Communities
and Local Government

Neighbourhood governance: making NDC elections a significant event for partnerships and communities?

Some lessons from the New Deal for Communities Programme

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The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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Executive summary

Introduction

The New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme encourages local partnerships to elect, rather than select, community representatives to sit on partnership boards. Elections in some form have been used by 37 NDCs. Average turnout in elections is around 23 per cent, although this has ranged from five per cent to 53.5 per cent.

Key questions for the research are therefore:

- why is there such variation in turnout between areas?
- which approaches are more effective in achieving high turnout and why?
- are there measures of effectiveness other than voter turnout that should be considered?
- is there evidence that NDC elections have wider impacts, for example do they engender higher levels of trust among local people or feelings of community empowerment and engagement?

This report draws on data from the NDC household surveys (notably the 2004 survey which asked whether residents voted in their last NDC election), 2001–2005 Partnership reports, a survey of NDC Partnerships, and three case studies of NDC Partnerships.

Who votes in elections?

Analysis of household survey data indicates that the profile of people more likely to vote in NDCs is not much different from the pattern at national General Elections:

- women are a quarter more likely to vote than men
- the likelihood of voting increases with age: those aged 65–74 are five times as likely to vote as those aged 16–24
- Asian residents are 65 per cent more likely to vote than white residents
- those with more qualifications are more likely to vote
- frequent movers and private renters are far less likely to vote than non-movers, owner-occupiers or social renters.

Voters are also far more likely to feel part of the community, to know neighbours and to find neighbours friendly than non-voters. Similarly, voters are more likely to think that their local Partnership has improved the area and that they are able to influence decisions.

However, the majority of residents in most NDC Partnerships do not vote.

Electoral turnout and area characteristics

A combination of local factors were found to help explain turnout:

- the effectiveness and commitment of NDC Partnerships in organising elections
- the quality of local candidates; the reach of candidates into different local communities and
- the coherency of the NDC as a constituency for political mobilisation.

Although there were found to be positive correlations between socio-demographic factors (including social capital) and electoral turnout for individuals at programme-wide level, these were not found to be significant at an area level. It was not, for example, the case that in areas where a high proportion of residents felt part of the community that there was necessarily a higher rate of turnout for NDC elections. Neither was it possible to find positive and statistically significant relationships between the proportion of people aware of the NDC and turnout nor between NDC-level spend on community development activity (measured by spend on the community theme as a proportion of total spend to 2004) and turnout. This is not to say that these do not exist just that no significant relationships could be found when the 29 NDCs (for which there was sufficient electoral data) were considered.

Similarly we found no strong statistical relationships as to whether NDC elections and voting necessarily engender higher levels of trust, empowerment or engagement (nor indeed the corollary that people living in areas with higher levels of trust, empowerment or engagement were more likely to have higher turnouts). Qualitative research revealed that the election process did empower those individuals directly involved in elections, primarily the successful candidates, and their subsequent experience on NDC Partnership Boards.

Qualitative data from NDC Partnership reports also suggested that turnout alone was not necessarily the only signifier of what was considered locally as a successful election. In some areas a turnout of 25 per cent was seen as a success, whilst elsewhere it was as high as 40 per cent.

NDC partnership approaches to elections

Of 37 Partnerships holding elections, three have used a Single Transferable Vote (STV) method, two, ballots of resident group members, and the remainder a First Past The Post (FPTP) method. FPTP is most straight forward to operate although it can lead to an outcome of elected members being disproportionately drawn from the largest ethnic or other group – this was found to have happened in at least one NDC: smaller or minority groups may not be represented. STV, although a more proportionate system, can lead to complexity where there are low or no barriers to standing as a candidate (for example, in one NDC electors were asked to indicate their relative preference for 45 candidates).

Some NDCs were found to have a rolling programme of elections in which half the community representative positions would be elected every two years. This was found

to provide stability and continuity to the NDC Partnership Board, whilst maintaining awareness of elections and the NDC amongst residents.

Approaches have been adopted by NDC Partnerships to extend voting to groups not on, or less likely to be on, local electoral registers: 15–17 year olds, frequent movers, asylum seekers, refugees and non UK EU economic migrants. However, reaching these groups is difficult and can be costly and practice across NDC Partnerships was found not to be consistent – despite this, NDCs reported that attempts to include as many of their residents as possible is of symbolic and practical support to the NDC Partnership. Extending voting rights should be considered in areas where these groups form a significant part of the population.

Elected representatives' experience of elections

Elected representatives are often already active in the community in clubs, resident associations and tenant associations.

The experience of elected representatives as candidates and Board members was found to be mixed. More could be done to support resident representatives, but often as part of support to all Board members. Where representation worked well, elected members were seen as equals on Boards and their experience of living in the local area valued.

Conflict can occur where there are both local Councillors and also NDC elected representatives on Boards. However, these tensions have generally been addressed.

Conclusion

NDC Partnership elections are often seen locally as a symbolically important component to the Programme. The following is a list of **recommendations for effective practice** in regeneration and community elections. The rationale for them is to make elections a significant event for Partnerships and communities, in which candidates and representatives are supported, and the fullest possible constituency of voters is reached.

   i.   **Communication**: Elections should be seen as a core activity of the regeneration partnership with the profile of elections, candidates and representatives highlighted through newsletters, projects and other publicity

   ii. **Timing**: Partnerships should give consideration to establishing and effectively communicating an appropriate cycle of elections. Holding elections at the same time as local council elections should increase turnout

   iii. **Nominations**: It is necessary for Partnerships to support involvement in the electoral process from groups who may not be actively involved

   iv. **Hustings**: Participation in electoral hustings may be both a daunting and new experience for some candidates, and Partnerships should consider how hustings are operated and the support provided

v.   **Constituency**: Establishment of appropriate and smaller constituencies (i.e. the division of the NDC area into two or three areas) was found to be effective in many NDC Partnerships and should be used in the future. However, the division of the area into many smaller electoral patches gave rise to a risk of there being no candidates or representatives in some areas

vi. **Reach**: Partnerships should take steps to actively engage and promote elections to groups less likely to vote: young people, frequent movers and the most disadvantaged groups

vii. **Electoral System**: Partnerships should consider the choice of electoral system alongside other decisions around constituency, the timing of elections, and the representation of different communities

viii. **Mentoring and Support**: Candidates and elected representatives should be provided with training to develop skills for Board membership and effective communication with constituents

ix. **Budgeting**: Elections require partnership commitment to meet both direct and indirect costs

x.   **Post Programme Sustainability**: Retaining the involvement of elected representatives will require new governance arrangements and may in some cases require representatives to take up additional responsibilities (for instance as trustees of new not-for-profit organisations). It is unclear whether representatives will be willing to do this. Electoral systems can also be costly (especially where additional measures to increase turnout are necessary).

1. Introduction

Background

1.1.   The New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme encourages local areas
to elect, rather than to select, community representatives.[1] The Programme
allows non-statutory elections (ie not local council, General Election or EU
elections) for representatives to join public, private and third sectors on NDC
Partnership Boards. Elections are not a requirement of the Programme, but
have been used by 37 NDCs: 35 have held direct elections and two have
chosen community representatives through ballots of resident association
members. The two other NDC Partnerships selected representatives through
a nomination process from community and voluntary sector organisations.

1.2.   The rationale for elections is that they provide a means for residents in NDC
areas to express their voice through electoral preferences, and through their
elected representatives to acquire greater influence over, and accountability
for, expenditure and activities in their area.

1.3.   Across the Programme there are on average 23 elected representatives on
NDC Partnerships Boards. All Boards have resident representatives and on
31 Boards, elected residents form the majority. However, NDC Partnerships
do not solely use elected representatives to enable community engagement
and ownership of programme activities and expenditure. Partnerships also
included co-opted members drawn from voluntary and community sector
organisations, and have also invested resources in community capacity
building. These issues are considered in two separate forthcoming NDC
reports (Russell 2008 *Community Engagement* and Fordham et al. 2008
Improving Outcomes? Engaging local communities in the NDC Programme).

1.4.   This report is of relevance to the proposals set out in the Government white
paper, *Communities in control: real people, real power* (Communities and
Local Government 2008a). In particular the white paper outlines proposals
to encourage greater community governance, for instance through the
development of parish or community councils. This is likely to include the
introduction of new rules and guidance for the conduct of community
elections.

Previous research

1.5.   NDC elections have been the subject of previous research. This report
updates this work but also explores additional questions such as change over

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[1]   NDC Programme Note 27 (*Board Effectiveness: Guidelines for New Deal for Communities*) notes that community elections are
not mandatory, although are recognised as one mechanism through which the community can be given voice and ownership
of NDC Partnership activities, through elected representatives being members of NDC Boards.

time. The main study to have looked at NDC elections to date is by Rallings, Thrasher, Cheal and Borisyuk commissioned by ODPM in 2001. This was a wide ranging study undertaken in the early stages of the NDC programme considering innovations in NDC electoral arrangements, the experience of candidates and levels of voter interest. In particular, this work sought to explain variations in turnout compared to local council elections.

1.6.   Rallings et al. noted important differences between NDC elections, on the one hand, and local and general elections, on the other:

- **NDC elections are non-partisan**: although the exclusion of party politics was not a formal requirement, Partnerships sought processes which encouraged residents to stand on a non-partisan basis: voters make a choice based on personal characteristics rather than the combination of party political and personal characteristics

- **different electoral systems**: three NDCs (in their first elections) used a Single Transferable Vote (STV) system: candidates were listed and voters asked to rank their preference for candidates; the intention was to provide a more proportional system; Rallings et al. note that a problem with STV is where there are a high number of candidates and voters are unable to make informed choices between candidates; in the first round of elections in Tower Hamlets voters were asked to rank 45 candidates in order of preference

- **extension of voting rights** to groups not normally qualified to vote, for instance to 15–17 year olds; the rationale for this is to engage groups often perceived to lack voice in regeneration, and politics more generally; compiling accurate voter registers can however be difficult.

1.7.   Other published research on NDC elections includes an early assessment of NDC elections based on one case study (Newcastle) by Shaw and Davidson (2002) which sought to recommend electoral good practice, research by Wright el al (2006) derived from national evaluation reports which was critical of the level of participation in NDCs, and by Dinham (2005) based on a case study of an east London NDC and reviewing NDCs' approaches to participation from a community development perspective.

Research questions and study brief

1.8.   This report addresses four overarching questions:

- why is there such variability between areas in the turnout for NDC elections?

- which approaches are more effective in achieving high turnout and why?

- should measures of effectiveness other than voter turnout be considered?

- do NDC elections have wider impacts, for example, do they engender higher levels of trust among local people or feelings of community empowerment and engagement?

1.9.   These questions are intended to inform the use of elections in neighbourhood renewal in the future, and to contribute to the wider evidence base around community empowerment (CLG 2008a; 2008b) and local and neighbourhood governance including the potential for participatory budgeting (CLG 2008a; 2008c).

Research undertaken and methods

1.10.   A range of research methods has been employed:

- analysis of Ipsos-MORI household survey data; in particular, the 2004 survey asked respondents whether they voted in NDC elections

- analysis of the 39 annual Partnership reports undertaken during the 2001–2005 Phase 1 of the evaluation, in particular to gather turnout data and commentaries on the electoral process

- a 2007 survey of NDCs to update earlier 2006 Partnership level data on electoral turnouts and processes (CRESR, 2006)

- case study work in Manchester, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Bristol; this involved additional data analysis, documentary collection, as well as semi-structured interviews with NDC Partnership teams, elected community representatives and other board members (including local councillors and agency members).

1.11.   These case studies were chosen to reflect different local circumstances (see Table 1.1). Hammersmith and Fulham is of interest because of high levels of population turnover; Bristol has achieved high turnout but did not conduct elections in 2005 or 2006 because of insufficient nominations (ie elections were uncontested); and Manchester operates elections through members of resident groups (ie voting is not extended to all residents).[2]

1.12.   In conclusion social capital and community variables for the case studies show:

- positive change in terms of people feeling part of the community in each case study (reflecting changes in NDC areas as a whole)

- but a decline in Manchester and Hammersmith and Fulham as to whether people are described as friendly. The decline in Hammersmith and Fulham is most marked

- in contrast an increase in Bristol and Hammersmith and Fulham of people reporting that they know their neighbours.

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[2]   Throughout the report the case study NDCs are referred to using the local authority name within which they fall. It should be noted that the three NDCs are also known by the following: Community at Heart (Bristol); North Fulham (Hammersmith and Fulham); and The Beacons Partnership, now part of New East Manchester (Manchester).

Table 1.1: Social Capital and Community Attachment in the Case Studies								
	Bristol		**Manchester**		**Fulham**		**All NDCs**	
	2002	**2006**	**2002**	**2006**	**2002**	**2006**	**2002**	**2006**
Feel part of the community	34	45	43	44	38	42	35	42
People in area friendly	81	84	89	86	81	71	83	85
Know neighbours	34	31	48	50	25	29	40	43

Source: Ipsos MORI NDC household survey

1.13.   Although elections themselves may have a limited bearing on these variables, the process of elections and community engagement may have an influence on these. The case studies are used to explore this.

1.14.   The **structure** of this report is as follows:

- Chapter 2 explores patterns of voting across the Programme as a whole
- Chapter 3 considers variations in patterns of voting across NDCs
- Chapter 4 explores the impact of Partnership strategies to increase turnout
- Chapter 5 examines election practice at the Partnership level
- Chapter 6 explores the experiences of elected representatives
- Chapter 7 pulls together key findings and presents recommendations.

Box 1.1: Case Studies of Three NDC Partnerships

Bristol

Elections were held each year from 2001–2004 and again in 2007. Turnout in 2001 was 53.5 percent and in 2007 30 percent. Ten representatives are elected from each of four geographic areas. Voting is extended to 16–17 year olds. Publicity material is sent to all households asking for nominations – with additional door-to-door canvassing in areas with fewer nominations. Not all seats have been contested at each election (due to insufficient nominations) and no elections were held in 2005 and 2006 because of this. Voting is by ballot box and post. A buddy system of mentoring new community representatives is used. Elections are planned as part of the succession strategy.

In 2007, the Partnership appointed a dedicated member of staff to encourage people to run for elections. Many interviewees believe that creating this position was instrumental in facilitating competition. Making sure that the NDC Board is accessible to all residents of the NDC area and that it reflects the diversity of the community were also raised as key issues by NDC Staff.

Interviewees also suggest that both NDC Staff and Partnership Board Members would like to see elections included in the succession strategy. Many of those involved in the NDC view elections as a key element of ensuring a democratic NDC. However, some NDC staff did voice concerns regarding the successor body's capacity to hold elections after the programme's completion.

Hammersmith and Fulham

Hammersmith and Fulham NDC held elections in 2003 and 2006 with turnout of 24 percent and 19 per cent respectively. Postal Voting was used in the 2006 election and rather than use the electoral register, electoral registration forms were sent to each house. This was undertaken to maximise turnout on the assumption that in an area with high population turnover, the electoral register may not be adequate. The most recent election was held in the summer. It was suggested that turnout could have been improved by holding the election at a different time of year and extending the voting period. Elections are not being planned for the Partnership's succession strategy.

The Board originally had 30 people but was restructured and reduced in size to 20 people in 2003. Respondents commented that the Board relations were poor at this time and it was characterised as being conflictual. The Board is now made up of eight community representatives, six representatives from community organisations and six stakeholders (local councillors etc). Elections were held in 2003 (24 per cent turnout) and 2006 (19 per cent turnout). A combination of postal voting and ballot box (held in a neighbourhood centre) were used for both elections. Residents of the area were sent voter registration forms and the size of the electorate was based on this.

The Partnership is currently considering adopting charitable trust status for the successor body to the NDC. It is felt that elections may be too expensive to continue after the NDC programme has ended.

The area has experienced significant tenure changes since the beginning of the programme with significant growth of the private rented sector. However the proportion of rented properties owned by local authorities has fallen from 55 per cent to 51 per cent in this period while the proportion of private rented properties has grown from 19 per cent to 29 per cent. In 2006, 60 per cent of residents interviewed said that they

felt the NDC area was somewhere where people looked out of each other but only eight per cent of people within the sample said that they had been involved in any voluntary work in the community in the preceding three years.

53 per cent of residents are in paid employment and 63 per cent are recorded as economically active. In 2006, 64 per cent of the population were white, 15 per cent were black or black British, 12 per cent were Asian or Asian British, five per cent were Chinese or other ethnic group and three per cent were of mixed heritage.

Manchester

Manchester NDC does not hold full resident elections. Elections to the Board are conducted through a Residents' Forum, an umbrella group of all resident groups in the area, and potential nominees have to fulfil a number of conditions before being allowed to run: being a member of a recognised Residents' Group within the Forum (groups have to be constituted, have elected officers, hold regular meetings and an AGM and methods of disseminating information); attending three Forum meetings in the calendar year; and being seconded by another Residents' Group. Membership of groups is open to all and follows from attending three meetings. There are 68 recognised resident groups.

Elections have been held every year. Postal voting and a ballot box are used for the resident group elections. There are seven community representatives (including one representative from the Youth Forum) on the Board. The Youth Forum representative was elected by 11–19 year olds. Elections for the Youth Representative were conducted using a mobile ballot box which was placed in schools in the area, elections were also promoted through the Youth Forum's magazine and a hustings event.

Elections will be part of the succession strategy as there will continue to be elected resident representatives on the Board of New East Manchester, the Urban Regeneration Company that merged with the NDC in October 2007. Two of the residents on the NDC Beacons Board also sit on the NEM Board. The electoral process is seen to work because of the strength and number of Resident Groups in the area: 87 per cent of those entitled to vote, have done so in the past.

Evidence from household survey suggests that while 73 per cent of households within the Manchester NDC area rented their homes, only 24 per cent of rented properties were rented from the local authority/council compared to 59 per cent of properties owned by housing associations. Between 2002 and 2006, the percentage of people who said that they saw the Manchester NDC area as somewhere where people looked out for one another dropped from 70 per cent to 65 per cent and in 2006 only 11 per cent of residents said that they had been involved in a local organisation on a voluntary basis in the preceding three years.

81 per cent of people living in the NDC area are registered as white, 11 per cent are black or black British, four per cent are of Chinese or other ethnic origin, three per cent are of mixed ethnic origin and only two per cent are Asian or Asian British. In 2006 only 35 per cent of people interviewed were in paid work and 48 per cent of people were registered as economically active and 48 per cent of people were registered as economically inactive.

2. Who votes in NDC elections?

Introduction

2.1. The average turnout in NDC elections to date is around 23 percent (based on reported turnout figures by NDCs). Although this is lower than the district average for local authority elections, the Electoral Commission (2007) report that turnout in deprived areas can be substantially lower than the average.

2.2 The 2004 NDC household survey asked respondents whether they had voted in the last NDC election. Using this evidence it is possible to explore associations between voting and possible individual-level explanatory variables. Results are presented as odds ratios. Odds ratios reflect the probability of a person being in one group rather than another after all other factors in the model have been taken into account. For example, an odds ratio of two means that a person with a known attribute, for example being female, is twice as likely to have voted in the last NDC election than a person who is male, after all other factors (such as age and ethnicity) have been taken into account.

2.3. It is also possible to draw comparisons with who votes in statutory elections, drawing on The Electoral Commission's *An audit of political engagement*.

Characteristics of voters in NDC elections

2.4. Our analysis explores the extent to which socio-demographic factors of individuals: sex, age, ethnicity, household composition, tenure, worklessness, and frequency of moving, are associated with NDC election turnout (Table 2.1). Key findings include:

- females are a quarter more likely to vote than are males
- the likelihood of voting generally increases with age, except for the 75+ age group, members of which are less likely to vote than are those aged 66–74
- Asian residents are almost twice as likely as white residents to vote at elections
- the likelihood of voting increases with the level of NVQ qualifications
- owner occupiers and social renters are most likely, and private renters least likely, to vote
- voting and frequency of moving home are inversely related; the likelihood of voting decreases the more times a resident has moved in the last five years.

Table 2.1: Socio Demographic Characteristics and Electoral Turnout		
Variable	**Category**	**Odds Ratio**
Sex	Male	**1.00**
	Female	**1.25**
Age categories	16–24	**1.00**
	25–34	**1.74**
	35–44	**2.22**
	45–54	**3.24**
	55–64	**3.97**
	65–74	**5.58**
	75+	**4.07**
Self-reported ethnicity	White	**1.00**
	Asian (inc Chinese)	**1.65**
	Black	1.14
NVQ level	No Qualifications	**1.00**
	NVQ 1	**1.40**
	NVQ 2	**1.56**
	NVQ 3	**1.73**
	NVQ 4+	**2.13**
Household composition	Couple, no dependent children	**1.00**
	Couple with dependent children	1.07
	Lone parent family	0.87
	Single person household	0.91
	Large adult household	0.90
Housing tenure	Owner occupier	**1.00**
	Social Renter	0.98
	Private Renter	**0.62**
Workless household	No	1.00
	Yes	0.93
Frequency of moving home	none/na	**1.00**
	once	**0.54**
	twice	**0.32**
	three	**0.33**
	four or more	**0.31**

Note: Odds Ratios in bold are significant at the five per cent level

2.5.   Case study evidence of tenure and ethnicity supports these findings. This is shown in Boxes 1 and 2:

Box 1: Housing Tenure and Electoral Turnout

The table below shows the composition of housing tenure in the three case study NDCS

Evidence from qualitative interviews suggests that NDC Board Members and Staff believe that tenure has an impact on engagement in NDC elections. In North Fulham for example the NDC has problems encouraging many of those renting properties within the NDC area to engage with NDC elections. They felt that the high proportion of renters was indicative of a high level of population churn and that election turnout figures were misleading as they did not take into account the number of people who had been actively engaged with the NDC but had moved away before elections had taken place.

Tenure	Bristol		Manchester		North Fulham	
	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006
Owner Occupier	40	43	25	25	23	16
Social Sector renter	48	43	63	63	60	57
Private renter	11	13	11	11	16	25
Other	1	1	*	1	1	1

Source: Ipsos MORI NDC Household Surveys (2002 and 2006)

Comments by NDC staff during interviews suggest that tenure can affect election turnout in other ways. One NDC worker stated that because many residents in Local Authority/Housing Association accommodation had not chosen their area over others but had moved because a property was available, they did not feel attached to the area and were less likely to engage in elections. NDC workers also believed that those in privately rented accommodation were less likely to engage in elections as they may view the NDC as something which did not affect them.

2.6.   The Electoral Commission research did not ask exactly the same questions as the NDC household survey, although there are sufficient similarities to make comparisons. The questions asked focused on voting intention in relation to an imminent General Election. Such a comparison reveals:

• in General Elections, men (55 per cent) are slightly more likely to vote than women (52 per cent): in NDC elections the reverse is the case

• the likelihood of voting increases with age, a pattern repeated in NDC elections

• those in AB social classes are nearly 40 per cent more likely to vote than those in DE social classes; this perhaps partly reflects NDC evidence in relation to educational qualifications.

2.7.   The pattern of voting in NDC elections does not therefore appear radically different to that characteristic of other elections, albeit people are more likely to vote in General Elections.

Box 2: Ethnicity and Electoral Turnout

NDC staff across the case studies had attached particular importance to the needs of local black and minority ethnic communities and they had tried to encourage people from minority groups to engage in the elections. However, in Bristol and Hammersmith and North Fulham the NDC Partnerships also encouraged people from black and minority ethnic communities to engage through forums and interest groups, in addition to elections. This was considered not on the basis of whether particular groups were likely to vote or not, but rather that it was important for legitimacy of the programme to engage these groups.

	Bristol		Manchester		North Fulham	
Ethnic origin	**2002**	**2006**	**2002**	**2006**	**2002**	**2006**
White	87	81	89	81	69	64
Mixed	2	1	1	3	3	3
Black or Black British	7	12	5	11	17	15
Asian or Asian British	3	5	2	2	9	12
Chinese or Other ethnic group	1	1	3	4	3	5

Source: Ipsos Mori NDC Household Surveys 2002 and 2006

Voting and social capital

2.8.   Household survey data can be used to explore relationships between voting and four aspects of social capital: feeling part of the community, knowing neighbours and thinking them friendly and believing neighbours look out for each other (Table 2.2):

• each of these four social capital variables is positively associated with NDC election turnout; although only three are **significantly** associated (at the five per cent level)

• of the four social capital variables 'feeling part of the community' is most strongly associated with turning out to vote at NDC board elections: residents who feel part of the community are two-thirds more likely than those who do not to vote.

Table 2.2: Social Capital and Electoral Turnout		
Variable	**Category**	**Odds Ratio**
Feel part of the community	No	**1.00**
	Yes	**1.66**
Neighbours friendly	No	**1.00**
	Yes	**1.21**
Know neighbours	No	**1.00**
	Yes	**1.43**
Neighbours look out for each other	No	1.00
	Yes	1.03

Note: Odds Ratios in bold are significant at the five per cent level

2.9.   It should be emphasised here that a positive, and not necessarily a causal, relationship between 'social capital' and voting is established. It would be inappropriate to claim that one leads to the other. However, it should be noted that research by Pattie and Johnston (2001) analysing data from the British Election Panel Study (1992–1997) indicates that 'conversation' between family members and peer groups influences the likelihood of voting for a particular party (over and above party political publicity for example). Applying their argument to NDC elections suggests that turnout may increase where the election (or issues surrounding it) becomes a 'local talking point'.

2.10.   Further research by Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley (2003), again looking at national elections, finds that voting and civic activism is influenced by a complex array of factors. These include general incentives (ie the notion that voting for a particular candidate will bring a financial return to the individual or their community), social capital (ie voting is driven because of trust in, and ties to, others and institutions), and civic voluntarism (ie voting is driven by a desire to contribute freely to the community). The implication of these findings is that NDCs may be able to mobilise and influence certain factors (eg general incentives and to a small extent social capital), but other contextual factors (such as the characteristics of residents and existing levels of engagement) will have a greater bearing, at least in the short term.

Voting, influence and outcomes

2.11.   The model depicted in Table 2.3 shows the extent to which factors relating to NDC outcomes (feel able to influence decisions, involved in NDC activities, and, think the NDC has improved the area) are associated with NDC election turnout:

- each of the three outcome variables is positively and significantly (at the 5 per cent level) associated with NDC election turnout

- of the three outcome variables, being involved in NDC activities is most strongly associated with voting at NDC elections; residents who have been involved in NDC activities are twice as likely to vote as are those who have not.

Table 2.3: Influence and Electoral Turnout		
Variable	**Category**	**Odds Ratio**
Feel able to influence decisions	No	**1.00**
	Yes	**1.79**
Involved in NDC activities	No	**1.00**
	Yes	**2.00**
Think NDC improved area	No	**1.00**
	Yes	**2.09**

Note: Odds Ratios in bold are significant at the five per cent level

2.12.   These findings are not unexpected. In general they suggest that those who perceive benefits from the NDC are more likely to vote.

Conclusion

2.13.   Findings developed in this chapter support arguments drawn from other research that people vote for a complex of different factors including perceived returns or benefits, civic involvement and voluntarism, and collective efficacy and social capital. The next chapter explores variations in voting across NDC areas.

3. Electoral turnout and area characteristics

Introduction

3.1.   The previous chapter examined voting at the Programme wide level. This section explores **differences in turnouts across NDC areas**. Evidence is based on election turnout figures for 2004 and 2005 to allow comparison with 2004 household survey data. Five possible explanations are investigated to assess the degree to which there are any relationships between different levels of turnout within each of 29 NDC areas and:

- methods of voting
- local election turnouts
- social capital
- ethnicity
- a high proportion of frequent movers

In addition, consideration is given to the extent to which there are links between how successful NDCs have been in publicising their own existence and activities and on whether there are any links between how much NDCs have invested in community development and capacity building[3].

Election turnouts and voting method

3.2.   It might be assumed that voting methods could help explain different turnouts across the 29 NDCs for which there are valid data (Table 3.1). Research by Rallings et al reported that only three NDCs had used STV and of these Tower Hamlets had then moved to a FPTP approach. Evidence is also available on whether postal and/or polling approaches were used.

3.3.   Correlation analysis suggests that polling and multiple methods are positively, and postal and other voting methods negatively, correlated with turnout. *Prima facie*, polling station voting seems to be the most effective method for increasing turnout, especially if used as part of a package of voting methods. However these associations are weak[4], and are not statistically significant (Table 3.2). Moreover, other research on electoral turnout reports that postal and other non ballot box approaches to polling can help increase turnout.

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[3] Community theme expenditure as a proportion of total expenditure to 2004.
[4] Spearman's correlation coefficients range between –1 indicating a perfect negative association and +1 indicating a perfect positive association; a coefficient of 0 indicates no linear relationship at all.

Table 3.1: NDC election turnout and voting methods					
NDC	**% Turnout 2004/05**	**Postal**	**Polling Station**	**Other**	**Multiple**
Birmingham A	42	No	Yes	No	No
Bradford	41	Yes	No	No	No
Middlesbrough	41	Yes	No	No	No
Doncaster	40	No	Yes	No	No
Hackney	37	Yes	No	No	No
Islington	33	Yes	No	No	No
Lewisham	29	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Luton	29	Yes	No	No	No
Plymouth	27	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Bristol	25	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Oldham	25	Yes	No	No	No
Tower Hamlets	25	No	Yes	No	No
Lambeth	24	Yes	No	No	No
Wolverhampton	24	Yes	No	No	No
Fulham	22	No	No	Yes	No
Sheffield	22	Yes	No	No	No
Southampton	22	Yes	No	No	No
Newham	20	Yes	No	No	No
Rochdale	20	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Birmingham Kings Norton	19	Yes	No	No	No
Haringey	19	Yes	No	No	No
Newcastle	17	Yes	No	No	No
Brighton	16	Yes	No	No	No
Brent	15	Yes	No	No	No
Leicester	14	Yes	No	No	No
Liverpool	14	Yes	No	No	No
Nottingham	14	No	Yes	No	No
Hartlepool	5	No	No	Yes	No
Knowsley	5	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
NDC average	**23.67**				

Source: Survey of NDC Partnerships (2006)

Table 3.2: Correlation between NDC election turnout and voting method				
	Postal	**Polling Station**	**Other**	**Multiple**
Correlation Coefficient	−0.04	0.21	−0.11	0.02
Significance. (2-tailed)	0.85	0.28	0.56	0.93

NDC and local election turnouts

3.4. To what extent can variations across these 29 NDCs be explained by reference to local election turnouts? Are there any suggestions that low turnout in local elections may be associated with low turnouts in NDC elections? Evidence is available illustrating turnouts for 29 NDCs and the electoral ward most closely corresponding to the NDC area (Table 3.3). However, there is only a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.24$) between the two sets of figures which is not significant at the five per cent level. The table also shows that only seven of the 29 NDCs had electoral turnout greater than that in local council elections, and even then turnout was not substantially higher.

Table 3.3: NDC election turnout and local election turnout			
NDC	**NDC election turnout (%, 2004–05)**	**Local election turnout* (%)**	**Local election year**
Birmingham Aston	42	40	2004
Bradford	41	50	2004
Middlesbrough	41	23	2003
Doncaster	40	36	2004
Hackney	37	33	2006
Islington	33	30	2006
Lewisham	29	26	2006
Luton	29	27	2003
Plymouth	27	29	2004
Bristol	25	33	2003
Oldham	25	42	2003
Tower Hamlets	25	42	2006
Lambeth	24	32	2006
Wolverhampton	24	33	2004
Hammersmith and Fulham	22	44	2006
Sheffield	22	37	2004
Southampton	22	29	2004
Newham	20	31	2006
Rochdale	20	27	2007
Birmingham Kings Norton	19	36	2004
Haringey	19	30	2006
Newcastle	17	41	2003
Brighton	16	31	2007
Brent	15	35	2006
Leicester	14	24	2003
Liverpool	14	20	2003
Nottingham	14	25	2003
Hartlepool	5	34	2004
Knowsley	5	31	2004

Note: *turnout for the closest electoral ward

Social capital and turnout

3.5. Correlation analysis has been carried out identifying relationships between a range of social capital variables and NDC turnouts. The argument here is that variations in turnout may be associated with different levels of community engagement and attitudes towards the local NDC. However, Pearson correlation coefficients suggest very weak, and in some cases counter-intuitive, associations (Table 3.4)[5]. None of the associations is that strong (ie there is a significant statistically valid relationship). Interestingly however if one or two outliers are removed from analysis a relationship does appear between election turnout and 'knowing neighbours' (r= .40) which is significant at the five per cent level. But in general it is not possible to argue from this evidence that variations across the 29 can be explained by differences in relation to aspects of social capital. With regard to a key question of this research, this evidence suggests that it is still unclear whether elections foster community empowerment and engagement (and equally whether empowerment and engagement lead to higher levels of electoral turnout).

Table 3.4: NDC election turnout and social capital		
Explanatory Variable	**Pearson Correlation**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
% Feel part of the community	0.15	0.43
% Neighbours friendly	−0.07	0.70
% Know neighbours	0.13	0.50
% Neighbours look out for each other	−0.06	0.76
% Think NDC has improved the local area	−0.10	0.59
% Involved in NDC activities	−0.29	0.13
% Feel able to influence decisions	0.04	0.86

Turnout and ethnicity

3.6. There is a twofold rationale for hypothesising that ethnic diversity may impact on election turnouts. First as is outlined in Table 2.1 higher concentrations of white British people may be correlated with lower turnout. And second, in more ethnically diverse areas it could be argued that different ethnic groups may seek to vote on a basis which would help a particular group secure additional resources for their community (a rational choice theory of electoral preference). A few outlier NDCs appear to provide some justification for this assumption. For instance Knowlsey and Hartlepool with low levels of ethnic diversity have low levels of turnout. On the other hand Birmingham Aston and Bradford are ethnically diverse and have high levels of turnout. However, when this relationship is explored for all 29 NDCs for which there is evidence no significant relationship emerges.

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[5] Pearson correlation coefficients range between −1 indicating a perfect negative association and +1 indicating a perfect positive association; a coefficient of 0 indicates no linear relationship at all.

Turnouts and frequent movers

3.7. The household survey data across the Programme as whole suggest that the likelihood of voting significantly reduces with frequency of moving (Table 2.1) However, the hypothesis that areas with high levels of mobility have low turnout is not significant when explored across the 29 relevant Partnerships.

Communications and community development

3.8. At a partnership-level, no strong relationships were found between area-level turnout and the proportion of people in that area who were aware of the NDC or between NDC spend on community theme activities and turnout.

Conclusion

3.9. This section has explored relationships between a range of explanatory variables and turnout at the Partnership level. No strong and overarching relationships have been found to explain variance in election turnout. Explanations for turnout appear to be complex and are not determined by a set of household and individual characteristics.

4. Partnership activities and turnout

Levels of turnout and change

4.1.   Turnout in NDCs has been wide ranging, from five percent to over 50 per cent. It has also changed markedly over time in some areas. Table 4.1 shows turnout over time in NDC elections and average turnout for the elections held.

4.2.   The table shows:

- a group of NDCs having high levels of turnout, which over the elections held have on average exceeded 35 per cent. These NDC partnerships include: Middlesbrough, Sunderland, Birmingham Aston, Doncaster, Bristol, Bradford, Hackney and Sheffield

- a group of mid ranking NDCs with turnout over 25 per cent on average: Southampton, Newcastle, Plymouth, Tower Hamlets, Sandwell, Islington and Walsall

- a group of NDCs with low turnout (5–25 per cent on average): Brighton and Leicester

- a group of NDCs with very low turnout (on average less than five per cent): Knowsley and Hartlepool

4.3.   We also looked at change over time – in particular were there any NDCs which had either seen significant improvements or declines in turnout:

- turnout in most NDC Partnerships was found to fall over time

- turnout in the following NDC Partnerships was found to improve significantly (either between particular elections or overall):

  – Middlesbrough from second to third elections went from 41 to 51 per cent

  – Southampton went from 22 to 35 per cent

  – Leicester went from 14 to 17 per cent.

- Most NDCs fell back in terms of turnout, the most notable being:

  – Bristol from its second to third election (54 to 25 per cent)

  – Islington from its second to third election (33 to 21 per cent), although from its first to second it had increased by 10 percentage points

  – Lewisham, like Islington, after an increase from first to second elections, witnessed a decline from 29 to 20 per cent turnout

– Luton, perhaps most notably increased from three per cent turnout to 29 per cent turnout before falling back to 17 per cent

– Birmingham Kings Norton fell from 19 to 10 per cent from second to third elections, despite seeing an increase from first to second elections.

Table 4.1: NDC Election Turnout								
	Year							
NDC	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Birmingham A					42			
Birmingham KN			15		19		10	
Bradford			37		41		40	
Brent					15		17	
Brighton				15.7	16		16	
Bristol		54			25			30
Coventry	Elections via resident groups							
Derby	Elections via theme groups							
Doncaster					40			
Hammersmith & Fulham		APPOINTED		22			19	30
Hackney					37		36	
Haringey			19		19		16	
Hartlepool						5	3	
Hull	Applied for Charity Status – board members are nominated							
Islington			23.2		33		21	
Knowsley	Seats not contested				5		4	
Lambeth			24		24		16	
Leicester			14		14		17	
Lewisham			16		29		20	
Liverpool			17		14			
Luton			3		29		17	
Manchester	Elections via tenants and resident associations							
Middlesbrough			74		41		52	
Newcastle			39.9		17		Seats not contested	
Newham			20.8		20			
Norwich			19				21	
Nottingham			7.1		14		10	
Oldham			21.2		25		17	
Plymouth			28		27		29	
Rochdale			23.6		20		19	
Salford	Elections via tenants and resident associations							
Salford								
Sandwell							26	
Sheffield			52.1		22		19	
Southampton					22		35	
Southwark	Elections via tenants and resident associations							
Sunderland	Structure not formalised						45	
Tower Hamlets			27.6		25			
Walsall			27.6		0		23	
Wolverhampton			9		24		20	

Source: NDC Partnerships Reports (2001–2005); NDC Partnership Surveys (2006) and Partnership Election Survey (2007)
Note: Shaded cells indicate missing data

4.4.   There is not a consistent pattern of turnout change across the NDC partnerships. Explanatory variables for change (discussed in previous sections) fail to provide confident predictors of turnout. We therefore sought to examine partnership reports (undertaken annually from 2001 and 2005) which included questions on election turnout with some prompts to comment on the elections. However, it should be stressed that the partnership reports did not contain explicit prompts to explain change in turnout or to comment on the level of turnout.

Partnership report data

4.5.   Partnership reports for NDC partnerships with high or medium turnout (over 25 per cent) or low turnout (under 15 per cent) were reviewed, along with NDCs experiencing notable change.

High turnout NDCs

4.6.   **Middlesbrough**: residents have to be members of the West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust to vote. Trust membership reached 700 in 2004 and turnout figures are expressed as a proportion of trust membership. The elections therefore do not involve a ballot of all residents over 18.

4.7.   **Sunderland**: Full elections were held for the first time in 2005 and £100,000 was spent on an e-voting system – this was to respond to concerns that accountability of the NDC to residents had been weak. Considerable effort was vested by the Partnership in the elections to improve engagement and accountability.

4.8.   **Birmingham Aston**: Elections were first held in 2003. (A system of nominations from neighbourhood forums had been used beforehand.) Community representatives are now chosen through a combination of election (five representatives) and nomination (four representatives).

4.9.   **Doncaster**: elections were introduced in 2002 and use a two or three year cycle. In 2003 only two out of 14 seats (up for election that year) were contested. There are 28 seats in total.

4.10.   **Bristol**: electoral turnout fell markedly over the period, despite turnout remaining relatively high. In the first year the election coincided with the 2001 General Elections and local elections. This gave turnout a significant boost. The NDC area is relatively fragmented with some reflections that mobilisation in some areas is harder than others.

4.11.   **Bradford**: turnout has remained relatively constant at around 40 per cent. The NDC Partnership report suggests that the factors for this included: considerable support given to individual candidates; promotion of the elections through publicity and community activities; and selection of

candidates with a relatively high profile locally (although this was not the case for all). Overall it was noted that the NDC election was held to be a significant event for the partnership and community and of central importance to the NDC.

4.12.   **Sheffield**: turnout in Sheffield has declined from a high initial turnout. Reasons for the high turnout were held to be active promotion of the election and active promotion of the candidates standing for the election. In subsequent elections, it was reported that elections were not seen to be as important – they were given less emphasis by the Partnership and there was a reflection that the there was less need to vote.

Mid-high turnout (25–35 per cent)

4.13.   **Newcastle**: there are different constituencies with elections held in some areas on certain years and others for other years. Turnout was found to vary and it was reported that turnout may have been as low as 13 per cent in specific patches.

4.14.   **Tower Hamlets**: this NDC changed its voting system from Single Transferable Vote to First Past the Post. The 2004/05 partnership report noted that the 2004 election was the first for two years and locally turnout (at 26 per cent) was seen to be encouraging. The NDC Partnership also felt that the newly elected community representatives strengthened the Board: notably the election of two people aged under 21, the leader of a local mosque and representatives from African-Caribbean and Somali communities. This made the Board more diverse in terms of age and ethnicity. In 2004 there had also been opportunities for women-only voting, reflecting the commitment and provision for an equal gender balance on the Board. The electoral processes were also highlighted in the report as being strong and robust.

4.15.   **Islington**: in February 2003 turnout in the election was 33 per cent – the highest for a London NDC. The partnership report for 2003/04 notes that community engagement and the election has been a priority for the NDC Partnership. Although several seats were not contested (it was not reported how many), the turnout was viewed as a 'significant achievement' in comparison to the previous election and elections in other London NDCs. A reflection of the partnership report was that the perceived success of the elections laid the foundations for the making of a more robust partnership.

4.16.   **Walsall**: the 2003/04 partnership report noted that the Walsall NDC area is divided into 24 patches, eight coming up for election at a time, with elections then held in each patch every four years. However, by November 2003 there were 10 patches with no elected representatives, and with a further patch where the elected representative was about to stand down. Residents received a letter asking for nominations for candidates and although nine candidates came forward, four subsequently withdrew. This

left five nominees, all for different patches. As a result none of these seats was contested and all nominees joined the board in December 2003.

Low turnout (less than 20 per cent)

4.17.   ***Luton***: turnout in Luton rose from three per cent to 29 per cent before falling back again to 17 per cent. The March 2003 elections (where 29 per cent was achieved) was for those seats not filled in the November 2002 elections. It was noted that the NDC was very active over this period in promoting the election and that there was also high profile issues regarding masterplanning and land acquisition which may have stimulated turnout. However, it is less clear from the partnership report why turnout in the 2002 election was so low.

4.18.   ***Birmingham Kings Norton***: here turnout was 21 per cent (2001), 15 per cent (2002), 19 per cent (2003) and then 10 per cent (2004). One reason for lower turnout may be that elections are held annually. Focus group evidence used in the partnership report (2003/04) also suggests little awareness of the elections. Investigations into the Partnership in 2003 led to the suspension of staff, which may have contributed to reduced confidence in the NDC Partnership.

4.19.   ***Nottingham***: turnout in three elections remained below 15 per cent. Reasons for the low turnout were suggested to be the mobile population (including a high student population) and a consequent lack of enfranchisement in the NDC process. It was also reported that local authority election turnout in the area is also low.

4.20.   ***Knowsley***: turnout was reported to be disappointingly very low (less than five per cent) in two elections. It is unclear from the partnership report what the reasons are for this. It was noted in that by 2004 the NDC Partnership was beginning to make progress in engaging residents, noting the formation of a Neighbourhood Network and work on youth engagement.

4.21.   **Hartlepool**: turnout was reported to be five per cent in 2002 and three per cent in 2003. In 2003 elections were held in the north area of the NDC. The partnership report for 2003/04 suggests that interest in the NDC is very low; little was spent on promoting the election and relatively few community engagement activities.

Conclusion

4.22.   The partnership reports give some indication and explanatory reasons for why turnout changes and the level of turnout. It should be stressed that the Partnership reports commented on the electoral process and turnout, however they were not asked to explore in detail reasons for change or

turnout. Comparative assessment is therefore difficult. What the qualitative data appears to suggest is that:

- turnout is strongly affected by a range of local contextual factors and in particular population change

- turnout can be increased and appears higher, where NDC Partnership engagement activities are effective (ie the NDC has a high and wide ranging profile), the NDC Partnership is seen to 'matter' to issues of immediate relevance to residents, and the NDC Partnership places considerable emphasis on the election

- turnout figures alone can be misleading and in particular may mask the proportion of seats which are uncontested and in some cases where not all residents are eligible to vote (for instance where elections are of the membership of community forums and resident associations).

4.23.   It was also reported that what constitutes 'high' or 'successful' turnout levels varies considerably across NDC Partnerships: some may see this as being a turnout of 25 per cent whilst others would see success as being turnout of 40 per cent. For some areas though, even securing a turnout of 10 per cent may constitute a success. These findings would seem to suggest that community engagement and empowerment will vary from place to place, and levels of engagement in some areas will remain low despite the efforts of the NDC. The following section draws on local case study evidence to assess the operation of elections and practical steps Partnerships have taken to engage local residents.

5. Partnership approaches to elections

Introduction

5.1.   This section reports on the differing approaches NDCs have used towards elections. Evidence is drawn from three case study NDCs (Bristol, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Manchester), Partnership reports (undertaken between 2001–2005), a survey of NDCs using elections, and other research on electoral practice.

Electoral systems

5.2.   Elections have been held in 37 NDC Partnerships. In 34 a FPTP system has been used. Three have employed a Single Transferable Vote (STV). However, at least one NDC (Tower Hamlets) which had used STV subsequently moved to FPTP. The benefit of FPTP is that it is widely understood (being used in local council elections in England and General elections in the United Kingdom), a clear 'winner' emerges, it costs less to administer, and there are fewer spoilt papers (which can be as high as 20 per cent using other systems).

5.3.   The problem with FPTP is that outcomes may not fully reflect the preferences of the electorate. In partisan elections this disadvantages smaller parties. In NDC elections it may lead to candidates being elected who reflect the socio-demographic composition of the largest group. In one NDC area for instance 11 of 12 elected representatives are British-Asian. For this area, population estimates suggest that 42 percent of the local NDC population is white, and 49 percent Asian or British-Asian. The results highlight that elections will not necessarily provide elected members who fully reflect the ethnic or gender composition of the neighbourhood. This shows that other means of engagement may be required.

5.4.   Although other electoral systems lead to more proportional outcomes, they are costly and complex to administer. Rallings et al (2004) report on Tower Hamlets' use of the STV electoral system. Under STV voters rank their preference for candidates – starting with their first ranked candidate. A candidate achieving a predetermined proportion of the votes is elected. Votes exceeding this amount and those cast for the candidate with the least votes are redistributed according to stated preferences. Redistribution continues until available seats are filled.

5.5.   In the first Tower Hamlets election there were 45 candidates for the NDC area. Whilst it was encouraging that so many candidates stood, voters were

faced with an A3 sheet and probably would not have recognised more than a handful of candidates.

5.6.   Given the need to operate an understandable system which is relatively straightforward to administer at reasonable cost, FPTP offers most benefits to NDC Partnerships. However, there must be some caution in using it where there is a risk of unrepresentative outcomes. Other steps discussed below may help address this.

Frequency of elections

5.7.   Whilst two NDCs were found to have held elections every year and one to have held only one election, most NDCs have sought to hold them every two years.

5.8.   Findings from the annual 2001–2005 NDC Partnership Reports suggest that establishing effective electoral processes for community representatives in some areas was not without its teething problems. This is illustrated in the 2003–04 Hammersmith and Fulham Partnership report undertaken by the national evaluation team:

> *Much of the time of the Board over the past year was taken up by the arrangements for elections for the community representatives. The NDC held its first elections in May 2003 with the results announced on 2nd June with new Board members attending their first Board meeting in September followed by a Board Away Day which was well attended and gave members of the Partnership time to review and work together on issues related to the future delivery of the programme. However, the filling of other posts (agency and forum representatives and co-optees) has meant that the full membership was only present at the November meeting. The positions of chair and vice-chair have been temporarily held by the post holders of the Shadow Board but election of those officers for the new Board will take place at the December meeting.*

5.9.   There is contrasting experience in relation to the proportion of seats up for election at any one time. Some NDCs have opted for all seats being up for election every four years, others a half. The main benefit of the latter system (ie with community representatives having terms of four years) is that the Board is given some continuity of membership. This approach rather than re-electing all community representatives in single elections is often seen locally as preferable. This approach does however rule out the possibility of holding full elections which may encourage a higher turnout, and it may also be more costly.

5.10.   The table on the following page shows the proposed frequency of NDC elections (reported in 2004 and 2006), together with the number of elections planned and the number of elections which took place. By 2006, 18 partnerships proposed to hold elections of some form every year, with a further 17 proposing to hold elections every two-three years. In the other

four areas representatives were either nominated or we do not hold data.
This pattern generally remained the same from 2004 to 2006.

Table 5.1: Frequency of NDC Elections				
	Frequency of elections		**Number of elections planned**	**Number of elections held**
NDC	**2004**	**2006**		
Birmingham A	Every three years	Every three years	2	1
Birmingham Kings Norton	Bi annual	Every two years	3	3
Bradford	Every two years	Every two years	3	3
Brent	Every three years	Every three years	2	2
Brighton	Currently two out of every three years	Every two years	3	3
Bristol	One third of election members each year	Every year	8	3
Coventry	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Derby	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Doncaster	Every two years	N/A	3	2
Hammersmith & Fulham	Every three years	Every three years	2	3
Hackney	Every three years	Every three years	2	2
Haringey	Every three years	Every three years	2	3
Hartlepool	Annual	Every year	8	2
Hull	1/3 of resident board members to offer	Every year	8	
Islington	2 years	Every two years	3	3
Knowsley	6 monthly cycles	Every three years	2	2
Lambeth	Every two years in three	Every two years	3	3
Leicester	Every year	Every year	8	3
Lewisham	Every two years	Every two years	3	3
Liverpool	Every three years	Every three years	2	2
Luton	Every year	Every year	8	3
Manchester	Every year	Every year	8	N/A
Middlesbrough	Every year	Every year	8	3
Newcastle	Every year	Every year	8	2
Newham	Every two years	Every three years	2	2
Norwich	Every year	Every year	8	2
Nottingham	Every year	Every year	8	3
Oldham	Every year	Irregularly	Not known	3
Plymouth	Every two years (for a third of board)	Every year	8	3
Rochdale	Every year	Every year	8	3
Salford	N/A	Every three years	2	2
Sandwell	Every year	Every year	8	1
Sheffield	Every two years	Every two years	3	3
Southampton	Every year	Every year	8	2
Southwark	N/A	Every year	8	N/A
Sunderland	N/A	Every year	8	1
Tower Hamlets	Normally every year but two years	Every year	8	2
Walsall	Annually for the pat representatives	Every year	8	2
Wolverhampton	Every two years	Every two years	3	3

Source: Partnership Surveys

5.11.   However, it is notable that there is a difference between planned and actual elections: of 33 NDC Partnerships for which we know that elections were planned, 13 held the number of elections planned, 18 held fewer elections and two held more elections. Strikingly, none of the 15 Partnership respondents planning to hold eight elections (ie every year) had done so – they had typically held two or three elections as not all seats were contested. Moreover, other partnerships reported that not all seats were contested as planned.

5.12.   Respondents in case study areas reported that uncontested elections were either an indicator of elected representatives being seen as popular (hence no rivals emerged) or that there were simply too few prospective candidates interested in standing. It may be too that as NDCs have matured and spending commitments made, so less emphasis has been placed on electing new people to Boards which may increasingly be seeing a diminution in their strategic role.

Voting systems

5.13.   Of 29 NDC partnerships holding elections, 23 used postal voting, eight a polling station and four some other system. Five NDCs used a combination of approaches.

5.14.   Electoral studies usually indicate that in general postal voting or multiple voting systems produce higher levels of turnout – although these studies generally do not take into account the extent of disadvantage. This small sample of NDC Partnerships does not provide sufficient evidence to support this assertion especially as NDCs expecting a low turnout appear more likely to have chosen multiple voting systems.

5.15.   The benefits of postal voting are its convenience and the fact that ballot papers are normally accepted over a longer period, for instance three weeks. Polling stations are costly to keep open for more than a few days and therefore tend to focus the election on a single date. Postal voting is also much cheaper. Typically postal voting costs around £5,000. This is a lower figure than are the costs for keeping polling stations opened for a single day.

Voters: who can vote?

5.16.   The most straight forward and lowest cost approach to identifying eligible voters is to use the electoral register. This holds the most recent postal details for those eligible to vote in statutory elections in the United Kingdom.[6]

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[6]   According to the Electoral Commission (2005), 'to vote in an election in the UK it is necessary to be included on an electoral register (to be eligible to register to vote, an individual must satisfy three criteria: age, nationality and residence). The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to prepare and publish a register of electors for their area each year.' To be eligible to vote in a national General Election a person must: be 18 years of age or over on polling day be a resident of the UK; be a British citizen, or qualifying Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland; not be subject to any legal incapacity to vote (including for example, convicted persons detained in pursuance of their sentences and anyone found guilty within the previous five years of corrupt or illegal practices in

However, the electoral register is a compilation of those returning electoral registration forms and lists all those eligible to vote at a particular postal address. However there are drawbacks in using the register for NDC elections:

• research by the Electoral Commission (2005) on the whole of the United Kingdom suggests that electoral registers may not include over three million people otherwise eligible to vote

• some neighbourhoods are known to have lower rates of return for electoral registration; these areas are typically characterised by having a high population turnover, and hence will include some NDC neighbourhoods

• there are also groups who an NDC may wish to vote but who are unlikely to be on the electoral register including asylum seekers; remand prisoners; those in mental institutions; and service personnel

5.17.   The use of the Electoral Register therefore raises two main issues for NDC Partnerships: firstly because there may be a significant number of people not registered (for the reasons outlined above and in particular frequent movers are less likely to be on the Electoral Register); and because NDC Partnerships may wish to extend voting to rights to those not eligible to vote, namely those under the age of 18 and asylum seekers and refugees.

5.18.   The questions facing NDC Partnerships are therefore to what extent they perceive the Electoral Register to hold the details of those entitled to vote, and to what extent they feel it is necessary to extend voting to non-eligible (in terms of local or national elections) groups.

5.19.   NDC Partnerships such as Walsall have sought to combat low levels of voter registration by allowing individuals the opportunity to register for community elections, as long as they could prove they are resident in the area. Other approaches to increase registration include using door-to-door canvassing; leaving calling cards; accessing Council Tax data; providing incentives to registration (such as entries into free draws); and highlighting the benefits to credit worthiness scores of being on the electoral register.

5.20.   Some Partnerships have also extended voting rights to people aged 15–17. As this group is not on the electoral register, NDCs such as Walsall have sought to reach this group through other means (including NDC projects, schools, colleges and Connexions offices). NDC Partnerships such as Bradford with diverse ethnic populations have also sought to encourage electoral registration of different language speakers by distributing materials in relevant languages.

connection with an election). The rules for local elections and EU elections vary slightly, in particular EU citizens resident in the UK are eligible to vote.

Constituency: reaching and representing geographic and interest communities

5.21.   Across the Programme there are on average 23 elected representatives on NDC Partnerships Boards. All Boards have resident representatives. The average proportion of these (vis-à-vis non-elected members) rose from 54 per cent in 2004 to 59 per cent two years later. On 31 Boards residents constitute a majority. Of the 11 with the highest proportion of resident members, six are in London. Between 2004 and 2006, 27 NDCs saw an increase in the percentage of resident members, 11 by ten percentage points or more, of which three increased by more than twenty percentage points.

5.22.   This balance towards community representatives, whether elected or not, has not been without its problems. In the early days of the Programme community representatives, often with differing and conflicting interests, were seen to stifle progress in some NDCs because of the subsequent inability of such Boards to make major financial commitments. This argument has also been made by Wright et al. (2006) and by the Interim Report of the National Evaluation of NDC (Research Report 17, 2005). Conversely, Partnerships in which the elected members are in the minority and with a majority of votes held by agencies, have been criticised for making unaccountable decisions.

5.23.   NDC Partnerships have taken two main approaches towards geographical representation: dividing the area into smaller electoral constituencies or holding single NDC wide elections. The benefits of the former approach are that smaller constituencies may better reflect the geography of the area as a whole and smaller areas may allow elected representatives to engage their local communities and thus be more easily recognised. An example of this approach is Bradford which has 12 elected representatives, four from each of its three main geographical constituencies (Marshfield, Little Horton and West Bowling). Two seats from each area are elected every two years. However, it may also be possible to delineate areas much further: Walsall identified 24 separate electoral 'patches'. The rationale was to elect representatives who would be more likely to be known to a relatively small group of residents. Unfortunately, this led to ten 'patches' having no representative (no residents came forward). Following attempts to find representatives in these areas (plus for an eleventh which became vacant), five people came forward for different patches and were elected unopposed. This still left six vacant patches.

5.24.   The delineation of NDC areas into smaller constituencies appears a useful means of connecting communities more effectively to candidates and representatives. However, this appears to have worked better in NDC Partnerships where there may be multiple representatives for areas with between two-four thousand people, and not smaller constituencies of a few hundred people.

Communication, publicity and cost

5.25. NDC Partnerships promote elections using an array of mechanisms. It is difficult to determine which are more effective than others. However, the 2001–2005 Partnership reports suggest that in areas with low electoral turnout (less than 15 percent) the local NDC had not prioritised elections or sought to embed them in wider community engagement activities. In addition where community engagement was reported to be weak or struggling, this also tended to coincide with low turnout in some cases.

5.26. Hammersmith and Fulham publicised elections through the following means:

- distribution of voting packs to all residents registered to vote, together with a voting card and details of how to vote
- information posted on the NDC website
- articles in the NDC magazine in the four months leading up to the election
- tube and bus stop advertisements
- posters around the area
- local newspaper articles and advertisements
- hustings event at the Fulham Summer Festival
- promotional teams out on the street
- information boards at NDC projects.

5.27. This Partnership was also active in seeking nominations to stand for election. For example, it sent letters to all households and advertised its call for candidates using some of the media outlets indicated above. Partly as a result all seats in its elections have been contested. However, despite a comprehensive strategy of information and engagement, turnout was 22 per cent in 2004 and 19 per cent in 2003. This may be due to factors such as levels of mobility in the area and the fact that it is comprised of discrete neighbourhoods.

Financial commitment

5.28. The cost of elections ranged from £10,000 to £20,000. Bradford, in common with many other Partnerships, employed Electoral Reform Services to undertake their elections. This cost approximately £12,000 which included a charge per ballot paper counted. Bradford NDC spent around a further £1,000 on hustings. The election was also publicised through projects and its newsletter.

Post-programme sustainability

5.29.   In the course of the research we also asked whether elections would feature as part of the NDC Partnership's strategy for sustainability after the NDC programme ends. From 15 respondents to a survey, we found that the issue was still under consideration in eight NDCs, two had ruled elections out and five stated that they were planning to hold elections.

5.30.   However, it was less clear from the research as to the practical implications of holding elections in the future. Bradford NDC Partnership, for example, was proposing an elected Parish Council which would provide some, but not all, of the members of a Partnership Board in the future. Where NDC Partnerships were also proposing the establishment of new organisations (Charities, Community Interest Companies and Companies Limited by Guarantee), it may be presumed that future elected representatives may be trustees or directors (as appropriate) of these organistions. This would bring with it formal legal duties.

5.31.   The research did not explore how the cost of elections would be met in future, and whether available budgets would influence the frequency of elections or their promotion. The Parish Council model may provide a route round this, although in other cases ballots of resident association and neighbourhood forum members (rather than full elections of registered voters) may come to the fore. These issues are considered in more detail in separate and parallel National Evaluation reports on Succession and Community Engagement.

Conclusion

5.32.   This section has reviewed the different approaches towards elections. Across the programme there is much more of a sense that elections can be effectively managed and promoted to reach different geographic areas and demographic groups. And as the national evaluation's 2004–05 report on Bradford highlighted: *the elections for places on the Board were themselves a significant event, with a large proportion of the electorate taking part, indicating the importance of the partnership to the local community*. Ensuring elections are perceived as **a significant local event** appears to be the key factor in achieving successful high turnout elections, leading to candidates holding legitimacy within the wider community.

6. Elected representatives experience of elections

Introduction

6.1.   This section draws on qualitative research in the three NDC case studies including semi-structured interviews with elected community representatives, Partnership officers and other board members. The section explores how representatives became involved in the NDC electoral process and their experience since being elected.

Who are the NDC elected representatives?

6.2.   Based on a small number of interviews in the three case study Partnerships, a consistent message is that elected representatives were already actively involved in NDC activities. This is reflected by other studies (Apsden and Birch, 2005). Examples of other forms of involvement include:

- running a children's football league for many years
- member of a neighbourhood watch
- former councillors
- member of a resident's association
- former trade union organiser
- over 50s forum
- gardening and chess clubs.

6.3.   In general elected members have often been resident in the area for many years and have participated in a range of other 'non NDC' voluntary activities and in existing local projects.

How do representatives become involved in the NDC?

6.4.   Elected representatives were generally aware of their NDC Partnership and wider regeneration before being elected. Respondents suggested that:

> [I] *became involved through curiosity – I wanted to see what they were doing*

> *I was at a community meeting and they were asking people to stand and I saw one of the rudest incidents between two humans … There was a*

member of NDC staff explaining about the elections and asking people to stand and there was this person who was boorish, bullying and a member of the previous "shadow board" – I was appalled by this and decided to run.

X got involved in the NDC area because no-one else would – it's a bit of a trek from The Dings to Barton Hill [in Bristol NDC]

6.5. However, there are exceptions to this generalisation in that some representatives had little awareness of their NDC , for example:

In the beginning it was a bit self-centred … I hadn't really participated in anything [to do with the regeneration process], I'm one of them type of people who think that if something went wrong or right or whatever, and you hadn't participated, you're not allowed to be calling someone…

6.6. Engagement often arose through more local activities, for example:

Reflecting on a perception that resident groups were quite isolated and insular, one responded commented: *Resident groups at the beginning, well, they were in, they didn't really like to move outwards … Nobody thought of themselves as East Manchester … Each one wanted whatever for their own particular area*

6.7. Manchester NDC also has an elected 'youth representative'. This person commented that it was the first time they had been involved in an election and with the support of the NDC Partnership, promoted the youth election through libraries and a young person's magazine. Ballot boxes were placed in schools and libraries. This person was involved in youth clubs and the NDC Youth Forum, and felt that they were well known in the area.

6.8. The three case study Partnership Boards also included selected and nominated representatives from the voluntary and community sector, including faith organisations. These Board members had an array of and varying links with local communities. In most cases these individuals were also active in various fora in the area and through their work felt that they knew the area well and were well known locally.

Support to candidates and representatives

6.9. Partnerships have sought nominations for **candidates in elections** through various forms of publicity, including community newsletters and through community meetings. In Hammersmith and Fulham:

we tried to encourage ownership, put up posters with candidate's photos, names and manifestos on a wall in a community centre above the ballot box…make clear who was standing and give information on what the NDC had achieved to date … it's crucial that representatives represent their community

6.10.   Despite these initiatives it can be difficult to get people to stand. In relation to the 2006 Hammersmith and Fulham elections one local commentator suggested that people became interested by the prospect of voting rather than prospect of running:

> *we held hustings as part of a festival, promotion and publicity made the elections more accessible to the wider community and raised the profile of the NDC but, in terms of continued interest, it really depends on whether the NDC offers what people are interested in.*

6.11.   Similarly in Bristol it was noted that: *getting people to run for an election is extremely difficult as people are intimidated by what they're getting involved in … I think that much of that comes from ignorance.*

6.12.   Partnerships have also tried to draw other candidates into the electoral process, either by establishing a board place for an elected representative from a youth forum, or through encouraging community activists who may ultimately help create a more representative board. In such cases NDC Partnerships have nevertheless also sought to be careful of the risk of favouring one candidate over another.

6.13.   During the election process, NDCs have supported candidates to prepare election materials, facilitated community meetings and more generally supported hustings at which candidates may speak. However, respondents in the three case studies suggested that these initiatives reached only a relatively small proportion of the total NDC population. Success in elections often depended on how well known a candidate was in the local area. Disseminating candidate photographs was widely seen as helping to enhance recognition.

6.14.   Practice appears to vary in relation to support provided to **elected representatives**. In one NDC a respondent noted:

> *they've had problems getting people involved in training when it was brought in – in 2003 there was a feeling that, well I don't need it, I've been a committee member since the beginning, who are you to tell me that I need training?… The harsh reality was that people who said they needed it, didn't take it up – only six resident board members showed up for training.*

6.15.   More critically, another respondent noted that:

> *you could conceivably say that there was a lack of capacity building around for new and potential members. I've been on a lot of committees … and its still took me a good, long while to understand what was going on … the [chair] and the Council had their own agenda … community reps were told to vote on proposals without discussing them first … [we] were just kept there as vote fodder. We were told if we didn't vote something through we'd lose the money.*

6.16.   However, this may reflect a board which was beset with other divisions and problems. Elsewhere it was noted that:

> *new people picked things up quickly … when I was Chair I was impressed how quickly [new resident representatives] took things on and became vocal. If they wanted to question things they weren't shy about it.*

6.17.   It was often recognised being on a Board involved being on a sharp learning curve:

> *for community members on the board it is always going to be an uphill struggle … as there is a level of expertise on the board which community members aren't used to … we've had members of the community come to the board and not even serve a full term and that's for many good reasons but I think the primary one is that they just cannot get to grips with the work that has to be understood and the work that has to be undertaken.*

6.18.   It will almost always be necessary to provide support, training and mentoring to elected community representatives, although one respondent (from a third sector organisation) argued that this should be extended to all board members equally:

> *in the beginning, I was classed as a professional even though I really wasn't that accustomed to board working – there were pre-Board meetings for community representatives only, I'd get really annoyed because they'd have all the answers … I sometimes felt like an idiot, asking silly questions that they already had the answers for.*

Experience of partnership and board membership

6.19.   Elected representatives had mixed experiences of partnership working and board membership. Reflections included:

> *The resident's forum in the beginning were hell and a nightmare … it's changed now, there's a wonderful atmosphere … but that's taken a few years to get here.*

> *Nothing's perfect is it? Unfortunately, some people are in it for their own self interest and what you can get out of it*

> *They [the NDC officers and Board] have tried extremely hard to get people involved but it's the damn people who will not take part … they'll rue it*

> *As you have to be nominated and seconded by another group within the Forum to run for election, it was who you knew – that has changed now.*

> *Many on the board did not know what was wrong.*

6.20.   Other members of boards reflected that elected representatives brought grass roots knowledge of the areas and were impressed by their

commitment. Where boards appear to work well, *the board isn't divided, there are differences of opinion but that's healthy*. Moreover, *the board is slightly different than what it was at the beginning, I think people have become more confident in the environment of the board and I think people's natural intelligence has been brought out*. In another NDC, *'the people who are on the board are seen as doing their job well, so people feel they don't need to run against them'*.

6.21.   A common theme from most respondents is that the operation of boards has evolved and improved over time. In general there is a sense that greater consensus has been built and that residents' awareness of NDC activities has increased.

Relationships with councillors and local authorities

6.22.   One area which was emphasised in the case study research as being a possible fault line in NDC elections is the relationship between elected community representatives and local Councillors. The most positive view on councillor relations came from Bristol where it was suggested:

> *I believe that councillors should be involved … I think councillors are there to represent the view of the wards that they serve and we cross over a couple of wards and if they are as informed as they ought to be then that's something valuable.*

6.23.   But rather more critical evidence emerged from two of the case studies, although these comments to some extent reflect specific local contexts. In Manchester community representatives are elected by resident associations (and not a full electorate) and in Hammersmith and Fulham which experienced significant problems with its board up until 2003. To give a flavour of these issues:

> *Community representative 1: Councillors don't deserve my support because they are not doing anything for me*
>
> *Community representative 1: Councillors should not be on the board – they are loyal to party but not to people: if they want to come as citizens that's fine, but not as Councillors. They're not invited [to the resident's forum] because they are political … and they should keep away at all costs … if the Council wants to get in touch with or work with residents, they can go ahead and do it. That's what they're getting paid for.*
>
> *Community representative 2: The Council are distrustful and suspicious of the NDC board: we do have a lot of problems with certain members of [our] council, who tend to turn round and say well who are these resident groups, who elects them … it is an ongoing battle with our councillors … I think local Councillors felt a little bit threatened.*

> *Community representative 3: the board and the NDC have been dominated by political figures – Councillors, members of political parties … my personal view is that in the previous administration, under the previous Chair, there were huge amounts of political interference within the NDC … probably the greatest of any in the country … the agenda of the local authority has been given primacy over … what I thought were the best interests of the NDC … there will always be some degree of political influence … the local authority is our major strategic partner but it is much more on a partnership basis now.*

> *Community representative 3: Structural changes (smaller board, new MP, new Chair and new Director) made a difference to the second election.*

> *NDC officer: There's a mixed bag of opinions about [the council] on the Board but, overall I don't think the [the relationship] is a very positive one.*

> *Councillor: the NDC Board is weakened by not having councillors on it … I think that the NDC board is weak in the sense that it doesn't have elected representatives … I don't see resident representatives as community representatives – key individuals who have something to say and who are endorsed by the community – they are like shop stewards – they don't represent the wider community – they aren't the typical person.*

6.24.   This divide between councillors and community representatives is long running, and as an issue is by no means confined solely to NDC Partnerships. Where such divisions exist regeneration partnerships alone may not be able to foster more effective working relations. There should not be an assumption that councillors and community representatives will work together.

6.25.   Typically at board meetings and partnership groups, community representatives are often asked for a 'community view', but may also be subject to challenge for not representing a spectrum of views within a community. However, many NDCs have shown that there are also cases of effective joint working between councillors and community representatives: tensions remain but they are often effectively addressed within the partnership.

Conclusion

6.26.   This section has considered elected representatives' experiences of the election process and of board participation. In general elected representatives often have substantial experience of involvement in local activities, from running small clubs to involvement in resident groups to involvement in previous regeneration activities. Often through these activities, elected representatives became aware of the NDC and decided to become actively involved – reflecting a commitment to improve the area.

6.27.   Elected representatives' experience of the election process and board participation is mixed, although it has improved, often reflecting the time required for partnership activities to mature and function effectively. Partnership working has however developed more quickly in some NDC areas than others. And although tensions do remain between councillors and elected representatives these are perhaps inevitable and appear to have moderated through time.

7. Conclusion: making elections a significant event for partnerships and communities?

7.1.   Electoral turnout in NDC elections has varied from five percent to 53 per cent. In elections held during 2004–05, it varied from five percent to 42 per cent. The average turnout for NDCs holding elections has remained at around 23 per cent.

7.2.   Across the **Programme** the likelihood of individuals to vote varies considerably by ethnicity, gender, age, qualifications and frequency of moving However, these factors alone do not provide robust **Partnership**-level predictors of electoral turnout.

7.3.   Moreover other possible theories of electoral turnout (including the diversity of communities or local election turnout) also do not provide robust predictors. Variations in electoral turnout across NDCs reflect specific local configurations of contextual, Partnership and socio-demographic factors. The analysis of National Evaluation Partnership Reports (2001–2005) revealed that what was considered a successful level of turnout varied from area to area. Moreover, there was some qualitative evidence in these reports that where Partnerships prioritised elections and saw these as part of a process of community engagement, that turnout could be increased. However, Partnership turnout data also suggested that levels of turnout tend to fall over time: the reason for this being that engagement and interest is difficult to sustain. We also found that at least 17 Partnerships proposed to hold elections every year – but that in practice this proved impossible. The most common reason was that seats would have been uncontested. A two or three yearly cycle of elections was found to be more sustainable in producing contested elections.

7.4.   In the course of the research we also asked whether elections would feature as part of the **succession strategy** of NDCs. From 15 respondents to a survey, we found that the issue was still under consideration in eight NDCs, two had ruled elections out and five stated that they were planning to hold elections.

7.5.   New legal forms will mean that the role of elected community representatives may be different, for instance, if the succession plan is to establish a company. The more likely arrangement is that the NDC forms a charity with a trading subsidiary, with elected members sitting on an advisory partnership to the charity and with the option to be nominated or elected as trustees of the charity or directors of the trading subsidiary company. In

Bradford for example, the NDC Partnership is establishing Bradford Trident Neighbourhood Council (a Parish Council) and is seeking government approval to use the local Council election process from May 2009.

7.6.   NDC Partnership elections are a symbolically important part of the NDC Programme. The have provided residents voice in NDC activities. However, elections have also served to highlight weaknesses in some NDC Partnerships and been a testing ground for Partnerships capacity to resolve conflict. Where they have worked well they have become a significant event in the community.

7.7.   The following is a list of **recommendations for effective practice** in regeneration and community elections. The rationale for them is to make elections a significant event for Partnerships and communities, in which candidates and representatives are supported, and the fullest possible constituency of voters reached.

i.   Communication

At an individual level, voting is highly correlated with awareness of the NDC Partnership and influence over decisions affecting the area. Elections should be seen as a core activity of the regeneration Partnership with the profile of elections, candidates and representatives highlighted through newsletters, projects and other publicity.

ii.   Timing

Partnerships should give consideration to establishing and effectively communicating an appropriate cycle of elections. In long term programmes, such as NDC, holding elections every two years was found to be appropriate. Election periods should not be held during the summer and should avoid religious and other festivals. Holding elections at the same time as local council elections should increase turnout and may possibly help clarify the complimentary roles of Councillors and community representatives.

iii.   Nominations

Candidates for elections are largely drawn from groups of individuals already active in community activities. This is unlikely to change significantly. However, it is necessary for Partnerships to support involvement in the electoral process from groups who may not be actively involved. This may involve, as part of community empowerment and capacity building work, support being targeted to particular groups (eg young people) and to areas which may be under-represented.

iv.   Hustings

NDC elections are non-partisan: voting decisions will often therefore be largely informed by personal recognition of candidates. Participation in electoral hustings may be both a daunting and new experience for some candidates, and Partnerships should consider how hustings are operated and the support provided. This may be through community

meetings or through support to circulate electoral material. Including photographs of candidates on ballot papers will help to increase recognition.

v. Constituency

NDC Partnerships typically face two main options: to hold a single election across the whole area for a group of candidates; or to divide the area into appropriate constituencies to select a smaller number of candidates for each area. For areas of around ten thousand people, the latter approach is more appropriate, especially where there are recognised geographical neighbourhoods. However, the division of the area into many smaller electoral patches was found to risk there being no candidates or representatives in some areas.

vi. Reach

Young people, frequent movers and more disadvantaged groups were found to be less likely to vote in elections. One simple reason may be that young people and frequent movers are less likely to be on the Electoral Register. There is scope for joint working with local authorities to promote the return of Electoral Register forms. More generally, Partnerships should consider the use of additional elections for young people's representatives to complement those elected through the main electoral process.

vii. Electoral System

Partnerships should consider the choice of electoral system alongside other decisions around constituency, the timing of elections, and the representation of different communities. Whilst proportional systems, such as Single Transferable Vote can deliver more representative electoral outcomes, they are complex to administer, costly and may confuse voters. Up to 20 per cent of ballot papers may be spoilt in any election. More proportionate outcomes can also be achieved through a First Past the Post system but with the division of the area into smaller electoral constituencies, active promotion of the election, and involvement of nominated representatives from third sector organisations on Boards.

viii. Mentoring and Support

Candidates and elected representatives should be adequately supported. This may mean the provision of training, in developing skills for Board meetings, and in effective communication with constituents. Moreover, where this support is also offered to other Board members, it may help build partnership working.

ix. Budgeting

Elections require partnership commitment to meet both direct and indirect costs. Elections using postal voting systems cost up to £12,000, although Partnerships also recognised additional costs involved in:

promoting elections through core publicity materials, purchasing of additional advertising and training and mentoring of elected representatives.

x. Post Programme Sustainability

Elections are likely to form part of many NDC Partnerships' succession strategies. Retaining the involvement of elected representatives will require new governance arrangements and may in some cases require representatives to take up additional responsibilities (for instance as trustees of new not for profit organisations). It is unclear whether representatives will be willing to do this. Electoral systems can also be costly (especially where additional measures are required to increase turnout are necessary). With smaller management and administration budgets, Partnerships will need to seek ways of maintaining effective electoral processes. One route appears to be to align electoral processes with local elections but where necessary to seek additional funds to ensure elections extend their reach amongst under represented groups, in particular young people.
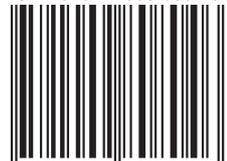
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