2 Learning the lessons

2.1 Our Own Experience
There is significant experience of urban regeneration work in Northern Ireland. This has been built up over many years, with a variety of initiatives and approaches used to tackle disadvantage.
Some important lessons have been learned from this:

- because physical development and community and social regeneration schemes have not been integrated, a lot of urban regeneration activity has not always had the desired ‘knock-on’ impact on addressing social exclusion;

- effective regeneration requires joined-up delivery by the public sector. Programmes such as Making Belfast Work and the Londonderry Regeneration Initiative have sought to achieve this and although there have been successes more needs to be done;

- the regeneration schemes and projects that have the greatest impact on the quality of life in disadvantaged areas deal with a range of economic, social, physical and community issues and involve the active involvement of those communities; and

- the various urban regeneration tools employed by DSD can be very powerful, but the project-led short-term focus often did not produce a lasting impact. A long-term programme based approach, addressing clearly defined needs, would result in a more sustained impact.

2.2 What You Told Us

DSD carried out a detailed consultation process to elicit views on its proposals for Neighbourhood Renewal. This involved publication of a consultation document and a series of public meetings, a total of 327 people attended 7 regional conferences and 48 written responses were submitted. The process was invaluable and there was a remarkable degree of convergence between consultees’ views on Neighbourhood Renewal and the proposals. Consultees agreed that the Noble Index of Deprivation should be used as a guide to prioritise resources to our most disadvantaged areas. They agreed that in addition to this other sources of information should be used to help define boundaries and planning priorities. In particular, local knowledge and local views must be factored into any decision making process. There was also a strong feeling in favour of moving away from an ad hoc, project-by-project approach to urban renewal towards a more planned, long-term and integrated approach. The consultation process emphasised the need for Departments to work more effectively with locally accountable structures to provide a framework to link physical, social, economic and community resources at point of delivery. The consultation process report is hosted on the DSD website (www.dsdni.gov.uk) along with this Strategy.

2.3 What is Happening Elsewhere

It is important that we learn from best practice in Neighbourhood Renewal in England, Scotland, Wales, the Republic of Ireland and further afield. Whilst differing implementation methods are utilised, there is an acceptance that taking an area-based approach to tackling endemic social deprivation is the most effective means of targeting our most deprived communities. Furthermore, central to each approach is the involvement of local communities in the regeneration process and the need to achieve
improved service delivery through comprehensive integrated planning processes. In England, the 'New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal' strategy, is championed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Here 82% of the most deprived wards are concentrated in 88 local authority areas and it is these areas which are targeted. The Strategy is delivered by Local Strategy Partnerships who are charged with identifying neighbourhoods and drawing up action plans and targets to improve them. In Scotland, the Scottish Executive's Community Regeneration Statement 'Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap' has adopted a twin track approach. The first is to improve core public services and the second is to enhance the social capital of deprived communities. Community planning will be used to achieve a more strategic approach to achieving better and more targeted core services to deprived communities. 'Community First' in Wales has identified the 100 most deprived areas and 32 smaller pockets of deprivation to be included in a 10 year programme of improvement. Partnerships from Community First Areas are being developed. They will be able to bid from a fund to deliver Community Action Plans. The Republic of Ireland has introduced a number of initiatives aimed at ensuring that public services are delivered in a more integrated way, which recognises the active involvement and engagement of local communities.

2.4 What Must be Done

These lessons, and what we know about the problems facing our most deprived people and places, tell us that there are some strong key issues that we must address if we are to really tackle deprivation:

*We must target the most acute deprivation* - The problems of deprived neighbourhoods amount to a great deal more than just the sum of the different parts of deprivation because they combine together in ways that turn individual issues into much more serious problems that affect the whole community. This means that there is a need for a strategy that tackles deprivation in the places where it is most intense.

*We must take a long-term view* - It will require many years to really address the different symptoms and causes of multiple deprivation and help deprived families and neighbourhoods break the cycle of deprivation. This will require long-term commitment and focus by all the agencies involved.

*We must take an integrated approach* - If you live in a deprived neighbourhood, you will be much more dependent on public services. Public services will be more effective if Government works collectively. We need to develop more integrated approaches at local level. This will take time and involve new ways of working, but it is necessary to ensure that the significant resources already deployed link together to make a sustainable impact.
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We must address community division and tension - In many neighbourhoods, deprivation is made much worse by religious segregation and community conflict. Community division and tension must be addressed throughout society but even more so when they further blight the quality of life in deprived communities.

We must work in partnership - No one organisation can deal with all of the problems of the most deprived neighbourhoods on its own. Efforts to regenerate the most deprived neighbourhoods must be based on real partnerships, both within and between communities and with Government. This must extend to the wider statutory sector, particularly district councils and to the community and voluntary sector. Partnership with the private sector will also be essential in bringing forward investment into deprived neighbourhoods and to harness private sector expertise in regeneration work.

We must empower communities - Local people must drive forward the regeneration of their areas. Some communities were not able to feel the full benefit of regeneration schemes in the past because they did not have the skills, knowledge and experience that they needed to contribute effectively to the development of their own areas. Building community capacity must, therefore, be a key element of our approach.

We must make a difference - To sustain everyone’s commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal, we must demonstrate a real difference. Too much of what we have measured to date has been about short-term inputs, which have not made any fundamental impact on the deep seated problems we have. This must change and the change must be evidenced by clear outputs and outcomes from programmes.

This Strategy must provide a framework to deal with each of these issues in Northern Ireland’s most deprived neighbourhoods.