3 Goals and Objectives

3.1 Our Mission

DSD is responsible for leading, co-ordinating and driving forward Government efforts to tackle deprivation. The mission - “Together, tackling disadvantage, building communities” encapsulates what the Department hopes to achieve with Neighbourhood Renewal.
DSD will work *together* with the people from the most deprived neighbourhoods, the social partners and all parts of the Government in order to *tackle disadvantage* and *build communities* that are confident, vibrant and sustainable.

### 3.2 Goals for Neighbourhood Renewal

Neighbourhood Renewal will help to close the gap between the quality of life for people in the most deprived neighbourhoods and the quality of life for the rest of society by pursuing two over-arching goals:

- to ensure that the people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods have access to the best possible services and to the opportunities which make for a better quality of life and prospects for themselves and their families; and
- to improve the environment and image of our most deprived neighbourhoods so that they become attractive places to live and invest in.

### 3.3 Strategic Objectives

To tackle the complex, multi-dimensional nature of deprivation in an integrated way Neighbourhood Renewal will have four interlinking strategic objectives:

**Community Renewal - To develop confident communities that are able and committed to improving the quality of life in their areas**

It is vital that we help communities to play a lead role in this process. This Strategy must be owned and sustained within neighbourhoods, therefore, it is essential that we develop community capacity and skills.

To enable this DSD’s *Voluntary and Community Unit (VCU)* will have a lead role in ensuring that the conditions for the effective support of Neighbourhood Renewal are set in place in the most deprived neighbourhoods. It can draw on strong relationships with the community sector, district councils and other agencies to help ensure that support is directed to neighbourhoods where community infrastructure is not strong.

Typical activities involve:

- developing and strengthening community infrastructure to improve the capacity of the communities;
- facilitating a more proactive and planned approach to community development, including identifying and promoting best practice within and between neighbourhoods;

**The Community Sustainability measure of the European Union Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme administered by the Voluntary and Community Unit supports community support organisations in each council area.**

The aims of the measure are to maintain a core voluntary and community sector infrastructure that can deliver services to all communities and to increased involvement by district councils and Local Strategy Partnerships in supporting this infrastructure.
• supporting training and the development of skills in community development and Neighbourhood Renewal, including providing support to those involved in the delivery of Neighbourhood Renewal and increasing the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to develop locally based programmes;

• improving community relations and reducing segregation, including capacity-building in areas with weak community infrastructure. A start has been made here - through the Peace II Programme's Area-Based Regeneration Measure, the Urban II Initiative in Inner North Belfast and the North Belfast Community Action Unit. This work will provide indications as to how community conflict can be addressed as part of the Neighbourhood Renewal process;

• promoting volunteering and active citizenship in the most deprived neighbourhoods; and

• supporting Government Departments and agencies in their efforts to enhance the delivery of public services by making greater use of voluntary and community organisations in the delivery of public services.

Economic Renewal - To develop economic activity in the most deprived neighbourhoods and connect them to the wider urban economy.

Poverty has for too long blighted the lives of whole neighbourhoods and is one of the primary causes of deprivation. Helping the people who live in the most deprived neighbourhoods to get jobs will be one of the best ways of tackling poverty and disadvantage. The first section of this document highlights some of the initiatives being taken by Government to improve the economic well-being of people in Northern Ireland. This Strategy will help focus attention on the particular needs of deprived areas. It will be essential that Neighbourhood Renewal effectively co-ordinates appropriate responses so that there is access to training and business opportunities for people, both where they live and outside their areas. In support of this we must also ensure that wider regeneration initiatives, wherever possible, have a positive economic impact in surrounding deprived neighbourhoods.

Typical activities involve:

• encouraging investment and business development in the most deprived neighbourhoods, including supporting entrepreneurship;

• making sure that people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods have the skills they need to participate in the labour market. This will mean helping people with poor basic literacy and numeracy skills; people who left school with few qualifications; and people in certain groups, such as young people, the long-term unemployed, disabled people and women - who sometimes face extra problems in finding work;
The Second Chance project in Poleglass allows women with few, if any, formal qualifications to have another chance at getting an education. In its first year, the project helped 15 women to achieve 25 qualifications between them, thereby helping them to get back into the labour market. Most of the women also said that their participation in the project means that they are now able to help their own children with their school work, thereby helping to break the cycle of educational under-achievement that affects neighbourhoods such as Poleglass.

- helping people from the most deprived neighbourhoods to get into higher and further education;
- helping people in the most deprived neighbourhoods to overcome any barriers to work such as poor transport or a lack of suitable childcare;
- supporting training and transport schemes that can help people in the most deprived neighbourhoods get to the jobs that are available elsewhere;
- ensuring that people on benefits are encouraged and supported to take up their full entitlement and that the process of seeking advice on a wide range of benefit and other issues is made more accessible; and
- supporting social economy programmes that can encourage community and social enterprises.

The Creggan Rath Mor Business and Community Enterprise Centre and Workspace Units demonstrate the potential of community-based economic development in deprived neighbourhoods. The Creggan Estate suffers from a combination of high unemployment, poverty, social exclusion and the effects of political turmoil. When the United Technologies Automotive (UTA) factory closed in 1997, the area lost its largest employer and the need for economic regeneration became pressing.

Having opened the Rath Mor Centre in 1995 as a social economy initiative developed in partnership and the International Fund for Ireland, Creggan Enterprises Limited - a local community group - drew up a plan to build eight workspace units for local businesses at the Rath Mor site. The total cost of the project was £339,000, of which £215,000 was provided by the North West Development Office under the URBAN Initiative. The scheme is now fully occupied and supports 23 jobs and eight businesses. Encouraged by the success of the units, the group undertook a larger 20,000 ft² project in the UTA site, which was completed in 2000 as an Indigenous Enterprise Park.

Social Renewal - To improve social conditions for the people who live in the most deprived neighbourhoods through better co-ordinated public services and the creation of safer environments.

Deprived neighbourhoods face a daunting range of social problems, poor health, low educational achievement, high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, high rates of anti-social behaviour, vandalism and crime. Social problems of this kind have a disproportionate effect on the quality of life of the people who live in these neighbourhoods and must be
tackled to make a real change, for the better, in the lives of residents. As effective public services are the foundation for Neighbourhood Renewal, a key element will be to improve public service delivery and make it more accountable to the community.

Typical activities involve:

- helping schools that serve the most disadvantaged areas to improve educational attainment;

- improving the health of people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods jointly with Investing for Health Partnerships, Health Action Zones, Healthy Living Centres and Sure Start Programmes. Issues that need to be addressed include drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, parenthood strategies and the promotion of healthier lifestyles;

- improving access and connections inside neighbourhoods and between neighbourhoods and other areas. This will involve schemes that help people get to jobs and services easily and safely by means of, for example, improvements to pedestrian paths, lighting and cycle paths;

- reducing the occurrence and fear of antisocial behaviour, vandalism and crime jointly with Community Safety Partnerships. Specific projects should tackle fear in interface areas, and help the work done by Neighbourhood Wardens within the context of an overall crime reduction strategy; and

- developing or improving the community, recreation and leisure facilities available to the people who live in the most deprived neighbourhoods. For example, this might include using school facilities for community meetings, sports facilities and leisure classes outside of normal school hours.

**Physical Renewal - To help create attractive, safe, sustainable environments in the most deprived neighbourhoods.**

The most deprived neighbourhoods are almost always in poor physical condition, with vacant or contaminated sites and derelict property. This makes them unattractive to live, work and invest in. Many areas have the added problems of homes, land and property blighted by interfaces. There is a need to build new hope and a sense of security in these communities. Vacant land and buildings can offer real opportunities for local regeneration schemes. DSD has successfully used Comprehensive Development, Urban Development Grants and Environmental Improvement Schemes to
draw substantial public and private sector investment into disadvantaged areas. This work will continue in the most deprived neighbourhoods but it must be more carefully integrated with the other economic, social and community renewal priorities identified in each neighbourhood.

Typical activities involve:
- developing derelict and vacant buildings;
- actively promoting land assembly, site clearance and infrastructure provision, particularly where it can develop brownfield sites or bring contaminated or derelict land back into productive use;
- putting in place environmental improvements on key sites, entrances to neighbourhoods and along arterial routes;
- controlling pollution and promoting effective waste management;
- promoting a more diversified tenure and tenant base, providing a better mix of local housing opportunities, reducing turnover and long term vacancies, and promoting balanced and settled communities; and
- dealing with the impact of interfaces and peacelines on communities, including working with local people to explore how contested places might be better used.

The Mayo Street/Ainsworth Avenue Housing Scheme has successfully developed two acres of vacant land close to the interface between the Shankill and Springfield Roads at Lanark Way that had become a focal point for anti-social behaviour and sectarian clashes.

By assembling the land and providing £419,000 in Urban Development Grant funding, the Belfast Regeneration Office was able to attract £1.8 million of private sector investment into one of the most deprived interface areas of Belfast. The scheme has created 39 houses that offer affordable housing for first-time buyers and families, brought a vacant area of land back into use and reduced the number of sectarian clashes at the interface.

The Short Strand Environmental Improvement Scheme jointly developed and funded by Belfast Regeneration Office and Groundwork Northern Ireland has redeveloped land at the junction of the Albertbridge and Mountpottinger Roads in East Belfast. The land is at the interface between the Short Strand and Inner East Belfast and at certain times of the year, it is the focus of serious interface violence. The project, which has the support of both communities, has turned the site into a play area for use by the Short Strand community and has improved the appearance of the junction. The project has successfully reduced the incidence of interface violence at the junction, enhanced an unsightly area and provided much-needed facilities in the community.