



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Getting “Under the Skin” of Community Planning

Local Government
Report Commissioned by
Community Planning Task Force



**GETTING "UNDER THE SKIN"
OF COMMUNITY PLANNING**

**Understanding Community Planning at the
Community Planning Partnership Level**

**A Report to the Community Planning Task Force
by Robert Stevenson
RDS Consultancy Services**

**Scottish Executive Social Research
2002**

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FOREWORD

Community planning has reached an important stage of development. Community plans are now in place throughout Scotland, and the Local Government in Scotland Bill provides a statutory basis for community planning. The Community Planning Task Force was set up in March 2001 to help drive this process further forward, develop the guidance associated with the Bill, and provide independent advice to the Scottish Executive and its key partners on the issues involved.

To assist us in this process we commissioned research to help us gain a better understanding of the issues affecting the future development of community planning. We wanted to get “under the skin” of Community Planning partnerships following findings from an initial postal survey of partnerships carried out for the Task Force last year. I would like to thank both the partnerships that participated in the research and the author for providing an informative report which is a valuable contribution to our work.

We will continue to work with the Scottish Executive and its partners in addressing the issues raised by this research, and, in so doing, further promote and support the key role of Community Planning in making services more responsive to the needs of communities. Further information about the work of the Task Force can be accessed on our website at: www.communityplanning.org.uk/

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alice Brown'.

Professor Alice Brown
Chair, Community Planning Task Force

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND (Chapter One)

1. This research was commissioned by the Community Planning Task Force to help it gain a better understanding of the development of Community Planning at a local level. The overall aim of the research was to get "under the skin" of Community Planning by examining a number of key issues: -

- Understanding of, and commitment to, Community Planning
- Community Planning partnership structures, roles and responsibilities
- Different approaches to developing Community Planning
- Achievements and benefits delivered by Community Planning
- Aspirations for the future development of Community Planning
- Challenges and barriers to the development of Community Planning
- Expectations of the Scottish Executive in relation to the development of Community Planning
- Expectations of the Community Planning Task Force

In addition to these general themes the research also examined the relationship between health improvement planning, as an example of a key cross-cutting policy initiative, and Community Planning.

METHODOLOGY (Chapter One)

2. The research was based on nine case studies in the Community Planning Partnerships in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Highland, East Ayrshire, Argyll and Bute, Renfrewshire and Stirling. The research also draws on evidence gathered during a pilot exercise that was conducted in North Lanarkshire.

UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITY PLANNING (Chapter Two)

3. There was strong support for the principles underlying the concept of Community Planning in all nine case study areas. Community Planning is perceived as being a key aspect of the process of modernising government at a local level and in particular to promote better working relationships across organisational boundaries.

4. There is some evidence that Community Planning can mean different things to different people, and that this causes some tensions within some partnerships. However, in

other partnerships there appears to be a strong consensus amongst participants suggesting a shared understanding of the approach to Community Planning being taken in their area.

5. The key issue facing most partnerships is how to translate these principles into practical action. Many stakeholders believe that Community Planning offers the potential to provide an overarching framework within which other collaborative working can be developed; but most accept that it has not yet realised this potential.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY PLANNING (Chapter Two)

6. While individual partnerships are at different stages of development, the vast majority of stakeholders expressed a desire to make Community Planning work and to ensure that it is developed in a way that is responsive to local needs and circumstances.

7. The level of engagement in the process is broader in some areas than in others. In some ways this reflects different stages of development, but it also suggests that some partnerships are adopting a more inclusive approach to involving people e.g. through participation in various working groups.

8. Partners' commitment to the process is strongly influenced by the commitment of individuals in leadership positions. However, there was also some evidence that some key stakeholders remained to be convinced that Community Planning was part of their "core business" and not just "another flavour of the month initiative".

9. There is a danger that commitment can become confused with capacity. There was some evidence that in some areas that some participants were equating the fact that other partners did not have the capacity to contribute to the process, to the extent required or expected by other partners, with a lack of commitment.

PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (Chapter Three)

10. There is no single model of a Community Planning partnership and the structures adopted or being developed are different in each of the case study areas. There is also evidence that structures are evolving as Community Planning develops as a concept and that different structures may be needed at different stages of the process.

11. Key learning issues suggested by the research about partnership structures included: -
- Partnership structures need time and space to develop and a strong emphasis should be placed on developing relationships and building trust amongst the members of various groups. On the other hand, groups need to have clearly defined tasks otherwise there is a danger that they could become "talking shops" and some people could become disillusioned with the process.
 - While flexibility is important there also needs to be clearly defined and accepted operational rules. In particular, as structures develop there will be a need for

clear lines of accountability and delegation to ensure that the structures are working effectively.

- Care needs to be taken to ensure that there is effective vertical integration between different levels in the partnership as well as horizontal integration between various thematic groups.

12. While it is generally accepted that there is a need for further experimentation to ensure that structures are "fit for purpose" there was also a strong desire for some stability to allow structures to mature and develop. Some stakeholders expressed a fear that the legislative framework could lead to pressures to adopt a more uniform approach that would not necessarily reflect local needs and priorities.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY PLANNING (Chapter Four)

13. Many partnerships are grappling to find the best way to integrate existing planning systems and other partnership working into the overarching Community Planning framework. Some of the tensions and confusions surrounding the relationship between health improvement planning and the Community Planning process illustrate the issues being faced by many partnerships.

14. There are clearly opportunities for rationalisation of existing partnership activity. However, it is perhaps inevitable that this will take place on an incremental basis as opportunities arise and the Community Planning process develops and matures. There is also evidence of a degree of conservatism or inertia which means that people are cautious about changing structures that they may be comfortable with, particularly when the Community Planning structures are relatively new and untested.

15. As Community Planning partnerships move from the initial visioning and strategy setting stages of the process most have delegated responsibility for implementation to thematic groups. Delegating implementation and action planning to thematic groups is an effective way of managing the Community Planning process, however, care needs to be taken to ensure that there is both effective vertical integration, between the thematic groups and the overall Community Planning partnership, as well as horizontal integration, between the various theme groups.

16. The relationship between health improvement planning and the Community Planning process illustrates many of the difficulties involved in seeking to achieve effective integration. Health improvement planning is a complex issue, involving a wide range of different stakeholders. On one level, all partners have a contribution to make to the Community Planning process, however, there is a danger that if "something is seen as everybody's responsibility it can become nobody's responsibility". However, on the other hand, if the issue is seen as being the responsibility of only a few stakeholders there is a danger that important aspects of the process will be overlooked. Achieving the appropriate balance between these two extremes is a complex and dynamic process that requires to be "worked at".

17. Almost all partnerships have community representation either on the main partnership group or in thematic groups. However, they also recognise that this type of representation is

not an adequate substitute for wider involvement of the community in the Community Planning process.

18. It is possible to identify three broad approaches to securing greater community participation in the process.

- Some partnerships propose to develop and build upon existing **representative structures** such as Local Committees/Forums or Community Councils.
- Other partnerships propose to integrate **other community based structures** e.g. social inclusion partnerships, neighbourhood forums etc. into the Community Planning structure.
- A number of partnerships have established, or are planning to establish, **new participation structures** either at a area/neighbourhood level or covering the whole of the Community Planning area.

Very few partnerships would claim to have fully developed effective mechanisms to engage communities in the Community Planning process. Some have established structures but they are still very much in their infancy and the evidence of their effectiveness is limited.

ACHIEVEMENTS & BENEFITS DELIVERED BY COMMUNITY PLANNING (Chapter Five)

19. There is limited evidence of tangible outputs that can be attributed directly to Community Planning, however, many stakeholders were able to identify a range of positive benefits that had been gained from the process. These benefits generally related to organisational and cultural changes resulting from closer working between Community Planning partners.

20. One of the key aims of Community Planning is to break down barriers between organisations. Many stakeholders felt that changing existing organisational cultures was a necessary prerequisite to achieving this. They felt that the Community Planning process had made a significant contribution towards this objective but that this needed to be built upon, particularly by broadening involvement in the process.

21. While most partnerships have developed performance indicators linked to key policy outputs there is less evidence of partnerships having established "softer" indicators that could be used to monitor progress in implementing process issues such as effective partnership working and community involvement.

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING (Chapter Six)

22. Stakeholders identified a number of key issues which they perceived to be important priorities that would need to be addressed by their Community Planning partnership over the next few years: -

The main issues identified included:-

- **Broader Involvement:-** There was general agreement that there was a need to increase the number of people in partner organisations who were involved in the Community Planning process.
- **An Accepted Way of Working:-** Many stakeholders said they hoped that Community Planning would increasingly set the agenda for collaborative working as an accepted way of working within and between partner organisations.
- **Less Fragmentation:-** Many stakeholders expressed a desire that as Community Planning developed it would become increasingly easy to rationalise and simplify other partnership and planning arrangements.
- **Learning from Experience:-** Given that partnerships are still developing it is important that they continue to learn from experience and be able to adapt to changing circumstances.
- **Resourcing the Process:-** A number of stakeholders felt that for Community Planning to progress it would require to have more resources devoted to it.

BARRIERS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING (Chapter Seven)

23. If Community Planning is to fulfil its potential there are a number of challenges and barriers that will need to be overcome. The changes required to make Community Planning work effectively are perceived to be cultural as well as structural and achieving these changes is seen as being one of the most complex challenges facing partnerships and individual partners.

24. Some of the most significant barriers to the development of Community Planning identified by stakeholders were as follows: -

- **Capacity Building:** - If Community Planning is to fundamentally change the way organisations operate it will require individuals to change the way they work. A number of stakeholders suggested that existing human resource policies in partner organisations did not always support collaborative working and in fact could sometimes work against it.
- **Managing Conflicting Priorities:** - The need to produce a range of different plans, funding bids and policy documents is perceived by many stakeholders to be both an unnecessary burden and a distraction from developing the Community Planning process.
- **Constant Organisational Change:** - Many of the key partners involved in Community Planning have had to deal with major organisational change over recent years. This has been unsettling and is perceived as having made it much more difficult to develop effective partnership working.

- **National versus Local Priorities:** - Some stakeholders said that there was a perception that the need to deliver nationally set policies restricted some partners ability to respond to local priorities identified through the Community Planning process.
- **Boundary Issues:-** The lack of coterminous boundaries in most Community Planning areas is seen as making it more difficult to develop effective partnership working compared to areas where most partners share the same boundaries.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE (Chapter Eight)

25. Many of the challenges facing Community Planning partnerships need to be addressed locally, however, there are a number of barriers that are common to all partnerships and can only be addressed at a national level.

26. The most frequently mentioned issue, which was raised by almost all stakeholders, was the need for the Scottish Executive to lead by example by demonstrating a "joined-up" approach across its various departments and divisions. There was a strong view that the Executive was guilty of operating through organisational "silos" which often resulted in policy initiatives being introduced which did not always appear to be integrated.

27. Some stakeholders perceived that the Executive had failed to emphasise the central importance of Community Planning. They felt that there was a need to reinforce the fact that it should be a key priority for all public sector organisations. There was also a strong view that the Executive could help develop the Community Planning process by rationalising the number of separate plans and strategies that local authorities and other partners are required to produce.

28. There was strong support for reducing the number of individual funding initiatives to address specific cross cutting issues and replacing them with a more flexible approach possibly based on outcome agreements with Community Planning partnerships.

29. A number of stakeholders also suggested that the Executive could provide additional funding to help support the development of the Community Planning process. Particular attention was drawn to the need to fund capacity building initiatives promoted by Community Planning partnerships. If this was promoted on a cross-sectoral basis, across the whole of the public sector in Scotland, it could make a significant contribution to breaking down some of the cultural barriers that are perceived as obstacles to more effective collaborative working between organisations.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY PLANNING TASK FORCE (Chapter Nine)

30. The Community Planning Task Force (CPTF) is perceived as having a crucial role to play as an advocate of the concept of Community Planning and in influencing the Scottish Executive to remove some of the barriers identified in the previous section.

31. The CPTF was also seen as having an important role to play in facilitating opportunities for those involved in Community Planning partnerships to network and discuss their experiences. This was felt to be particularly important by stakeholders from outwith local government who perceived that they did not have the same opportunities to network as their council colleagues.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 This report outlines the findings of research that was conducted to support the work of the Community Planning Task Force by helping it to gain a better understanding of the development of Community Planning at the level of individual Community Planning Partnerships. The purpose of the research was to get "under the skin" of Community Planning by examining a number of key issues:

- Understanding of, and commitment to, Community Planning
- Community Planning partnership structures, roles and responsibilities
- Different approaches to developing Community Planning
- Achievements and benefits delivered by Community Planning
- Aspirations for the future development of Community Planning
- Challenges and barriers to the development of Community Planning
- Expectations of the Scottish Executive in relation to the development of Community Planning
- Expectations of the Community Planning Task Force

1.2 These themes are examined in the following chapters. Each chapter describes the key issues identified by the research while the final chapter sets out a series of overall conclusions based on the research findings.

1.3 In addition to these general themes the research also examined the relationship between health improvement, as an example of a key cross-cutting initiative, and Community Planning. This aspect of the research was intended to explore how Community Planning partnerships are pursuing specific policy themes within the overall strategic framework of the Community Planning process.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4 The research was based on 9 case studies in individual Community Planning partnership areas. These areas were: -

- Aberdeen
- Dundee
- Edinburgh
- Glasgow
- Highland
- East Ayrshire
- Argyll and Bute
- Renfrewshire
- Stirling

The research also draws on evidence gathered during a pilot exercise that was conducted in North Lanarkshire.

1.5 The selection of case study areas was intended to reflect the diversity of approaches to Community Planning in different geographical areas. The four city partnership areas of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen as well as Highland were selected in order to provide information about Community Planning for the Scottish Executive's "Cities Review" as well as informing the wider research objectives..

1.6 The research in each case study area involved:

- An examination of published and unpublished documentation produced by each Community Planning partnership.
- Semi-structured interviews with a number of key stakeholders involved in each Community Planning partnership.

The main fieldwork was conducted between April and July 2002.

1.7 Given the constraints of time and budget it was only possible to interview approximately 10 people in each case study area. However, an attempt was made to achieve a broadly representative sample of participants both within each case study area and across all nine areas. This involved identifying key stakeholders from the main partner organisations in each area and attempting to interview people who were involved at the implementation level as well as on the main Community Partnership Board. Representatives from the local authority (at both officer and elected member level), the NHS and the Scottish Enterprise Network were interviewed in each case study area. Representatives from the police, Communities Scotland and the voluntary and community sectors were also interviewed in a number of case study areas.

CHAPTER TWO UNDERSTANDING OF & COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY PLANNING

COMMUNITY PLANNING AS A CONCEPT

2.1 There was almost universal acceptance of the key principles underlying Community Planning amongst stakeholders in all of the case study areas. The key principles that are perceived to be underlying Community Planning as a concept are: -

- Developing a **strategic vision** that is accepted by all partners and forms the basis for planning to meet the economic, social and environmental needs of an area.
- Providing greater opportunities for **community participation and involvement** in the process of identifying priorities and planning how these priorities can be addressed by partner organisations.
- Promoting greater partnership working and more **integrated service delivery** to meet the needs of customers and citizens.

2.2 The vast majority of stakeholders accepted that these three principles reflect different but inter-related dimensions of Community Planning. Inevitably, people sometimes placed more or less emphasis on one or other of these principles. This could sometimes be attributed to an individual or organisational perspective, with different stakeholders within a single partnership emphasising different dimensions of the Community planning process. In some other areas there appeared to be a strong consensus amongst stakeholders about the key aspects of the process, suggesting a shared understanding of the approach to community planning being taken in their area.

2.3 The vast majority of stakeholders said that they saw Community Planning as a key aspect of the process of modernising governance at a local level and in particular it was seen as offering the potential to help overcome fragmented organisational structures. Many stakeholders said that a key aspect of Community Planning was the need to break down barriers between organisations and develop better working relationships across organisational boundaries. However, they also recognised that developing effective "joined up" working will be a long-term process that will not be achieved by structural and systemic changes alone. Some people suggested that Community Planning should be viewed as a change management process requiring a commitment to organisational and cultural changes within and between organisations.

2.4 While the principles of Community Planning are generally undisputed, few people could argue with them as principles underlying good governance or even simple common sense and there is an element of "motherhood and apple pie" about them. The key issue facing most partnerships is to develop ways of translating these broad principles into practical action. In particular, many partnerships appear to be still exploring how best to integrate Community Planning with other mainstream activities and partnership initiatives. As one stakeholder put it, "*Community Planning is a concept struggling to find a role in a crowded environment of other priorities and initiatives*".

2.5 Many stakeholders believe that Community Planning offers the potential to provide an overarching framework within which other initiatives can be developed. However, there is also a general acceptance that it has not yet realised this potential. This is partly because the development of Community Planning is at a relatively early stage but some stakeholders believe that it is also partly because it is not universally accepted as an overarching process, particularly at a national level. There is a feeling that local organisations have to continuously respond to a myriad of national initiatives and policy developments that don't always fit within the overall Community Planning framework. In other words, there is a perception that the Community Planning process has to continuously adapt to meet the requirements of other initiatives rather than vice versa.

2.6 Despite the fact that the Scottish Executive and COSLA had issued joint guidance to Community Planning partnerships about the development of Health Improvement Plans there appeared to be a degree of confusion and uncertainty in some partnerships about how to achieve this within the overall Community Planning framework. This illustrates the fact that many partnerships are still developing structures and systems to manage the interface between Community Planning and a range of other policy planning requirements.

2.7 A small minority of stakeholders expressed some caution and concerns about the development of Community Planning as a concept. In some cases this appeared to be the result of frustration about the fact that, despite the rhetoric, Community Planning was not yet delivering its potential benefits. However, in other cases there was an element of scepticism, sometimes bordering on cynicism, about the concept. Some stakeholders said that they remained to be convinced of the potential benefits of Community Planning and the extent to which it could "add value" to existing partnership activity. This view was particularly strong in areas where there was a strong tradition of partnership where some stakeholders felt that Community Planning was nothing more than *"old wine in new bottles"*.

2.8 There were some concerns that the complex and multi-dimensional nature of Community Planning was not always appreciated at a national level. Some stakeholders said that they did not feel that the Scottish Executive appreciated the complexity of the Community Planning process and did not have a clear vision of how it fitted in with the wider modernisation agenda. This was seen as leading to "mixed messages" about the role of Community Planning being sent out with different aspects of the process being emphasised at different times. For example, some stakeholders said that they perceived that there had been a shift in thinking in the Executive recently, with far greater emphasis being placed on the service delivery dimension than had previously been the case.

2.9 Most councillors welcomed the introduction of Community Planning as an opportunity for the council to exercise its community leadership role. However, a small number of councillors and some council officers, while accepting the need to work in partnership with other organisations, expressed some concerns that Community Planning could be used as a way of undermining the "democratic legitimacy" of local authorities. This concern appeared to be based on a fear that the Scottish Executive could use Community Planning partnerships as a way of bypassing councils and giving more influence to non-elected agencies.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY PLANNING

2.10 The research demonstrated that there is a strong commitment to making the Community Planning process work across a range of organisations. While individual partnerships are at different stages of development the vast majority of stakeholders expressed a desire to make Community Planning work and to ensure that it is developed in a way that was responsive to local needs and circumstances.

2.11 Many senior stakeholders, i.e. chief executives, in various partner organisations expressed a strong personal commitment to Community Planning as a process and acknowledged the importance of leading by example. However, there was also a general recognition of the need to ensure that their personal commitment was backed up by action to reinforce the importance of Community Planning and demonstrate that partnerships were more than simply "talking shops". Commitment at a senior level in partner organisations is also seen as being a good way of signalling the importance attached to the Community Planning process and encouraging others to recognise the fact that it needs to be treated as a priority for the organisation.

2.12 Personal motivation amongst key stakeholders is clearly an important factor in making the process work effectively. In many cases it was clear that individuals' commitment to the process reflected the organisational culture within which they are operating. However, there were also a number of examples of individuals who appeared to be "working against the grain" in their organisations. There was also a strong feeling in some areas that responsibility for developing the process still rested with a relatively small group of individuals who could become overburdened and isolated. As one stakeholder put it:

"If you give someone specific responsibility for developing Community Planning there is a danger that it becomes thier responsibility and no one else's"

2.13 The level of engagement in the Community Planning process appeared to be broader in some case study areas than others. To a certain extent this reflects different stages in development, however, it also reflects the fact that some partnerships appeared to be adopting a more inclusive approach to involving people in the process e.g. through the membership of various working groups. There was, however, a general agreement that there was a need to broaden involvement in the process and communicate more effectively with staff "down the line" in partnership organisations.

2.14 One practical demonstration of commitment to Community Planning is the fact that partners in many of the case study areas have been prepared to commit resources to support the process. A number of partnerships had secured resources to employ staff to support the process and other resources to help drive the process forward. Even where financial resources have not been made available, it is clear that partners in all of the areas have devoted a considerable amount of time and resources in kind to help support the development of the Community Planning process.

2.15 There is a danger that commitment becomes confused with capacity. Some organisations may be committed to the process but do not have the capacity to support the process to the extent required or expected by other partners. There was some evidence that some partners were equating an inability by other partners to devote resources to the process with a lack of commitment. This was perceived as being a particular problem for partners

who have to participate in more than one Community Planning partnership and therefore may struggle to provide the resources required to support multiple processes.

2.16 The level of commitment to the process by partners is closely linked to the extent to which partner organisations perceive that Community Planning can make a contribution to the achievement of their own operational objectives. Many stakeholders suggested, either explicitly or implicitly, that the commitment of some partners was conditional on the extent to which they believed that their participation was contributing to the achievement of their own organisation's core objectives. This constraint is recognised by many partner organisations, however, there was also some evidence that others may perceive it as a "get out" which is used to disguise either an inability, due to lack of capacity, or unwillingness to participate fully in the process.

2.17 Another potential constraint on partners' commitment to the Community Planning process is an uncertainty about the level of "true" commitment at a national level. There were still some doubts about the extent to which all parts of the Scottish Executive were "fully signed up" to Community Planning as an overarching, cross-cutting initiative that was a central element of the modernisation agenda rather than "just another, flavour of the month initiative". There is a perception that this suspicion may be resulting in some organisations holding back from fully committing to the process until they are convinced they are "backing the right horse".

2.18 A number of stakeholders felt that there were often mixed messages coming out of the Scottish Executive about Community Planning and its relationship to other policy planning systems. This was illustrated by a degree of confusion in some areas about how Health Improvement Plans, which are intended to be developed through Community Planning structures, relate to other planning requirements being developed through the NHS structures. This demonstrates the importance of the Executive itself adopting a "joined-up" approach and the need to ensure that all policy divisions, especially those that sponsor NDPBs and other agencies, emphasise the importance of Community Planning. As one senior manager in an NDPB put it:-

"My organisation will be committed to Community Planning as a key priority when our sponsoring division tells us it should be a key priority"

CHAPTER THREE COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURES

3.1 There is no single model of Community Planning partnership and the structures adopted or being developed in the case study areas are all different. This reflects the fact that structures are being developed to meet local needs and circumstances and in many cases build upon existing arrangements. There is also evidence that structures are evolving as Community Planning develops and that different structures may be necessary as partnerships move from the initial visioning stage towards action planning and implementation.

3.2 There is considerable diversity in terms of the size and composition of Community Planning partnerships. Some partnerships are relatively small with a limited number of partners involved in the main partnership group while others are much larger with a wider range of partners involved. Many stakeholders suggested that there was a potential tension between adopting an inclusive approach, which would require a large number of partners to be formally involved and the need for efficient decision making structures, suggesting, a smaller group of core partners. Some partnerships have attempted to resolve this tension by having a small core group and a wider reference group involving a broader range of partners. While this appears to work in practice, some stakeholders felt that there was a potential danger that it could lead to some partners who are not involved in the core group feeling that they are "second class citizens".

3.3 While there are considerable differences in the precise structures adopted by individual partnerships there are also a number of similarities. Most partnerships have three core elements: -

- **Partnership Groups** - usually comprising senior representatives, either Chief Executives, Directors, from partner organisations. Some of these groups involve elected members from the council and appointed Board Members from other organisations; however, in others they only involve paid officials.
- **Implementation Groups** - involving less senior officers from partner organisations. These groups are usually charged with responsibility for taking forward Community Planning between meetings of the main Partnership Group.
- **Thematic Groups** - most partnerships have established or are in the process of establishing thematic groups with responsibility for developing the key strategic themes outlined in the Community Plan. (In some areas these groups build upon existing groups which have been brought into the wider Community Planning process).

Although many of the structures in Community Planning partnerships are relatively new there are a number of emerging issues suggested by the research.

- Partnership structures need time and space to develop and a strong emphasis should be placed on developing relationships and building trust amongst the

members of various groups. On the other hand, groups need to have clearly defined tasks otherwise there is a danger that they could become "talking shops" and some people could become disillusioned with the process.

- While flexibility is important there also needs to be clearly defined and accepted operational rules. In particular, as structures develop there will be a need for clear lines of accountability and delegation to ensure that the structures are working effectively.
- Care needs to be taken to ensure that there is effective vertical integration between different levels in the partnership as well as horizontal integration between various thematic groups.

3.4 Almost all partnerships have a thematic group dealing with issues related to health improvement. Some of these groups have very wide remits that cover issues relating to social welfare e.g. community care and community safety as well as health improvement issues. There is some evidence that some of these groups are struggling to find an effective way of dealing effectively with such a wide agenda. In other areas thematic groups appear to have focused on specific aspects of the agenda, often building on existing partnership activities. In one partnership there appeared to be a tension amongst partners about how best to deal with the health improvement agenda with some partners saying there should be a specific thematic group while others believed it should be dealt with as a cross-cutting issue that should be reflected in the work of other thematic groups.

3.5 Any new group needs time to help build up trust between members and find a style of working that members are comfortable with. Many partnerships have recognised this and have invested time and resources in capacity building exercises such as development days and get to know each other sessions, however, there is also a pressure to "produce results". It is also clear that some participants in the process are more comfortable with a developmental approach while others are more likely to want to focus on tangible outputs. This can cause a tension that needs to be managed carefully to ensure that people do not become disillusioned or feel excluded from the process.

3.6 Almost all Community Planning partnerships are informal and do not have a separate legal status (the only exception is the Glasgow Alliance, which was not established to deal specifically with Community Planning). Some partnerships have attempted to develop a separate identity but this appears to have been primarily for marketing purposes rather than structural reasons. While most stakeholders did not rule out the possibility of partnerships adopting a more formal structure in the future, the vast majority did not see this as being necessary in the short term. In fact a number of stakeholders said that they felt there would be major disadvantages to adopting a more formal structure for Community Planning partnerships.

3.7 The main disadvantages of adopting a more formal structure cited were increased bureaucracy and a lack of flexibility. However, the main arguments against adopting a more formal structure were that it could suggest a lack of trust amongst partners and the potential danger that the partnership could become, or be perceived to have become, a separate organisation with its own identity and agenda rather than a collaborative partnership. This fear was summed up by one stakeholder who said:-

"If Community Planning partnerships become too formal they will soon adopt their own identity, employ their own staff with their own agendas and before we know it we will have another quango"

3.8 Given that many of the structures adopted by Community Planning partnerships have only recently been established there is scope for further experimentation and learning to ensure that they are "fit for purpose". However, this needs to be balanced with a strong desire amongst many stakeholders for a degree of stability in the role and composition of various groups to allow them to develop and mature. The vast majority of stakeholders said that it was important that structures were designed to suit local circumstances. They were also concerned that as Community Planning developed there would be pressures to adopt a more uniform approach. For example, while some stakeholders felt there was a need for greater clarity about the role of various groups in the Community Planning process they also felt that this should be provided locally rather than being prescribed on a national basis.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN PARTNERSHIPS

3.9 Councils have the main leadership role in the Community Planning partnerships in all of the case study areas. However, the way they have chosen to exercise this leadership role varies in different partnerships. This can range from a "light touch" approach to a much more directive approach with the council clearly setting the agenda and retaining control over all aspects of the process. The approach adopted seems to depend to a large extent on the personalities involved rather than a conscious choice to adopt a particular style of leadership.

3.10 The leadership role of councils is generally accepted by other partners on the basis that they are often the largest organisation with the widest range of responsibilities. There is also recognition that councils provide a link to the democratic process and in many cases have more established relationships with the community and voluntary sectors. Some stakeholders expressed concerns about the potential for the council to seek to dominate the Community Planning process by wanting to be involved in everything. However, very few examples of real conflict were cited in support of this fear with most stakeholders accepting that this was more a question of perceptions rather than presenting practical difficulties. On the other hand, some local authority stakeholders felt that some of their partners were happy to let the council take on the leadership role as this meant it would have to shoulder the bulk of the workload. This was often taken to be an indication of a lack of commitment by other partners.

3.11 The level of involvement of councillors in the Community Planning process is patchy. In some areas councillors, or at least leading councillors, are heavily involved and appear to exercise a strong leadership role. However, in other areas councillors are only involved at the margins or not at all. The involvement of councillors can bring its own challenges. In some areas a few stakeholders from other agencies said that they sometimes felt uncomfortable when councillors were involved in discussions because they were not used to operating in an overtly political environment. Conversely, some councillors indicated that they were uncomfortable in partnership meetings, where relationships between officers and elected members were less clear-cut than within the council.

3.12 There are a number of similarities in the composition of individual Community Planning partnerships but there are also some significant differences. The organisations that are most likely to be represented on the main Community Planning groups are the council,

the NHS boards, the local enterprise company and the police. Outwith these core members other organisations that are also involved in some partnerships include Communities Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, area tourist boards and local colleges or universities. The involvement of individual organisations generally reflects local circumstances e.g. it is more likely that Scottish Natural Heritage will be involved in rural areas. However, in some areas it appears to reflect existing relationships and build upon previous partnership structures.

3.13 The involvement of the NHS in Community Planning partnerships is complex with some partnerships involving NHS Boards while others also involve representatives from Trusts and possibly local health care co-operatives. To a certain extent this reflects on-going organisational change within the NHS but there is some evidence that it also reflects an uncertainty about the most appropriate level of engagement of the health service in the Community Planning process. In some areas this has led to a degree of tension about which partners should take lead responsibility for developing the health improvement theme, both within the NHS and between the NHS and the local authority.

3.14 A number of stakeholders also expressed some concerns about the involvement of Communities Scotland in local Community Planning partnerships given its new role and status. This was generally a result of uncertainty about how the new organisation would balance its national and local roles but in some cases it was also based on a suspicion about how the organisation would seek to develop its new role in relation to regeneration.¹

3.15 The effectiveness of Community Planning partnerships does not only depend upon the organisations involved but crucially on the people these organisations choose to represent them at partnership meetings. Representation on core partnership groups is generally at a very senior level, most often Chief Executives or equivalent. This can present a challenge for some organisations, particularly those that have to be involved in multiple Community Planning partnerships. A number of Chief Executives in such organisations indicated that they were not always able to attend Community Planning meetings in each area personally. While they did not see this as a problem there was some evidence that it did cause some tensions amongst other partners where there was an expectation that representation should be at Chief Executive level.

3.16 A potential tension within partnerships arises when it is perceived that the person who attends meetings on behalf of a partner does not have sufficient authority to take decisions or make commitments without referring them back to their organisation. An associated difficulty arises where organisations are represented on partnerships by someone who has a specific functional responsibility and may not be able to comment on issues outwith their own area of responsibility. This can cause frustration amongst other partners and is perceived as potentially slowing down decision-making processes. Examples cited to support this concern tended to be relatively minor in nature, however, this may become a more significant issue as partnerships become more involved in making more substantive decisions e.g. involving the pooling of resources in the future.

¹ The vast majority of interviews were conducted prior to the publication of the Scottish Executive's community regeneration statement "*Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap*"

3.17 The research suggests that many Community Planning partnerships are struggling to find the most appropriate way of involving community and voluntary sector representatives within their partnership structures. This often reflects a lack of clarity about the role that such representatives are expected to play in various partnership groups. They cannot represent a single organisation in the same way that other partners do, on the other hand, they cannot be expected to represent "the community" or "the voluntary sector". Some community and voluntary sector representatives said that they felt that describing them as representatives was "misleading" and raised unrealistic expectations about the extent to which they could speak on behalf of other members of their sector.

3.18 The involvement of representatives from the community and voluntary sectors appears to work best in two different types of circumstances: -

- Where it is recognised and accepted that they are involved as individuals who can offer a different perspective based on their own experience and knowledge. In other words they are representatives from rather than of their particular sector.
- Where voluntary or community organisations organise their own representative and administrative structures parallel to the Community Planning partnership structures and decide amongst themselves the best way to be represented on various partnership groups.

3.19 Very few partnerships have representatives of the private sector on the main partnership group. A small number of partnerships did have some representation from the private sector, either on the main partnership board or on thematic working groups but they were often seen as being there in an individual rather than representative capacity. A number of stakeholders said that the private sector was represented on local economic forums and this was seen as an effective way for them to contribute to the Community Planning process.

3.20 Where partnerships involved partners outwith the main public sector agencies their involvement was generally seen as providing a fresh perspective that contributed to the work of the partnership. In some areas the contribution made by representatives from further or higher education institutions was viewed positively and there was a feeling that these institutions provided a potential resource in terms of expertise that could be used by the Community Planning partnership.

CHAPTER FOUR APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING COMMUNITY PLANNING

4.1 Each Community Planning partnership is at a different stage of development. All but one of the partnerships has produced a Community Plan and most of them have also produced action or implementation plans for the main themes within the plan. A number of stakeholders commented that this was the "easy" part of the process, as partners were able to focus their attention on a specific task i.e. the production of a plan. Some also accepted that there may have been a loss of momentum following the production of the first Community Plan, as partnerships grappled with the more complex, process related, issues associated with translating the plan into action.

4.2 There appear to be three fundamental issues that Community Planning partnerships have to consider as they develop the process beyond the initial stages of visioning and the production of a Community Plan.

- **Integration** of Community Planning with other planning processes and partnership structures.
- Establishing effective **Action Planning and Implementation** structures and systems.
- Maximising effective **Community Participation** in the Community Planning process.

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER PLANNING PROCESSES

4.3 A key issue that all Community Planning partnerships are facing is how to effectively integrate existing planning processes and partnership structures into the community planning process. Individual partnerships are seeking to address this issue in different ways, depending upon local needs and circumstances, however, it is possible to identify four broad approaches: -

- **New Build** - This approach involves setting up a new infrastructure based on the key themes identified in the Community Plan. Existing structures and processes are then expected to fit into the overarching Community Planning structure. There is an expectation that this approach may lead to a rationalisation and simplification of existing structures; however, there is limited evidence that this has actually happened to any great extent in practice.
- **Incremental Gap Filling** - Under this approach the Community Planning structures and processes are used to address issues where there is no existing mechanism already in place. Community Planning is also seen as providing the overall strategic direction for other partnership structures and processes but there are no formal reporting mechanisms. It is also anticipated that in the future Community Planning structures will be utilised to address new issues or initiatives requiring a collaborative approach rather than new mechanisms having to be established.

- **Restructuring** - This approach involves a process of alignment of existing partnership structures and mechanisms with the themes identified in the Community Plan. In some cases the alignment process has been relatively "painless" and a clear match has been made between existing structures and Community Planning themes. However, in other cases it is more complex and can involve extending the role and remit of existing partnership structures.
- **Organic Networking** - This approach does not seek to develop a formal structure but rather relies upon good communications and information sharing to ensure that various planning systems and collaborative working arrangements operate in an integrated manner.

4.4 Most Community Planning partnerships appear to be adopting a pragmatic approach. Some have reviewed the interface between Community Planning and other planning and partnership activity on an incremental basis when opportunities arise. Others have delegated responsibility for rationalising planning structures to thematic groups with an expectation that as the new structures develop others will "wither on the vine" as people realise that they are no longer necessary.

4.5 There are clearly opportunities for rationalisation of existing partnership activity. However, it is perhaps inevitable that this will take place on an incremental basis, as opportunities arise, and the Community Planning process develops and matures. There is also evidence of a degree of conservatism or inertia, which means that people are cautious about changing structures that they are comfortable with, particularly when the Community Planning structures are relatively new and untested.

4.6 A number of partnerships have undertaken audits or reviews of planning and partnership activity. However, any resultant rationalisation has been limited and very much at the margins. There appears to be a general agreement that there is a need to rationalise existing partnership activity but there are also a number of constraints preventing this happening in practice. Some partnerships are constituted to meet statutory or other national planning requirements. Others have been established to deliver specific programmes or initiatives and there appears to be a general reluctance to change these arrangements, particularly if they are perceived to be working well. Many stakeholders appeared to take the view that "if it isn't broken you don't need to fix it".

4.7 Rather than expecting a fundamental rationalisation of partnership activity it may be more important to ensure that Community Planning is providing an overall strategic framework for all existing partnership activity in order to avoid duplication and confusion. This will depend as much on establishing good communications and information flows, as it will on any structural changes. There is also a case for arguing that there should be a presumption that any new initiatives that require a collaborative approach are built into the Community Planning process from the outset, rather than seeking to establish new partnership structures. This presumption should apply to both national initiatives and initiatives promoted by partners at a local level.

ACTION PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

4.8 As Community Planning partnerships move from the initial visioning and strategy setting stages of the process they have to pay more attention to establishing effective implementation mechanisms. Most partnerships that have reached this stage have delegated responsibility for implementation to thematic groups. These may be existing groups or partnerships, e.g. community safety partnerships, or new groups that are established to deal with a specific theme in the Community Plan. These groups often involve people who have not previously been involved in the Community Planning process and as such are seen as a valuable way to broaden participation in the process.

4.9 Thematic groups vary considerably in terms of their size and composition. Many of the themes contained in Community Plans are very broad and therefore impact upon the work of a wide range of people and organisations. There is, therefore, a tendency to establish large groups in order to ensure all interests are represented and demonstrate that the process is inclusive. However, this needs to be balanced with a need to ensure that groups are of a manageable size. Some stakeholders also suggested that they sometimes got frustrated having to spend time discussing issues that had no direct relevance to them, although others said that they welcomed the opportunity to discuss wider issues. Many thematic groups have addressed this issue by establishing sub-groups; however, there is a danger that this could defeat the purpose of having broad themes dealing with cross cutting issues.

4.10 While delegating implementation and action planning to thematic groups is an effective way of managing the Community Planning process there are a number of dangers that need to be avoided. Firstly, there is a need to ensure that there is effective vertical integration between the thematic groups and the overall Community Planning partnership. Some partnerships have addressed this issue by having the leaders of thematic groups on the main Community Planning Partnership or implementation group. Secondly, there is a need to ensure that there is horizontal integration between the various themes and that "themes don't become the new silos". Again regular meetings of thematic group leaders can help to overcome this potential danger, however, there may also be a case for having joint meetings to discuss issues that cut across two or more themes. However, there is also a danger that "everyone becomes involved in everything" which could be a recipe for inaction. The main way of ensuring good integration appears to rely on good communications both within the partnership but also within partner organisations so that people know what other groups are doing.

4.11 The need to ensure effective vertical and horizontal integration is particularly important when partnerships are dealing with broad cross-cutting themes. This was particularly evident in terms of the health improvement function but also applies to other cross-cutting issues such as social inclusion, community regeneration and sustainability.

4.12 Many partnerships have taken a collaborative approach to establishing thematic groups by allocating lead responsibility for individual themes to different partners. Where this is the case, partners generally welcome it as it demonstrates effective joint working and indicates trust within the partnership. Conversely, where one partner, generally the council, has lead responsibility for all or most of the themes in the Community Plan there is sometimes a degree of frustration and resentment amongst other partners.

4.13 There appears to have been a high degree of consensus over the allocation of lead responsibility for individual themes in most areas. However, in some areas there were some "contested issues" where there appeared to be a disagreement over who should have lead responsibility for a particular theme. In particular, there appeared to be a lack of consensus in some areas about lead responsibility for economic development, while in others health improvement was perceived to be a "contested issue". There was some evidence that the lack of consensus over responsibility for leading on these themes was causing some tensions within the partnerships concerned but it was not regarded as an unresolvable issue.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

4.14 The third key issue that all Community Planning partnerships appear to be grappling with is how to maximise the effectiveness of community participation in the process. Almost all partnerships have community representation either on the main partnership group or in thematic groups. However, they also recognise that this type of representation is not an adequate substitute for wider involvement of the community in the Community Planning process. The need to secure wider community participation was identified as a key priority by a substantial number of stakeholders. As one stakeholder commented, *"we need to put the community into community planning"*.

4.15 Most partnerships have established mechanisms or made use of existing mechanisms to consult with local communities. Mechanisms used include formal consultation e.g. on draft Community Plans, consultative conferences or forums, surveys and citizen's panels. However, most of these of these mechanisms are largely passive in nature and the challenge facing partnerships is how to secure more active participation in the process. Active participation suggests an on-going dialogue with communities rather than a series of individual, ad-hoc, consultation exercises.

4.16 While it is difficult to categorise the wide range of different approaches to engaging communities that are being implemented, or are planned, by individual Community Planning partnerships it is possible to identify three broad models.

- Some partnerships propose to develop and build upon existing **representative structures** such as Local Committees/Forums or Community Councils.
- Other partnerships propose to integrate **other community based structures** e.g. social inclusion partnerships, neighbourhood forums etc. into the Community Planning structure.
- A number of partnerships have established or are planning to establish **new participation structures** either at a area/neighbourhood level or covering the whole of the Community Planning area.

These are not necessarily mutually exclusive models and it may be that the most suitable approach will involve a combination of more than one of them. Whatever approach is adopted it is important that it is perceived as being a mainstream part of the Community Planning process rather than being a superficial "bolt on". The research evidence suggests that, despite the expressed commitment to community participation, most Community Planning partnerships have not yet been able to demonstrate that they have effective

mechanisms for engaging with local communities that form a core element of the Community Planning process.

4.17 While some Community Planning partnerships are planning to engage communities in the process on an area wide basis, many stakeholders recognise that effective community engagement will only take place at a more local level. Many partnerships are therefore looking to integrate existing area based initiatives into the Community Planning process. A key challenge facing many partnerships, as they seek to develop local Community Planning, is the need to integrate horizontal, spatially based, planning, with the vertical policy themes identified in the area wide Community Plan. In other words, there is a need to ensure that there is a strong link between "top down" and "bottom up" planning processes. The evidence suggests that this is not always the case currently and that sometimes area-based initiatives are being developed in isolation from thematic policy planning processes.

4.18 Very few partnerships would claim to have fully developed effective mechanisms to engage communities in the Community Planning process. Some have established structures, but they are still very much in their infancy, and the evidence of their effectiveness is limited. Others have experimented with different methods of engaging communities e.g. through pilot projects. What is clear is that there is no "one size fits all" approach that will suit all circumstances and there is probably a need for continuous learning and experimentation in order to find the most effective method of engaging communities in the Community Planning process.

4.19 Some stakeholders expressed concerns that the new legislative framework could lead to a more prescriptive approach being taken. Similar concerns were raised about proposals to make community regeneration and social inclusion partnerships more integrated with the Community Planning process. There was strong resistance to any suggestion that there should be a single model for community participation that could be applied uniformly throughout Scotland.

CHAPTER FIVE ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFITS DELIVERED BY COMMUNITY PLANNING

5.1 Given the fact that Community Planning is a relatively new concept it is perhaps unsurprising that very few stakeholders were able to identify tangible outputs that could be attributed directly to it. Most stakeholders were able to identify projects or initiatives that may not have happened as quickly or been implemented as effectively without Community Planning, but they could not say that they would not have happened anyway. The main "added value" of Community Planning was perceived to be the fact that it provided a strategic framework that allowed opportunities for collaborative working to be identified and partnership projects to be developed.

5.2 While there is limited evidence of tangible outputs that can be attributed directly to Community Planning many stakeholders were able to identify a range of positive benefits that had been gained from the process. These benefits generally related to organisational and cultural changes resulting from closer working between Community Planning partners. The benefits that were most frequently mentioned by stakeholders included: -

- An explicit recognition of the value and importance of collaborative working.
- The development of a shared vision for the area.
- The establishment of a strategic framework for the development of shared priorities
- An infrastructure for developing joint projects and preparing funding bids for cross-cutting initiatives.
- The development of greater understanding and trust amongst partners.
- Stronger interpersonal relationships.
- A more co-ordinated approach to consulting with citizens and local communities.

5.3 While acknowledging the fact that these benefits were not always tangible, and could not be quantified, many stakeholders were keen to emphasise their importance. One of the key aims of Community Planning is to break down barriers between organisations and many stakeholders felt that changing existing organisational cultures was a necessary prerequisite to achieving this. They felt that the Community Planning process had made a significant contribution towards this but that this needed to be built upon particularly by broadening involvement in the process. Many stakeholders said that there needed to be greater involvement of middle managers and professionals in partner organisations as this was perceived to be where some of the main barriers to greater collaborative working existed.

5.4 While many stakeholders were keen to emphasise the importance of these process-related achievements they also acknowledged the need to be able to demonstrate the success of Community Planning in terms of more tangible outputs. This need to demonstrate positive outputs that can be attributed to the Community Planning process has led some partnerships to try and identify "quick wins". While most people recognised the need to identify

collaborative projects that could be implemented quickly, some stakeholders voiced concerns that it could deflect attention from developing the partnership's longer-term vision and strategy.

5.5 The desire to demonstrate tangible outputs from the Community Planning process has also resulted in some partnerships considering how existing collaborative initiatives should be "badged". There are a wide range of initiatives in different policy areas that demonstrate the principles of Community Planning but are not currently always identified with Community Planning. One example that was frequently cited is the joint futures agenda which is seen generally as a separate initiative but could equally be regarded as an excellent example of Community Planning in practice.

5.6 Some stakeholders who had been involved in well established partnership structures relating to health improvement and social welfare were sceptical about the benefits of these initiatives being brought within the overall Community Planning framework. This scepticism appeared to be based on a fear that it would result in more centralisation and reduce the flexibility and responsiveness of existing arrangements.

5.7 The temptation to "rebadge" existing collaborative initiatives under the Community Planning "brand" is understandable, however, the evidence suggests that it needs to be handled carefully. There is a danger that people who have been closely involved in existing initiatives may be resentful if it appears to them that other people are claiming credit for their efforts. They may also be concerned that being seen as a formal part of the Community Planning process may result in increased bureaucracy which would mean that they have to "jump through additional hoops" in terms of reporting requirements. An alternative to simply "rebadging" existing activities may be to place more emphasis on the links between these activities and Community Planning and ensure that they are developed in a way that complements the overall vision and strategy developed through the Community Planning process.

5.8 Most partnerships recognise that the ultimate success of Community Planning will be the extent to which its achievements can be measured in terms of tangible outcomes. They also recognise the need to have a system for monitoring and evaluating their performance in terms of these outcomes. A number of partnerships have developed cross-cutting performance indicators that are linked to the key themes described in the Community Plan. In most cases, these indicators are a combination of existing national indicators, e.g. social justice milestones, and locally developed indicators. There is less evidence of partnerships having established "softer" indicators that could be used to monitor progress in implementing process issues such as effective partnership working and community involvement.

CHAPTER SIX

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

6.1 Stakeholders were asked how they would like to see Community Planning develop over the next 2-3 years. The vast majority said that they would hope to be able to build upon the solid foundations that had already been established. The general view was that Community Planning would continue to develop and mature but that to achieve its full potential it would have to be seen increasingly as part of the mainstream business of all partners, rather than just another new initiative.

6.2 Many stakeholders expressed their aspirations for the future in terms of policy outcomes in relation to the main objectives outlined in their Community Plan. They argued that the "success" of Community Planning as a concept would be determined by the extent to which it could lead to positive policy outcomes particularly in relation to cross-cutting policy issues such as health improvement and community safety.

6.3 While it is undoubtedly true that the impact of Community Planning will ultimately be determined by the extent to which it can make a positive impact in key policy areas there are also a number of process related issues that will need to be addressed in order to achieve these outcomes. Stakeholders identified a number of key issues which they perceived to be important priorities that would need to be addressed by their Community Planning partnership over the next few years: -

Community Participation

6.4 The issue that was most frequently mentioned by stakeholders was the need to establish and develop mechanisms to ensure that communities can play a central part in the Community Planning process. There was a fairly uniform view that partnerships were committed to greater community involvement but that they would need to do more to translate this commitment into reality. Many stakeholders said that they wanted to move to a position where communities were the main drivers of the Community Planning process and that they felt they had genuine opportunities to influence partner's decisions about issues that affected them.

Broader Involvement

6.5 There was general agreement that there was a need to increase the number of people in partner organisations who were involved in the Community Planning process. This was seen as being important to ensure that Community Planning was seen as being relevant to all aspects of each partner's activities and that people were aware of the overarching strategy within which they were expected to operate.

An Accepted Way of Working

6.6 Many stakeholders said they hoped that Community Planning would increasingly set the agenda for collaborative working as an accepted way of working within and between

partner organisations. There was a clear expectation that this would lead to more partnership projects, greater use of pooled budgets, co-location of staff and a general *"blurring of the boundaries between organisations"*.

Less Fragmentation

6.7 Many stakeholders expressed a desire that as Community Planning developed it would become increasingly easy to rationalise and simplify other partnership and planning arrangements. This was seen as being one of the key benefits that could be achieved by Community Planning and would help to reduce the fragmentation associated with the current pattern of a "patchwork" of multiple and often uncoordinated requirements to establish partnerships. However, the ability to rationalise and simply the partnership structures may depend on being able to demonstrate that Community Planning can be an effective vehicle for delivering collaborative initiatives.

Learning from Experience

6.8 Given that partnerships are still developing it is important that they continue to learn from experience and be able to adapt to changing circumstances. This is seen as being essential to ensure that Community Planning does not become another time limited initiative but is sustained as a durable and permanent part of the system of local governance. A number of stakeholders expressed a strong desire that partnerships should be allowed the flexibility to continue to evolve in response to local circumstances and not be "forced into a straight jacket" by an over prescriptive and ridged national framework.

Resourcing the Process

6.9 A number of stakeholders felt that for Community Planning to progress it would require to have more resources devoted to it. There was a feeling that the resources available to support the development of Community Planning were minimal compared to those available for other partnership initiatives. In some ways this is a challenge to partners themselves to make more mainstream resources available to support the Community Planning process. However, there was also a strong view that the Scottish Executive should make more resources available to support the development of Community Planning to demonstrate that it regards it as a key aspect of the modernisation agenda.

CHAPTER SEVEN CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

7.1 If Community Planning is to fulfil its potential there are a number of challenges and barriers that will need to be overcome. Many of the challenges facing Community Planning partnerships have been alluded to in previous sections. This section outlines some of the key barriers to the development of Community Planning that were identified by stakeholders during the course of the research.

7.2 Many stakeholders emphasised the fact that Community Planning was an evolving process and that it was important that partnerships be given the time and space to develop. It was also clear that stakeholders viewed Community Planning as a long-term process that implied fundamental changes in the way public sector organisations conduct their business. The changes required to make Community Planning work effectively are perceived to be cultural as well as structural and achieving these changes is seen as being one of the most complex challenges facing partnerships and individual partners. In this sense Community Planning can be seen as a change management process and as one stakeholder put it, *"managing change within a single organisation is always complex but managing change across a number of different organisations is even more complex"*.

7.3 Some of the most significant barriers to the development of Community Planning identified by stakeholders were as follows: -

Capacity Building

7.4 If Community Planning is to fundamentally change the way organisations operate it will require individuals to change the way they work. A key priority for many partnerships is to broaden involvement in the Community Planning process by staff at all levels within partner organisations. In order to achieve this there is a need to create the capacity within organisations to make collaborative working a key objective. This may mean that staff will need to develop new skills but it also means that there should be more incentives to encourage staff to work in a collaborative manner. A number of stakeholders suggested that existing human resource policies in partner organisations did not always support collaborative working and could, in fact, sometimes work against it.

Managing Conflicting Priorities

7.5 A key issue raised by a large number of stakeholders was the fact that the Community Planning process had to be managed against a background of a constant flow of other initiatives and funding programmes. The need to constantly respond to new initiatives from the Scottish Executive means that partners are not always able to devote the time to Community Planning that they would like to. There is also evidence to suggest that some initiatives do not recognise the capacity of Community Planning to provide an overarching framework for the development of collaborative working at a local level. The need to produce a range of different plans, funding bids and policy documents is perceived by many stakeholders to be both an unnecessary burden and a distraction from developing the

Community Planning process. Reducing this burden on partners would release resources that could be devoted to Community Planning.

Constant Organisational Change

7.6 Many of the key partners involved in Community Planning have had to deal with major organisational change over recent years. This has been unsettling and is perceived as having made it much more difficult to develop effective partnership working. Organisational change creates uncertainty and often involves changes in management structures that can have implications for Community Planning partnerships. Changes in senior management personnel also means that new relationships have to be established and can lead to a lack of continuity in the membership of partnership groups. The need to devote resources and time to managing organisational change was also cited by a number of stakeholders as a reason why they had not been able to provide as much commitment to the Community Planning process as they would have like to.

7.7 The impact of organisational change on the ability of some partners to contribute fully to the Community Planning process was cited as a factor particularly in relation to the health improvement agenda. Ongoing organisational change within the NHS and the prospect of further structural changes, as a result of the current review of management and decision making, was seen by some stakeholders as one of the main barriers to developing effective collaborative working.

National versus Local Priorities

7.8 A key issue for some stakeholders was the need to balance their involvement in the Community Planning process with the requirement to meet national targets and priorities. Some stakeholders said that there was a perception that the need to deliver nationally set policies restricted some partners ability to respond to local priorities identified through the Community Planning process. While there is limited evidence that there have been significant conflicts between national priorities and locally determined needs, it is seen as a potential factor that could influence the ability of some organisations to contribute fully to the Community Planning process in the future. There was also a strong perception amongst some stakeholders that not all national agencies and sponsoring divisions within the Scottish Executive recognised the importance of Community Planning and that this could limit the ability of local agencies to commit time and resources to the process.

Boundary Issues

7.9 Some stakeholders cited the fact that various partner organisations covered different geographical areas as a barrier to the development of Community Planning. The lack of coterminous boundaries in most Community Planning areas is seen as making it more difficult to develop effective partnership working than in those areas where most partners share the same boundaries. It causes particular difficulties for organisations that are involved in more than one partnership and therefore have to resource multiple Community Planning processes. There were some concerns expressed that this challenge was not always

appreciated by other partners and that a lack of capacity to participate in more than one partnership was sometimes perceived as demonstrating a lack of commitment.

7.10 Another associated problem relates to partners having different operational boundaries within the wider Community Planning area. This can sometimes create problems in developing collaborative working arrangements and is perceived as being a major barrier to the development of local community planning.

Lack of Resources

7.11 In the initial stages of Community Planning the process was generally resourced from within existing budgets and using existing staff. As partnerships have developed it has become clear that it is a resource intensive process and many partnerships have now put in place dedicated resources in terms of both staff and budgets. However, there is still a feeling amongst many stakeholders that insufficient resources are being dedicated to developing the Community Planning process. The lack of resources to manage the process is seen by many stakeholders as having a significant impact on the pace at which Community planning can be developed. There is also evidence that resources need to be provided for capacity building within partner organisations to support the organisational and cultural changes that will be required in order to fulfil the full potential of the Community Planning process.

CHAPTER EIGHT EXPECTATIONS OF THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE IN RELATION TO COMMUNITY PLANNING

8.1 Many of the challenges facing Community Planning partnerships need to be addressed locally, however, there are a number of barriers that are common to all partnerships and can only be addressed at a national level. Stakeholders were asked what action they thought the Scottish Executive could take to support the development of Community Planning. The main issues identified were as follows: -

Lead by example.

8.2 The most frequently mentioned issue, which was raised by almost all stakeholders, was the need for the Scottish Executive to lead by example by demonstrating a "joined up" approach across its various departments and divisions. There was a strong view that the Executive was guilty of operating through organisational "silos" which often resulted in policy initiatives being introduced which did not always appear to be integrated.

Emphasise the central importance of Community Planning.

8.3 Some stakeholders perceived that the Executive had failed to emphasise the central importance of Community Planning. They felt that there was a need to reinforce the fact that it should be a key priority for all public sector organisations.

Clarify expectations.

8.4 Community Planning has developed on a voluntary basis and partnerships have been free to develop their own approach to meet local needs and circumstances. This flexibility has been welcomed but some stakeholders expressed a desire for more guidance from the Executive about its expectations of Community Planning and how it sees it developing in the future. While there was a desire to have more guidance about the Executive's expectations, all stakeholders agreed that the guidance should not be over prescriptive and should focus on the key principles rather than the details of how partnerships should operate.

Rationalise planning requirements.

8.5 There was a strong view that the Executive could emphasise the importance it placed on Community Planning and help develop the process by rationalising the number of separate plans and strategies that local authorities and other partners are prepared to produce. Many stakeholders felt that this would allow more resources to be committed to Community Planning and would also reinforce the fact that it is a core aspect of the modernisation agenda rather than "just another initiative".

Reduce ring fenced funding.

8.6 Many stakeholders said they felt the real benefits of Community Planning would not be fully realised unless partners had more financial flexibility. There was strong support for reducing the number of individual funding initiatives to address specific cross-cutting issues and replacing them with a more flexible approach possibly based on outcome agreements with Community Planning partnerships.

Provide Additional Resources.

8.7 There is a case for additional resources to be made available to support and encourage the development of the Community Planning process. The Executive makes resources available to support a wide range of other partnership activities but partners are expected to meet the costs associated with Community Planning from within existing resources. While this has the advantage of encouraging organisations to view Community Planning as a mainstream activity, it does mean that some partners, particularly smaller organisations and those who have to participate in multiple partnerships, may struggle to play a full and effective part in the process.

8.8 A number of stakeholders also suggested that the Executive could provide additional funding to support capacity building initiatives promoted by Community Planning partnerships. If this was promoted on a cross-sectoral basis across the whole of the public sector in Scotland it could make a significant contribution to breaking down some of the cultural barriers that are perceived as obstacles to more effective collaborative working between organisations.

Promoting Inter-Organisational Learning.

8.9 The Executive could help promote the development of Community Planning on a national level by supporting inter-organisational learning, networking, the sharing of experiences and the development of good practice guidelines. A number of stakeholders felt that there was a need for an national organisation that could facilitate this process and help Community Planning partners learn from the experience of others and gain a better understanding of what works and what doesn't work in practice.

CHAPTER NINE EXPECTATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY PLANNING TASK FORCE

9.1 The Community Planning Task Force (CPTF) is perceived as having a crucial role to play as an advocate of the concept of Community Planning and in influencing the Scottish Executive to remove some of the barriers identified in the previous section.

9.2 The key issues for the CPTF identified during the course of this research are as follows: -

- There appears to be a relatively low level of awareness about the work of the CPTF among key stakeholders many of whom said they would like to be kept better informed about the task-force's activities.
- The task-force was seen as having an important role to play in facilitating opportunities for those involved in Community Planning partnerships to network and discuss their experiences. This was felt to be particularly important by stakeholders from outwith local government many of whom perceived that they did not have the same opportunities to network as their council colleagues.
- There was a strong expectation that the CPTF would consult widely with Community Planning partners before it produced its final report to the Executive.
- The task-force's work is viewed as an opportunity to raise the profile of Community Planning by promoting its benefits while also acknowledging the complexity of the process and highlighting some of the potential barriers to it fulfilling its full potential.
- The task-force is perceived as having a key role to play in helping to shape the guidance that will accompany the Local Government in Scotland Bill. Many stakeholders expressed the hope that the CPTF would be able to use its influence to ensure that the guidance helped clarify the Executive's expectations with regard to Community Planning, but does not take an overly prescriptive approach as to how Community Planning partners should seek to meet these expectations.
- A number of stakeholders suggested that there should be an on-going role for the task-force or similar group in order to provide a national forum for promoting the development of Community Planning.

CHAPTER TEN CONCLUSIONS

COMMUNITY PLANNING AS A CONCEPT

10.1 Community Planning is a complex and multi-dimensional concept that encompasses a number of different principles. It is perceived as being about promoting "joined up" working between organisations in order to develop a shared strategic vision for a geographical area, providing greater opportunities for community participation and encouraging more integrated service delivery across organisational boundaries.

10.2 Given the multi-dimensional nature of the concept, it is understandable that it often means different things to different stakeholders and that some stakeholders place more or less emphasis on one particular dimension. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as it provides a number of different routes for stakeholders to become involved in the process depending on their own interests. However, there is some evidence that stakeholders would like more clarity about the expectations of the Scottish Executive about the role they see Community Planning playing in relation to the wider modernising agenda as well as how it relates to other key policy initiatives. While stakeholders would welcome more clarity about the basic principles underlying Community Planning as a concept there is strong resistance to an over prescriptive approach to the way these principles should be translated into action at a local level.

10.3 The research suggests that key stakeholders involved in Community Planning partnerships have "signed up" to the basic principles underlying the concept. There is also evidence that they are committed to translating these principles into practical action. However, in doing so it is clear that Community Planning partnerships are having to grapple with a number of complex and difficult issues. This emphasises the fact that Community Planning as a concept is essentially a change management process that requires cultural and organisational change as much as new structures and systems. The time, capacity and resources to secure these changes should not be underestimated and it suggests that Community Planning should be viewed as a long-term developmental process rather than another time limited initiative.

10.4 There is a danger that capacity can become equated with commitment. There is a need to recognise that while some partners may be committed to the Community Planning process they may have limited capacity to contribute to the process. This can cause some tensions within partnerships with some partners perceiving a lack of capacity as indicating a lack of commitment to the process. On the other hand, there is also some evidence that some organisations do not perceive Community Planning as part of their "core business" and as a result do not provide the resources required to support the process. Greater encouragement from the Scottish Executive, across all policy departments and divisions, would help ensure that all agencies could contribute effectively to the Community Planning process.

PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

10.5 There is no single model of Community Planning partnership and the structures adopted, or being developed, are different in each partnership area. This reflects the fact that

structures are being developed to meet local needs and circumstances and in many cases build upon existing partnership arrangements.

10.6 Given that many of the structures adopted by Community Planning partnerships have only recently been established there is clearly scope for further experimentation and learning. However, this needs to be balanced with a strong desire for a degree of stability to allow various groups to mature and develop.

10.7 The leadership role of councils, in developing the Community Planning process, is generally accepted amongst other partners. There are, however, some concerns about the way that this leadership role is being interpreted in some areas. While this concern seems to be based more on perceptions rather than real examples of problems, it is clear that local authorities need be careful about how they exercise their leadership role to ensure that the Community Planning process is as inclusive as possible. The research suggests that partnerships appear to work more effectively where the council adopts a "light touch" approach to their leadership role.

10.8 The research also suggests that some partnerships are struggling to find the most appropriate way to involve community and voluntary sector organisations within their structures. This is often the result of a confusion about the role such representatives are expected to play within various groups. The involvement of community and voluntary sector organisations appears to work best where it is accepted that they are involved as individuals who can bring a different perspective to the work of the partnership. This suggests that they should be seen as representatives from rather than of their particular sectors.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY PLANNING

10.9 Community Planning may be "an idea whose time has come" but it will also take some time to develop its full potential. Each Community Planning partnership is at a different stage of development but it is clear that as partnerships move from the "easy" process of setting up partnership structures and developing a community plan towards the more detailed implementation stages of the process they are all having to face a number of complex and challenging issues.

10.10 The research suggests that there are three fundamental issues that all partnerships have to address.

- **Integration** of Community Planning with other planning processes and partnership structures.
- Establishing effective **Action Planning and Implementation** structures and systems.
- Maximising effective **Community Participation** in the Community Planning process.

10.11 There is no "right way" of approaching these issues and each Community Planning partnership will need to develop solutions that are tailored to local needs and circumstances.

Given the stage of development in most Community Partnership it is not possible to say what approaches work best in practice and it is clear that it will take time to properly evaluate the impact of various approaches. There is, however, scope for greater sharing of information between partnerships to avoid the need to "reinvent the wheel".

10.12 The relationship between health improvement planning and the overarching Community Planning process clearly illustrates some of the difficulties and tensions involved in seeking to integrate major cross-cutting policy themes within the overall Community Planning process. However, the issues raised in this context could apply equally to other cross-cutting policy themes e.g. social inclusion, sustainability etc.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

10.13 There is limited evidence of tangible outcomes that can be attributed directly to the Community Planning process. Most of the benefits that have been delivered to date relate to intangible process related issues. This does not mean that these achievements should be underestimated. One of the key aims of the Community Planning process is to break down organisational barriers and organisational and cultural changes are a necessary prerequisite to achieving this.

10.14 There is some evidence that Community Planning partnerships are feeling under pressure to demonstrate more tangible results in terms of service outputs or outcomes. This has led many partnerships to identify "quick wins" and also consider rebranding existing partnership activities under the Community Planning "brand". While the desire to demonstrate the impact of community planning is desirable there is a danger that a focus on "hard" output measures of success could be at the expense of the "softer" organisational and cultural changes that are more likely to secure long term and sustainable changes.

BARRIERS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

10.15 If Community Planning is to fulfil its potential there are a number of challenges and barriers that will need to be overcome. One of the key challenges facing all partnerships is being able to create the capacity, space and resources required to support the Community Planning process. This is an issue that needs to be addressed by individual partners but there is also a strong feeling that the need to constantly respond to new initiatives from the Scottish Executive, as well as produce numerous plans, policy documents and funding proposals, is deflecting attention from the Community Planning process.

10.16 Another issue that is perceived as deflecting attention from the Community Planning process is the need for many partner agencies to deal with ongoing organisational change. There is also a strong feeling that organisational change within individual organisations or sectors is not always sensitive to the needs of Community Planning and that any future structural changes should be designed to support the process of partnership working at a local level.

10.17 The lack of coterminous boundaries amongst organisations involved in Community Planning partnerships is often cited as a barrier to the development of Community Planning. The research suggests that the main problem related to this issue is the capacity and resources

available to organisations that have to support more than one Community Planning partnership, rather than the boundaries themselves. There was certainly no strong support for further changes to organisational boundaries simply to support the Community Planning process although again this should be a criterion that is taken into account if future changes are made to operational boundaries at either a local or national level.

THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

10.18 Most stakeholders clearly have high expectations for the future development of Community Planning, however, they are also realistic about the scale of some of the challenges they face and the time it may take to fully realise the potential of the process. There are some concerns that these issues may not be fully appreciated at a national level and that there may be pressure to produce "quick results" to demonstrate that Community planning is "working".

10.19 The most important thing that can be done to support the development of Community Planning is to give individual partnerships the time and space to grapple with some of the complex issues they are currently facing. This suggests that any guidance issued by the Scottish Executive should avoid being overly prescriptive and should encourage local innovation and experimentation.

10.20 Many of the challenges facing Community Planning partnerships need to be addressed locally, however, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed at a national level.

10.21 The Scottish Executive can help support the process by clarifying its own expectations about how it sees Community Planning developing and how it relates to the wider modernising government agenda. There is also a need to re-emphasise the fact that Community Planning should be a key priority for all public sector organisations and ensure that this message is communicated effectively and consistently down all policy channels.

10.22 The Scottish Executive can also support the process through actions as well as words. There is a clear need to ensure that it leads by example by demonstrating a "joined up" approach across the Executive and dealing more effectively with cross-cutting issues. It could also demonstrate support for the Community Planning process by ensuring that it is seen as being the main vehicle for delivering collaborative working at a local level and subsequently rationalising the number of other partnership structures that are required by national policy initiatives.

10.23 The Community Planning Task Force has a crucial role to play as an advocate for Community Planning as a concept and as a vehicle for promoting best practice. However, given what has been said about Community Planning being seen as a long term change process, consideration also needs to be given to how these roles can be undertaken at a national level beyond the lifespan of the current Task Force.

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