programme across all agencies and at all levels of government would begin to build a culture of strategic collaboration and co-ordination.
- **Building community capacity**

Balancing the needs and interests of strategic players with those of communities to ensure that ‘joining-up’ activities are as inclusive as possible is difficult. A review of early community planning work in Scotland (Rogers et al, 1999) found that while strategic partners emphasised the strategic planning element of the community plan, communities emphasised the community element. As a result public service providers had different expectations of the process than communities, something that was rarely easy to resolve. However, as other studies have demonstrated (e.g. SEU, PAT 17, 2000 and Stewart et al, 2002) community involvement is essential if sustainability is to result. While neighbourhood and local partnership arrangements in Northern Ireland emphasise their community orientation, this needs to be complemented by mechanisms that build community perspectives into other layers of governance.
- **A co-ordinated approach to Europe**

Mechanisms exist to manage Northern Ireland's relationship with the EU at different levels. Of most significance perhaps is the Committee of the Regions, a representative body which the European Commission and Council are required to consult on matters that have a regional or local dimension, including: economic and social cohesion, trans-European infrastructure networks, health, education and culture, employment policy, social policy, the environment, and vocational training and transport. The Committee of the Regions has 222 members, 24 from the UK including 2 from the Northern Ireland Assembly. Other mechanisms exist to co-ordinate the local implementation of EU programmes e.g. Belfast Local Strategy Partnership. Relationships with the EU have clearly been important and beneficial for Northern Ireland in terms of regeneration funding. However these relationships can appear both partial e.g. the absence of strong vertical relationships linking the activities of the Committee of the Regions with more localised partnerships, and opportunistic, e.g. local partnerships emerging in response to funding opportunities. Attention needs to be paid to examining how Northern Ireland can relate most effectively with the EU e.g. through the Committee of the Regions without stifling local enterprise.

In the next section other experiences of 'joining-up' will be examined with a view to responding to the issues identified here.

'JOINING-UP' IN PRACTICE – EXPERIENCES AND ISSUES

As was indicated in the introduction the better co-ordination and integration of the public policy system has been a recurring issue in British public policy. Numerous mechanisms have been employed at all levels including inter-departmental committees and working groups, the reorganisation of departments, partnership arrangements of different kinds and integrated teams for the delivery of specific services. Since 1997 central government has created new institutions such as the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly and developed new mechanisms at central and local levels e.g. Social Exclusion Unit, the development of Local Strategic Partnerships. Here we review those developments that illustrate the issues and problems of most relevance to the Northern Ireland context.

- **Mechanisms that link vertically.**

In recent years various attempts have been made to improve vertical relationships and while they have experienced some success a core difficulty remains the tendency for vertical relationships to evolve into central control. For example, the introduction of the Government Offices of the Regions in England in the early 1990s was intended to make central government more accessible and responsive to other tiers and stakeholders. However early research into their operation found that this physical accessibility was not matched by a professional permeability – civil servants remained gatekeepers and communication did not evolve into dialogue. The inability of government to integrate vertically and thus to present a coherent picture of central policies at sub-national level was again highlighted by the report of the Performance and Innovation Unit (Cabinet Office, 2000). This demonstrated the mixed messages sent down the line to Government offices of the Regions and the consequent failure of GOs to draw these messages together into a framework which would support better joined up working at local level. The English response has been the establishment of the Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU) which has provided a framework which attempts to assure the co-ordination of programmes. A ‘double key’ approval system, a review of ABIs, the merging of some ABIs, and the provision of an ABI information system and network goes some way towards providing a structure which may reduce the fragmentation of programmes (RCU 2002 at rcu.gov.uk). Similarly legislation which allows the combination of funding streams (under the Health Act 2000) offers flexibility between health and local authorities to engage in shared funding.

The institutional interface between central government and local government in England has been supported since 1997 by the central-local government partnership, a formally constituted body comprising key central government departments with representatives from local government. The partnership aims to improve the capacity of the public policy system to work effectively by increasing understanding between central and local levels, developing improved relationships and focusing on shared concerns. Its establishment in 1997 was accompanied by a set of published principles

that would guide its working and in 2002 the partnership published a set of common issue/service priorities that were to frame policy and implementation. While the existence of the partnership is not well known outside the strategic players in local government its existence has symbolic and practical importance in relation to the commitment to 'join-up' government in England.

- **Influencing mainstream change.**

In England the evaluations of regeneration initiatives regularly refer to the need for more attention to be paid to securing sustainable change in the way mainstream services operate and policies are made (e.g. Russell et al, 1996, Hall et al, 1999). Since 1997 a plethora of ABIs have been announced that aim to transform the mainstream in England, e.g. HAZ, New Deal for Communities, Sure Start and the Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. Initiatives have targeted structures and cultures and have operated at all levels. However, difficulties remain in developing practical thinking about mainstreaming. There remain definitional problems, with localities continuing to struggle with the distinctions between bending resources, reshaping services and providing continuity for ABIs. Many of the difficulties revolve around the identification of area-specific expenditures. The difficulties involved include some of the following:

- Expenditure information is not collected on a geographical basis to allow the identification of neighbourhood spending.
- Calculating the amount of central or corporate services which should be counted as neighbourhood expenditure.
- The operations of accountancy conventions, e.g. gross spend versus net spend, recharges, and the balancing of different accounting approaches taken by different organisations.

Experience in Cheshire surrounding the Neighbourhood Management pilot in the peripheral Blacon estate illustrates the challenges. Cheshire has a long established Research and Information unit with extensive expertise in area based analysis (cf. its

family Stress Area work, Community Action Areas, and county wide surveys). Yet, as elsewhere, much of the expenditure identified as being spent on Blacon was calculated on a pro rata population basis, albeit modified by some variables for some elements of the budget. This implies that revisiting this figure in five years time will produce a new spending figure dependent on whatever the population is in that year. Tracking expenditure directly by identifying specific activities allocated to areas (such as neighbourhood staff) is time consuming and difficult where resources are divided between areas or where no records of time specifically dedicated to particular areas are held. Management accounting systems seldom offer detailed spatially disaggregated data.

Elsewhere there are moves towards greater recognition of mainstreaming. Sure Start for example has a specific, if as yet small, mainstreaming programme which itself support initiatives which seek to integrate Sure Start learning into the main health and social care programmes. The HAZ experience confirms the tension in investing in innovative projects and then integrating them into mainstream services (Audit Commission 2002, Sandford, 2001). A useful definition of mainstreaming therefore is that it is 'the application of learning and new behaviour into core activities of organisations' (Maddock, 1999). The experience of Bradford HAZ illustrates this point. The development of new primary care organisations with a strong orientation towards the public and the capacity to link up with others to achieve health goals was a key goal of this initiative. To achieve this the HAZ funded a Community Involvement Team whose job was to work with the four developing Primary Care Groups (PCG) in Bradford to help build their public involvement capacity. Each PCG had its own community involvement worker but the individual workers also had strong links with each other through a centrally co-ordinated team in order to maximise cross fertilisation of ideas and to provide support. The findings of the HAZ local and national evaluations were that the team had been very successful in embedding within the PCGs and latterly the PCTs the principles of public involvement, so much so that the PCTs had continued to fund the function post HAZ funding (Fawcett and South, 2002, Barnes, Matka and Sullivan, forthcoming).

Other attempts to influence mainstream change have also combined structural and cultural change, for example Coventry's programme of Area Co-ordination. Each area in Coventry is the responsibility of a full time area co-ordinator whose job involves bringing together a cross sector group of local providers and voluntary and community organisations to identify local priorities and try and meet these via improved co-ordination as well as through bidding for external funds. The work of the areas is supported by a strategic level group who represent the key players in the city. Most recently the area co-ordination scheme has focused on the development of common data sets of area based service performance indicators to try and develop the evidence base for their work (Sullivan, 2001, Sullivan et al, 2001).

Finally, one option for encouraging mainstream change is the development of integrated multi-disciplinary teams to address particular issues. The issue of co-located integrated teams is one which can present as many problems as it might solve (see Haynes, 2002 for a discussion of these). However, in certain circumstances it can present an important mechanism for 'joining-up' a service area. For example Bristol operates a 'one-stop shop' for single homeless people (the HUB) which brings together housing, social services, benefits and health staff in order to meet the multiple needs of single homeless people in the city. It is managed by a co-ordinator who spends a considerable amount of time working with staff and their service heads to address professional/service differences that might get in the way of delivering an integrated service.

Mainstreaming continues to be a major challenge, and early evaluation of the role of public bodies in LSPs² confirms the range of obstacles which confront main programme bending (OPM/UWE 2002).

- **Providing a local strategic framework.**

The provision of a local strategic framework has been facilitated in two ways in England; firstly through the 'duty' of community strategy that requires local

authorities to identify and publicise the key strategic issues that need to be addressed in the locality accompanied by programmes of action, and secondly through the introduction of Local Strategic Partnerships. Local authorities have responsibility for setting up LSPs and in their newly established 'community leadership' role they also tend to take the lead in LSPs (although this is not a requirement). LSPs do not have to conform to particular local authority boundaries but rather can be established to reflect the most appropriate level of operation. Therefore while some reflect individual local government boundaries e.g. Sandwell, others bring together a number of local authority areas to reflect sub-regional preferences or county identities e.g. the Northumberland Strategic Partnership, the East Durham partnership, the West Suffolk Partnership. There is often a close alignment between the community strategy and LSP. For example, in Sandwell the Community Strategy was developed by the established Civic Partnership and is being delivered through the work programmes of the various partners overseen by the reconstituted civic partnership, the LSP (Smith et al, 2002). In LSPs where a number of local authority areas are covered it may be more difficult to achieve a balance between the community strategies and the LSP, but there are a number of examples where county level and district LSPs are achieving a reconciliation of mutual interests and are engaging in collaborative working (e.g. Hampshire)

Whatever the configuration, delivering on such an agenda requires considerable effort in supporting and maintaining the LSP even when LSPs are based upon pre-existing good relationships. One common means of achieving this is through the appointment of an Executive Director and team. In Sandwell the key players in the borough – local authority, health and police service - fund the Executive team. The LSP Director was recruited from outside Sandwell and is considered (and considers himself) independent of the partners while his team comprise secondees from different partner organisations. In a wider context an early survey of 196 English LSPs shows that 26% have some form of support of their own (i.e. are independent of the local authority).

The workings of LSPs should have significant implications for the mainstream of local governance bodies. This clearly has implications for local accountability. It is possible to identify at least three lines of accountability in LSPs (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002):

- Vertical accountability: upward - to central government to account for meeting NRF targets. This is the most clearly delineated relationship.
- Vertical accountability: downward - to local people to account for progress towards meeting priority local needs. In practice this will depend on whether organisations and communities have sufficient capacity to give/hold to account.
- Horizontal accountability: sideways - to partners in the LSP to account for delivery of partners' contributions to agreed outcomes. These may be those most easily compromised by changing central government priorities in relation to organisational targets.

Traditional forms of local accountability are challenged by the development of LSPs. Partners to the LSP do not see themselves as accountable to the council for their performance. In fact the council is considered as one among a number of partners required to give account of performance towards shared goals. At the same time its community leadership role implies a responsibility for securing the public interest. One way to exercise this role is to monitor the performance of the LSP in relation to the aspirations of the Community Strategy. It could also develop the role of area forums so that local councillors could work through them to review and challenge the contribution of the LSP in that area.

In addition while partners to the LSP may gain their position by virtue of their role responsibilities, if the contribution of the partnership is to be more than the sum of the parts, then hierarchical accountability has to be augmented by another form of (horizontal) accountability, such as corporate accountability (the partnership as an accountable entity) and/or collective accountability (the actions of one are the responsibility of the whole). Bovens (1998) alerts us to the difficulties associated with

each of these forms of accountability, specifically whether corporate entities can be held accountable and the potential for collective accountability to become collective unaccountability, i.e. everyone and therefore no-one is responsible, but urges us to develop them as possibilities nonetheless. The experience of LSPs to date illustrates the practical difficulties here as while LSPs agree targets with the government regional office, for practical purposes those targets are broken down into actions that different organisations may be held to account for (Smith et al, 2002). For the LSP to be considered an accountable body would require it to meet certain conditions in terms of its legal and financial constitution and it would also need to be accompanied by cultural changes that resulted in the partners to the LSP being prepared to be held to account for targets to which they contributed beyond the level of their contribution. There would also need to be clarity as to whom the LSP would be accountable, e.g. central government, local communities and how that accountability could be secured. A more immediate practical and political reality is that which Pyper (1996) alerts us to, that some forms of accountability can supersede others. In the case of LSPs in receipt of NRF funds, it could be that accountability upwards to central government takes priority, rendering other forms of accountability, and indeed local accountability less significant.

- **Building community capacity**

Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) identify three levels at which citizens and communities can engage in collaboration to achieve 'joined-up' outcomes. These are

- Strategic: activity that is local authority wide or is sub-regional/regional in nature
- Sectoral: activity to do with the design and delivery of specific policies or services
- Neighbourhood: activity that is community focused, e.g. neighbourhood or village.

Some initiatives may be level specific while others may operate across a number of levels. However each level holds specific implications for participation that will determine the nature of the relationship that develops.

In strategic collaborations participation may take a number of forms. Very often citizens are not members of the strategic body directing the collaboration, for example, Local Strategic Partnership but they may be identified as key consultees. Where citizens are members their role is a representative one. As a result the individuals who participate tend to be ‘community leaders’, that is people who are recognised as having a legitimate position of authority within their communities. Another way of securing representation is through the formation of an umbrella body to represent the interests of a particular group who then elect or appoint a leader to participate in strategic fora. A number of Health Action Zones have adopted this approach.

The focus on ‘representation’ and the relatively small number of seats available to citizens on strategic bodies means that they may be offered to individuals who are perceived as reflecting the nature of the local population. Such an approach can be problematic. For example, where the number of seats available may not actually reflect the diversity of stakeholders in the population continued exclusion can result. Where no infrastructure links the strategic body with communities the capacity of citizen representatives to maintain regular communication may be limited. Finally, where the chosen citizen representatives are not in fact widely recognised by communities as having a connection with them, they may be rejected as appropriate representatives. Regardless of the means of representation, strategic vehicles for collaboration are generally wider ranging in their remit and comprise the most powerful actors in the locality or region. As such citizen representatives may be able to exercise little influence over the collaboration and may also experience it as inaccessible and only partially relevant to their interests. Bradford HAZ sought to address this problem by devolving many decisions about resource allocation to PCGs or similar area based bodies which were able to develop more intimate relationships with local community interests (Barnes, Matka and Sullivan, forthcoming).

Sectoral collaborations are more focused in their intent, requiring the participation of a particular citizen group, usually one that benefits from the service that the collaboration is built around. The focus of the collaboration is clear with an emphasis on improved service design and delivery along with the development of enhanced methods of user evaluation. Service users tend to have a more equal presence in these collaborations, as there are fewer partners to involve. Connexions partnerships, for example, actively engage their users (young people) on local management boards. However in sectoral partnerships professionals, by virtue of their authority, retain considerable influence over decisions and processes (Barnes et al, 1999).

Neighbourhood collaborations are focused on a specific area but are wide ranging in their remit. They are well documented in relation to regeneration but are also the focus for environmental sustainability (Local Agenda 21), local service delivery (neighbourhood management) and housing (via estate management boards). It is at this level that citizen participation in collaboration is potentially widest and deepest. The relative intimacy of the collaborative arrangements means that in terms of representation, a wider range of stakeholders can be represented. It also means that citizen participation in the collaboration may be easier and more meaningful because it is close to the respective communities (although this may not be the case where neighbourhood initiatives disregard and cut across communities of identity). The citizen presence in neighbourhood collaborations is significant and under new Labour the emphasis has been on the development of leadership as well as participation amongst citizen members. While the role of citizens as community leaders has become increasingly important, past experience suggests that the development of this leadership capacity necessitates consideration of issues such as legitimacy and accountability (Purdue et al, 2000, Anastacio et al, 2000).

Birmingham City Council has sought to link citizen and community participation at all levels via its decentralisation initiative. Here the city wide LSP (for a population of just under a million) is supported by ward (@25,000 population) and constituency

based (@90,000 population) partnerships that involve a higher proportion of community/voluntary sector groups. The needs of specific interest groups that might be marginalised through sole focus on communities of geography are met via the specific networks, that are supported by the Council's Equalities Unit and /or relevant service departments. This is part of a wider programme of devolution that Birmingham City Council is engaged in where the potential loss of efficiency that might result from devolving decisions and services is to be compensated for by the improvements in service effectiveness that result from better co-ordinated decision making on the ground.

- **A co-ordinated approach to Europe**

This should result from action taken in relation to the points made above. However what is also necessary is a mechanism that can provide effective horizontal co-ordination at the centre and develop vertical linkages with sub-regional and local partnerships. In addition the creation of a less opportunistic, more coherent approach to Europe may result from specific activities to enable community determination. For example in Nottingham area based partnerships had a shared forum within which wider policy issues were discussed and views determined on a cross partnership basis, including issues in relation to future European monies. In other areas attempts have been made to bring priority communities together with each making the case for their area and listening to other presentations. The decision about the overall prioritisation is then made by the communities present. This has been undertaken in relation to prioritising areas for New Deal for Communities money and it could also be used for determining how/where future European money should be targeted.

CONCLUSION – KEY LESSONS AND REFLECTIONS

Decades of disjointed working have left a challenging legacy. The fragmentation of planning and delivery systems, accentuated in the 1980s by the institutional proliferation of the Thatcher governments, but reinforced in the 1990s by the Labour Government's

pursuit of special initiatives, weakens both the local capacity to deliver integrated services and the ability of the centre to control. What emerges is an implementation gap between intention and outcome. Failure to integrate and to close this gap allows - often encourages - individual planning and providing agencies, central and local, to follow their own priorities, and a complex battle of organisational politics occurs with everyone pursuing single and selfish goals. The difficulties of the public policy system in the 21st Century are compounded by the specific impact of three features: the legacy of New Public Management, the development of multi-level governance and the emergence of 'wicked issues', all of which made 'joining-up' governance at once more difficult and more necessary.

In the prevailing environment action to 'join-up', decision making and implementation need to take place at different levels and across policies and programme areas with an emphasis upon securing interaction vertically as well as horizontally. One way of conceiving this complex set of inter-relationships is to understand them as part of a 'whole system' concerned with the effective design, management and delivery of public policies and programmes, although this approach must be adopted in a sensitive manner given the inherent complexity and therefore unpredictability of the public policy system.

Analysis of governance arrangements in Northern Ireland led us to suggest that disjointed working was a feature of the context and that the following were key issues to be addressed in the pursuit of 'joined-up' governance:

- The development of mechanisms that link vertically combined with a greater consistency in the nature of relationships between central organisations and their peripheral delivery arms.
- Influencing mainstream change, particularly moving beyond the contribution of exceptional individuals towards system change. Recognising that there are considerable difficulties associated with the practical application of mainstreaming it was suggested that conceiving mainstreaming as 'the application of learning and

new behaviour into core activities of organisations' might be helpful (Maddock, 1999).

- Providing a local strategic framework for planning and co-ordinating local action and building strategic capacity. This requires consideration of the level at which the framework should operate, the identification of a lead body and the development of mechanisms to measure achievement and give account to local communities. To achieve this also requires investment in the creation of the capacity to think strategically. This could be achieved via the development of a collective learning programme across all agencies and at all levels of government.
- Building community capacity and complementing the involvement of communities in neighbourhood partnerships with mechanisms to build community perspectives into other layers of governance so as to balance the interests of communities and strategic players.
- A co-ordinated approach to Europe so as to maximise the impact of the region without stifling local enterprise.

11.12.02

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