In December 2009, the Big Lottery Fund tendered for the delivery of three pilot projects on Community Planning in Northern Ireland and a separate but linked support contract to capture the learning and good practice.

The main purpose of the projects was to support the voluntary and community sectors to participate more meaningfully in the emerging Community Planning process in Northern Ireland. The overall aim was to provide a model and a toolkit of good practice in Community Planning that will help to ensure the genuine engagement of these sectors in the emerging formal processes.

This report provides a summary of the work of the Belfast pilot. It explains what we did and the lessons we learned. It outlines some of the key pieces of work undertaken including the development of a Belfast model of Community Planning.

The report represents the culmination of an 18 month project which would not have been achieved without the hard work and commitment of a wide range of people and organisations, many of whom have been developing the foundations necessary for Community Planning on which this project has been built. We commend them for the significant contribution they have made to the development of Community Planning in Belfast and indeed Northern Ireland.
We would also like to acknowledge the role of the Big Lottery Fund in making this possible and in displaying its confidence in the potential of Community Planning.

The legacy of this project is already being felt – whether it be in the form of the Belfast Strategic Partnership’s Framework for Action or in the relationships established between the Consortium and the Belfast City Council cross-party reference group on Community Planning.

However this is not the end of the process. We believe that Community Planning will make a difference and we look forward to building on the work and the relationships already developed, to deliver a workable and effective model of Community Planning that leads to real improvements in the quality of life for all the people of Belfast.

The Belfast Community Planning Consortium

This report is based on the results of a pilot project delivered on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund during 2010 and 2011 by the Belfast Community Planning consortium. The project’s main aim was to work with the community and voluntary sectors to support their meaningful participation in the planned implementation of Community Planning in Northern Ireland.

This final public report of the project:

- Describes concepts and approaches associated with Community Planning in other places and how these might inform its delivery in Belfast;
- Describes the work of the Belfast Community Planning Consortium in delivering the project, including its capacity building work with stakeholders and engagement with the community and voluntary sectors;
- In particular, outlines the experience of the consortium in working with the new Belfast Strategic Partnership to use a Community Planning approach in the development of their framework for health and wellbeing;
- Based on the learning from the project, proposes the necessary elements required to deliver Community Planning in Belfast (“the model”) and;
- Presents a series of next steps to prepare Belfast for forthcoming Community Planning responsibilities.
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At the end of 2009 the Big Lottery Fund publicly tendered for the delivery of three pilot projects on Community Planning in Northern Ireland. The main purpose of the projects was to support the voluntary and community sectors to participate more meaningfully in the emerging Community Planning process in Northern Ireland.

The driver behind the tender for the project was the planned implementation of Community Planning across local authorities in Northern Ireland in 2011. While this implementation has been delayed, Community Planning remains an important strand in the work of local authorities and its partners elsewhere.

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The Belfast pilot was expected to deliver on a number of objectives:

1. To enable local councils, the voluntary and community sectors, and other stakeholders, to gain a fuller understanding of Community Planning through testing and modelling Community Planning processes;

2. To engage key stakeholders in pilot Community Planning projects ahead of formal structures;

3. To build and increase networks and strategic alliances;

4. To enable meaningful collaboration between the Statutory Transition Committees (as proposed in the Review of Public Administration) and various partners in the Community Planning process;

5. To increase understanding of the role of the voluntary and community sectors in Community Planning; and;

6. To empower the voluntary and community sectors to participate in Community Planning.

The BIG Lottery Fund’s other two pilots were awarded to Derry City Council (covering Derry and Strabane council areas) and the Rural Development Council (covering the Fermanagh and Omagh council areas). An additional ‘support’ contract was awarded to Community Places to draw together the learning from all three pilots and to develop a sustainable toolkit to support the voluntary and community sectors in participating in Community Planning.

Background

National government introduced the concept of Community Planning in the 1990s and in other parts of the UK there is a legal requirement on councils to lead Community Planning. Under the Northern Ireland Review of Administration (RPA), it was intended that local councils here would also become legally responsible for Community Planning. However, when the RPA was suspended in June 2010, the work to extend Community Planning to Northern Ireland was delayed. More recently, the NI Executive, in its 2011 draft Programme for Government, has signalled its intention to introduce a ‘Duty of Community Planning’ on local councils by 2015.

Currently definitions and approaches to Community Planning differ slightly across England, Scotland and Wales. At the moment there is no official definition of what Community Planning will be in Northern Ireland but it seems likely that it will be similar to the Scottish model which Audit Scotland defines as:

‘...the process through which public sector organisations work together and with local communities and the voluntary sector, to identify and solve local problems, improve services and share resources.’

Using the Scottish model as a guide, there is an assumption that local councils, such as Belfast City Council and their partners, will have the capability in place to fully engage with local communities in the process of planning and delivering local public services. And that these organisations can work in partnership to deliver such services in an integrated and effective manner.

In part response to this a Belfast Community Planning Consortium, led by Belfast City Council, successfully bid for one of the BIG Lottery Fund’s tenders. The consortium also included the city’s five Area Partnership Boards and the not-for-profit organisations, Community Places. The results of its eighteen month project are contained in this report.
A focus on health

While the consortium could have approached Community Planning in a variety of ways, it chose to take a citywide thematic perspective on the subject of health.

At the time the new Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP) was developing a health and wellbeing framework for the city and the consortium recognised that this could present an opportunity to test aspects of Community Planning in a real-world situation. Belfast has considerable health inequalities and suffers from some of the lowest of health outcomes in the UK. The project would work closely with the Partnership and its new Belfast Health Development Unit (BHDU).

The consortium’s steering group was expanded to include members of the city’s health agencies. A key aim for the project was to test how the voluntary and community sectors could participate most effectively in the process of developing the framework.

Building capacity

The consortium’s approach was constructed with the understanding that capacity building was required across all sectors.

Capacity building with representatives of the voluntary and community sectors, with councillors and with statutory sector staff was the golden thread which ran through the project. The impact of this work is likely to be felt beyond the life of the project and will provide a basis for on-going work towards the wider implementation of Community Planning in Belfast.

A model for Community Planning

Another planned legacy of the project was the development of a Community Planning model that would identify the necessary elements and processes required to deliver Community Planning in Belfast.

The model that emerged does not propose any particular organisational arrangements for Community Planning (such as formal partnership arrangements or the creation of supporting bodies). It also doesn’t attempt to describe what a final ‘community plan’ for Belfast might look like. These will ultimately be shaped by the final RPA legislation and guidance. What the model can usefully do is identify the critical factors for applying a Community Planning approach in any given planning circumstance that is adaptable to the emerging legislative framework.

The model was based on the learning and practice gathered during the life of the project, particularly the experience of working with the Belfast Strategic Partnership on the creation of their framework. The project also ran a specific engagement programme with members of the voluntary and community sectors to test and shape the final content of the model.

The model is based on the understanding that the approach in Belfast should be based on three drivers:

1. A strong, genuine engagement with people about the services they receive;
2. A commitment by organisations and communities to work in partnership;
3. A commitment to integrated service delivery by organisations in the city.
The consortium was established in January 2010 for the purposes of competing for one of three BIG Lottery Community Planning pilot projects in Northern Ireland.

The project was based on the assumption that a formal duty of Community Planning would be introduced in Northern Ireland in June 2011 and on research that suggested that the voluntary and community sectors were under-resourced to participate in Community Planning on an equal footing.

The members of the consortium were:
- Belfast City Council (lead partner)
- The five Belfast Area Partnership Boards
  - North Belfast Partnership
  - South Belfast Partnership
  - East Belfast Partnership
  - West Belfast Partnership
  - Greater Shankill Partnership
- Community Places

Within this section:
The Steering Group
Cross-Party Reference Group
The partners brought together many individual strengths and assets.

- The Area Partnerships have been working across the city for more than a decade and have relationships across the local voluntary and community sectors on a range of interests and projects.
- Community Places, a not for profit organisation, has spent a number of years exploring the implications of various aspects of Community Planning for Northern Ireland.
- Belfast City Council had already begun to explore the implications of Community Planning and, as the likely lead partner in any future Community Planning arrangements, were in a position to examine the political and operational realities of implementing the approach.

The Steering Group

The consortium set up a steering group to guide the pilot project. Reflecting the focus on the theme of health, the membership was expanded beyond the original partners. It included:
- Belfast City Council
- The five Belfast Area Partnerships, including their health development workers
- Community Places
- Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
- Public Health Agency
- Belfast Health Development Unit

The steering group provided leadership to the project. In addition, given the diverse nature of the group and its links across the statutory, community and voluntary sectors, it also presented a vehicle for substantial capacity building work. In a series of workshops, evaluations and meetings, the group explored the concepts and implications underpinning Community Planning and worked to unpack the elements required for a Belfast model.

This capacity building work, and the stronger relationships that have developed during the project, were an important outcome.

Cross-Party Reference Group

Belfast City Council’s Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is its principal committee with responsibility for council strategy including Community Planning. This committee also acted as the council’s RPA transition committee. The BIG Lottery Fund had initially intended for pilot projects to liaise closely with each relevant transition committee but when the RPA was deferred in June 2010 the transition committees were also stood down.

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee set up a Cross-Party Reference Group to provide a political forum to discuss and test emerging ideas and concepts relating to Community Planning and to make recommendations to the Committee regarding a Community Planning framework for Belfast. The group’s membership included councillors from the six parties represented on Belfast City Council.

The consortium has had a strong and fruitful relationship with the group, sharing ideas on the Community Planning model and the implications for the council. This work also facilitated stronger links between the consortium’s members and councillors.
Building capacity with representatives of the voluntary and community sectors, with councillors, and with statutory sector staff was the golden thread which ran through the project. From the outset the steering group was adamant that capacity building was required across all sectors and not just within the voluntary and community sectors. This was particularly important in terms of the likely cultural change required within statutory agencies to effectively embrace a core tenet of Community Planning, namely community engagement and involvement.

Specific activities were developed to provide capacity building opportunities. These included:

- The development of an accredited, three day course ‘Introduction to Community Planning’
- Delivery of Insight seminars showcasing a diverse range of existing Community Planning approaches.

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However, the project’s approach to capacity building went beyond these specific activities, with all partners agreeing that the ongoing communication, engagement and involvement contributed to building capacity. Inherent within this was the building of relationships and trust, which could only really be achieved by working together in a practical sense. The steering group was keen that opportunities were available throughout the project to improve understanding, skills development and partnership working in a shared environment.

The impact of this work is likely to be felt beyond the life of the project and will provide a basis for on-going work towards the wider implementation of Community Planning in Belfast.

Introduction to Community Planning course

A bespoke ‘Introduction to Community Planning’ course was developed in partnership with the University of Ulster and piloted as a broad means of building capacity across all sectors (but with a specific goal of recruiting participants from the voluntary and community sectors). The course had a Belfast focus and was important in terms of general capacity building not just in terms of knowledge and skills.

This three day accredited course was piloted with two groups. There were 51 participants, 26 of whom were from the voluntary and community sectors. The course was significantly oversubscribed reflecting a significant interest from all sectors.

The content of ‘Introduction to Community Planning’ course was:

Day 1: Understanding Community Planning

An introduction to the concepts, context and approach to Community Planning in the UK, Northern Ireland and, specifically, Belfast.

Day 2: Building the capacity for Community Planning

An exploration of the roles and responsibilities of those involved at partnership, organisational and individual levels in Community Planning and identifying the skills and competencies required to participate effectively. Attendees were encouraged to reflect on their own potential roles in future Community Planning processes within Belfast.

Day 3: Engagement and Community Planning

An examination of the importance of engagement in effective Community Planning and how theory is put into practice.

The course was delivered by a variety of external speakers and lecturing staff from the University of Ulster with experience of Community Planning across Northern Ireland, GB and the Republic of Ireland. It provided significant opportunities to develop multi-sector relationships, to enhance the understanding of each other’s work, and to develop a shared set of values and competences.

The course is being evaluated and assessed for its future sustainability and value. Initial feedback indicate that participants enjoyed and valued the course and noted in particular the usefulness of the cross-sector approach.
Insight seminars

In addition to the formal ‘Introduction to Community Planning’ course the project also organised a series of five Insight seminars which showcased a range of approaches to local Community Planning; investigated a city-wide example from the Derry City Council area; and explored the challenges of aligning planning processes in the health and local government sectors.

These events were held throughout the city and were well-attended. The feedback showed good levels of satisfaction in terms of improving understanding and exploring the ideas and concepts of Community Planning and increased awareness of existing approaches.

The seminars also provided opportunities to engage people in the wider work of the project, in particular the development of the Community Planning model.

Community Planning and Local Area Working
Belfast City Council’s approach to local area working is ensuring that council services can respond, and adapt to, the needs of local communities. This session gave examples of this approach in action; how it had benefited communities; and the importance of a strong evidence base when delivering local area services.

Integrated Services for Children and Young People (ISCYP)
The ISCYP project has had a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable children, young people and families across west Belfast including the Greater Shankill area. Adopting an ‘outcomes focused’ approach the project has sought to engage meaningfully with people at all stages of its development and has delivered improved, integrated services for the area. This session outlined the approach taken by the project, describing some of the lessons it has learned and the challenges it faces.

Integrated locality planning in Mount Vernon
The Public Health Agency is leading a pilot that uses an assets-based approach to involve local people and stakeholder agencies in the redesign and delivery of better, more locally appropriate and managed services. This session described its approach which has included assessing the resources being spent by statutory agencies in Mount Vernon and how, when there are no additional financial resources, existing spending can be re-aligned or re-allocated to fit more closely with the needs of local people.

One City, One Voice, One Plan
This seminar shared learning from the Derry / Londonderry regeneration experience. Aideen McGinley, chief executive of the ILEX regeneration company, outlined the experience of developing the city’s ‘One City, One Plan, One Voice’ regeneration plan. In particular the seminar focused on the innovative ‘Future Search’ technique that was utilised in the development of the plan.

Planning cycles in the statutory sector
This seminar was created in response to demand, primarily from voluntary and community sector representatives, for more information on the planning cycles of the statutory agencies. It provided an overview of the Council’s, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and the Local Commissioning Group’s planning cycles. Feedback indicated a significant interest in a follow-up session to this seminar.
Given the size and complexity of Belfast, the consortium decided at an early stage that the project should focus on a single theme to test Community Planning processes in a manageable, real-world situation. A number of options were considered and it was agreed that the pilot should focus on health.

Belfast has considerable health inequalities and suffers from some of the worst levels of deprivation and health outcomes in comparison to the rest of Northern Ireland. Developing a strategic Community Planning approach to improving health provides a number of challenges and substantial scope for learning especially in terms of aligning strategic structures and securing local joined up delivery. The health theme therefore was seen as a microcosm of Community Planning.
Developing the framework for action

Proposals to create a strategic health partnership and health and wellbeing framework for Belfast were at an early stage when the project was being designed. This provided an opportunity for the consortium to support the piloting of a Community Planning approach in a real-world situation. A number of strategic developments had taken place but engagement with the voluntary and community sectors had been limited and was an acknowledged area for improvement.

The Belfast Strategic Partnership was established in early 2011; this is an initiative of Belfast City Council, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and the Public Health Agency. It is a multi-agency partnership of over 40 senior level stakeholders. The five Belfast Area Partnerships are represented and it also has five community members, who were nominated through an informal cross-sector process. The Partnership is chaired by the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council.

At its first meeting in February 2011, the Partnership agreed to adopt a Community Planning approach, partnering with the Community Planning project to assist its development of a four year framework for action to address life inequalities in Belfast. The Partnership was committed to drafting this plan within 12 months.

The steering group determined that its work on health should build on, and be informed by, recent and existing research, community-led surveys and strategic reports. A scoping paper was prepared which enabled initial analysis and prioritisation of health issues.

The steering group agreed that where appropriate initial engagement should be with existing structures and as a consequence the Belfast Area Partnership Health Forums, who have a wide cross-sectoral membership, were approached to contribute to this role.

The project designed an initial planning and engagement process to assist the development the Framework for Action. In particular the project proposed a process to distil and rationalise priorities to be included in the Framework. This was agreed at the April 2011 Belfast Strategic Partnership meeting and its main vehicle was to be a stakeholder workshop to be held in June 2011.

In advance the stakeholder workshop, the project collated and synthesised of health priorities that would be considered in the workshop. As the majority of Health Forums had already identified local priorities (incorporating those from Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships), the Belfast Area Partnership Health Workers were asked to submit these to be considered alongside survey questionnaires completed by members of the Belfast Strategic Partnership and the Belfast Health Development Unit’s existing interim plan. As a consequence a key local dimension was brought to the development of priorities.

A Framework for Action

In advance the stakeholder workshop, the project collated and synthesised of health priorities that would be considered in the workshop. As the majority of Health Forums had already identified local priorities (incorporating those from Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships), the Belfast Area Partnership Health Workers were asked to submit these to be considered alongside survey questionnaires completed by members of the Belfast Strategic Partnership and the Belfast Health Development Unit’s existing interim plan. As a consequence a key local dimension was brought to the development of priorities.
In collaboration with the Belfast Health Development Unit the project planned, organised and resourced the stakeholder workshop on 28 June 2011. This was attended by over 100 people from a mixture of sectors. This facilitated workshop proposed a set of high-level priorities for the Partnership to consider for inclusion in its Framework for Action.

The findings of that day have formed the primary content of the Framework for Action on Addressing Life Inequalities which the Belfast Strategic Partnership endorsed at its September 2011 meeting. The key priorities (which will now be taken forward in thematic working groups) are:

- Addressing mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Addressing issues of life long learning
- Addressing alcohol and drug related issues
- Focusing on early years and early interventions
- Regenerating living places and healthy spaces
- Addressing poverty related issues
- Building community capacity
- Organisational development
- Active Belfast
- Healthy Ageing
- Health and health equity in all local policies

In addition to the key priorities identified, six cross-cutting themes were also agreed:

Evaluation

The project commissioned an independent evaluation to assess how effective the engagement process had been for this first stage of developing the Partnership’s Framework for Action.

The initial process, designed and implemented by the project, ensured that relevant partners (and in particular the voluntary and community sectors) were involved at the early stages of the development of the Framework.

Two surveys were used, one at the end of the initial stakeholder workshop in June 2011 and the other when the draft Framework was ready for circulation (October 2011). The evaluation was not of the Framework per se, but rather of the engagement process that contributed to its formulation.

The evaluation utilised the Scottish Standards for Community Engagement to elicit feedback and to provide a baseline for the Belfast Strategic Partnership on its engagement with the voluntary and community sectors. The follow-up survey provided useful information on the associated barriers and capacity issues for future engagement.

In general those attending the stakeholder workshop felt that the engagement process, ‘worked well’ and that overall, the Framework’s priorities and cross-cutting themes reflected the discussions that took place.

The evaluation identified three underlying needs for more effective engagement: a participation structure that enables community and voluntary sector representatives to become more aware of Belfast Strategic Partnership activities; greater understanding within these sectors of the process of prioritisation; and greater capacity across all sectors to learn from other related initiatives, for example Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships.

The majority of respondents (88%) felt this first stage engagement was at least ‘partially effective’. Just under one half (44%) identified the engagement as ‘quite’ or ‘very good’. This is a useful baseline and, while recognising the engagement process is in its ‘early days’ the recommendation would be to improve on this current level to a best practice aim of 65% perceiving the Partnership’s future engagement to be “quite” or “very good”.

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This chapter presents the emerging model and provides a description of how it was developed and how it might be taken forward. The model represents a significant output by the project but more work will be required to develop a final version with the necessary supporting processes, structures and competencies for delivering Community Planning in Belfast.

During the work of the project recurring themes, challenges and core principles were identified. These were informed by the action research with the Belfast Strategic Partnership and the wider engagement around Community Planning approaches. The steering group explored how these could be drawn together and packaged to enable discussion and critical examination by other stakeholders in the city. This provided the nucleus and concept for the emerging model.

**Within this section:**
- Engagement on the draft model
- The model and elements
- Making the model work
- Additional support for community planning
Engagement on the draft model

Given the project’s central aim of supporting voluntary and community sector participation in Community Planning, the steering group designed an engagement programme to ensure that the emerging model fully reflected the learning and knowledge of this sector. If the model was to have robustness, or if it was to be applicable in the real world, it was important that it drew on the experiences of those who have previously grappled with the challenges of Community Planning in the city.

An initial planning workshop was held with representatives from the voluntary and community sectors in July 2011 to assist in the design of both the engagement programme and the capacity building course. The final engagement programme included two workshops aimed specifically at the voluntary and community sectors, with a third workshop targeted at the statutory sector.

The voluntary and community sectors workshops included contributions from Harriet Eadie, Director of the Edinburgh Volunteer Center and the chair of the Edinburgh Compact Partnership and Bryan Poole, the manager of the Fife Council for Voluntary Services who both drew on their considerable experience of Community Planning in Scotland and contributed greatly to building capacity.

The statutory sector workshop explored the likely obligations facing these organisations as a result of the introduction of Community Planning and facilitated discussion on how an emerging Belfast model might help. It included a presentation from a representative of the Department of the Environment who gave an update on the introduction of Community Planning in Northern Ireland.

A further event was held with the council’s Cross-Party Reference Group to allow councillors an opportunity to comment and contribute to the model.

The project also set up a wiki-based website to encourage users to contribute their own ideas and content to the development of the model. Wikis are online tools that support easy-to-use online collaboration. Training sessions were organised for anyone wishing to contribute to the wiki.

There were a large number of ideas, experiences and concepts generated during the engagement programme. These were collated and fed into this draft of the model.
The model and elements

The consortium’s model is based on the concept that, independent of any legislation or statutory requirements to create a community plan, using a Community Planning approach in the design and delivery of public services is the best way of ensuring that these services will be effective and efficient.

Thus the emerging model does not propose any particular organisational arrangements for Community Planning in Belfast (such as formal partnership arrangements or supporting infrastructure). It also doesn’t attempt to describe what a final ‘community plan’ for Belfast might look like. These will be shaped by the final Review of Public Administration legislation and guidance.

Central is the vision of making a difference and improving the lives of people living and working in Belfast. In achieving this the model identifies nine essential elements, whose dynamic interaction will ensure successful Community Planning and result in achieving the positive transformation in communities and the services delivered to them.

The model does not identify a specific order in which each element would be applied in a planning process. In any given scenario the starting point is likely to be influenced by existing circumstances. For example, a planning process may originate from a strong political imperative with civic leaders driving change. Alternatively, the drive may have come from the commitment to deliver on shared outcomes that have been identified as the result of previous engagement with communities. Or perhaps priorities have emerged during a drive for service integration.

Whatever the starting point the model encourages people to analyse the inevitable inter-connections and dependencies between these and the other elements in the model. For example, shared outcomes are likely to be dependent on processes that support inclusion and robust evidence gathering which in turn are dependent on other elements. Examining each of these relationships encourages a well-designed planning process that is both robust and inclusive, and which utilises existing assets.
Acknowledging the context

This element is based on the understanding that the existing context will have implications for how a Community Planning approach is developed and applied. Those applying the model need to adapt their approach to best fit with such things as local environment, communities, existing statutory obligations, pre-agreed commitments, existing structures or thematic initiatives. This approach discourages the creation of additional new processes or structures if existing arrangements are adequate (or can be adapted to achieve the same aims).

Inclusion and communication

At the heart of Community Planning is a commitment to meaningful engagement, involving people in all aspects of the approach from the outset of the planning process. An inclusive, participatory approach, that emphasises communication with communities and between partner organisations, is not an optional extra – it is essential to success. In most circumstances services will be more effective if those who use them are involved in their design.

Focusing on outcomes

Successful planning results in tangible change that benefits people and communities. Such an approach involves working from an early stage with those involved, including the end users, to identify shared, long term aspirational outcomes. It is important to map the causal relationships between these outcomes and the interventions to deliver them, along with identifying the indicators to measure their impact. This also includes a commitment to monitor and evaluate the approach taken to deliver intervention.

Civic leadership and ownership

This includes the governance arrangements under which Community Planning must operate (for example, under the Local Government Reform proposals local authorities in Northern Ireland will have political responsibility for leading on Community Planning). However, this element also addresses the wider leadership responsibilities and commitments by organisations (both statutory and the voluntary and community sector), communities and individuals in making Community Planning work.

Evidence and knowledge

Evidence can be both the quantitative data relevant to making decisions around assets, priorities and commitments, and the rich qualitative information that can be drawn from personal experience, engagement, research and learning.

It is not only the collection, storing and sharing of such evidence but also the ability to use it appropriately to make informed decisions.

Assets and building capacity

Organisations (including statutory and the voluntary and community sectors), communities and individuals have many strengths, talents, skills and resources that can contribute to success in community planning. It is likely though that there will be some gaps or areas that need strengthening to ensure an effective contribution and participation occurs. It’s important to be aware of the assets and capacity that exist and are required for success and to support a culture of capacity building.
Resourcing

Community Planning is usually not about creating additional funding or budgets. Rather it is about the flexible use and sharing of budgets towards agreed joint outcomes with resources committed and reflected in individual stakeholder plans. A Community Planning approach often requires an understanding of how existing resources are committed and their combined impact in particular circumstances.

It is also a recognition that while many of the approaches to Community Planning may well be adaptations of existing approaches, there is likely to be a resource implication for design and delivering Community Planning particularly in support of engagement and capacity building.

Effective partnership working

A successful Community Planning model may or may not include an official partnership structure (such as the Belfast Strategic Partnership) but it’s likely that in the current environment, any approach will require the support of a variety of existing or new formal and informal partnership arrangements that work well at different levels (strategic, thematic, local). Partnership working requires a suite of skills and competences.

Integrating services

Most effective interventions that contribute to long term outcomes are likely to be delivered by a number of statutory, community and voluntary organisations working together. While the integration of existing service delivery is one of the aims of Community Planning it is also likely to be the key to its success. Community Planning is ensuring that these are planned, designed, delivered and evaluated in an environment that is conducive to shared approaches.
Making the model work

During the engagement programme on the development of the model there was broad consensus amongst those involved that it represents a fairly comprehensive and flexible approach to applying Community Planning in Belfast.

There are many challenges in relation to its successful implementation and there was much constructive feedback from a range of partners on what needs to be addressed in the future development and implementation of the model. There were a number of key issues identified:

1. The need to confirm the legislative framework in which Community Planning in Northern Ireland will operate;
2. A commitment by all partners to consistent and meaningful engagement;
3. How to address the cultural shift within organisations required to implement Community Planning. This is particularly relevant for statutory agencies.
4. The need for effective representation including addressing how the voluntary and community sectors, geographical communities or communities of interest can be properly represented in an emerging structure.
5. The private sector should have a role in any plan for a city but how can this role be expressed within the model?
6. How to integrate local or neighbourhood priorities within a citywide vision?
7. How to implement Community Planning approaches in an environment when there is likely to be no additional resourcing?

Feedback also provided suggestions as to how the model should be developed to enable it to take forward Community Planning:

1. The model proposes that at the heart of Community Planning is the broad aim of ‘making a difference’ to people’s lives in the city. This needs defining to create a shared vision of Community Planning.
2. In its current form the model is not (and was not designed to be) a planning or evaluation tool. However, it does offer a useful structure against which such tools could be developed to:
   a. Create an outcomes-based performance management framework;
   b. Assist in the planning process in terms of helping identifying key linkages and mutual dependencies between each of the elements.
3. The model would benefit from the development of a framework for delivery that encourages:
   a. Utilisation of existing work and use of existing relationships;
   b. Application of a community development approach;
   c. Formal memoranda of understanding or other agreements that are underpinned by principles of equality and respect;
4. An emphasis on ‘collaborative gain’ should be the priority of Community Planning. That is, ensure the focus of Community Planning is on those areas where a collaborative partnership-based approach will offer the greatest benefits.
Community Places was awarded a separate additional contract by the Big Lottery Fund to provide learning and support for those involved in Community Planning.

One outcome is that Community Places is developing an on-line toolkit for community planning. The toolkit describes the core features of community planning and will provide examples of good practice and links to further resources. The toolkit focuses on the following themes:

1. **Community Engagement** - guidance on good practice in planning for engagement; on-line tools for designing and delivering community engagement; outlines the strengths and appropriateness of various methods.

2. **Working Together** - identifies the value and realities of effective partnership working and how to assess partnerships. Also provides guidance on the challenges community and voluntary groups encounter in working with and trying to influence the public and private sectors.

3. **Outcomes** - this part of the Toolkit explains the value of having agreed and clear outcomes for Community Planning and provides guidance for community planning partners on developing them.

4. **Aligning Plans and Processes** - issues covered here include the challenges and benefits of aligning (joining-up) plans and services at local, programme and strategic levels. These are illustrated with examples including participatory budgeting, Total Place and local services joint management initiatives.

For more information visit [www.communityplaces.info](http://www.communityplaces.info).
This report has provided a summary of the activity and learning of the Belfast BIG Community Planning pilot project. It has outlined some of the key pieces of work undertaken including the development of a Belfast model of Community Planning.

The report represents the culmination of an 18 month project which will need to be built upon to implement effective Community Planning across Belfast prior to the introduction of the formal duty.

**Recommended next steps**

To ensure the continuing development of effective Community Planning in Belfast the Consortium proposes the following:

1. To continue building on the relationships established through the project especially the engagement with the voluntary and community sectors.

2. To engage with the Department of the Environment on development of guidance for Community Planning and to work with the department and other partners towards implementation.

3. To develop a framework for delivery of the emerging Community Planning model and to apply it across another thematic/geographical area.

4. To develop synergies with key areas of related work eg community development, consultation and engagement.

5. To develop a route map for the implementation of the formal duty of Community Planning in Belfast.

Although the timeframe for introducing the formal duty is not yet known, Belfast City Council, as the organisation which will have statutory responsibility for Community Planning, is committed to taking this work forward collaboratively, building on the foundations laid by the consortium through this project.
Online resources

BIG Lottery Fund Northern Ireland
www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/northernireland

Consortium and steering group members

Belfast City Council
www.belfastcity.gov.uk/communityplanning

North Belfast partnership
www.northbelfastpartnership.org

East Belfast Partnership
www.eastbelfastpartnership.org

South Belfast Partnership Board
www.southbelfast.org

West Belfast Partnership
www.westbelfast-partnership.com

Greater Shankill Partnership
www.greatershankillpartnership.org

Community Places
www.communityplaces.info/community-planning.html

Belfast Health Development Unit
www.belfastcity.gov.uk/healthandwellbeing/unit.asp

Public Health Agency
www.publichealth.hscni.net

Other sites

Department for the Environment
Minutes and membership of the Community Planning sub-group
http://tinyurl.com/7c98lya

Scottish Improvement Service
Scottish government Community Planning resources
www.improvementservice.org.uk/community-planning/

Dundee Partnership
Interesting case study of how Dundee has put Community Planning into practice.
www.dundeepartnership.co.uk

Edinburgh Compact Partnership
www.edinburghcompact.org.uk

Fife Council for Voluntary Services
www.cvsfife.org