Models of community-government partnerships
and their effectiveness in achieving welfare goals:
a review of the literature
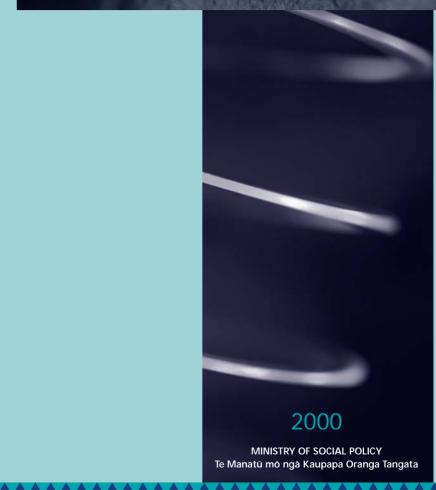
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MINISTRY OF SOCIAL POLICY
Te Manatū mō ngā Kaupapa Oranga Tangata

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1. Executive summary

The Social Policy Agency[1] commissioned this literature review to identify models of community-government partnership and to assess the effectiveness of these partnerships in achieving welfare goals (creating opportunities for work, strengthening families, and improving childhood outcomes). Specifically, the literature review sought to provide information on:

- models of community-government partnerships
- type of projects or programmes undertaken by these partnerships
- the success of community-government partnerships in achieving welfare objectives
- those factors which help or hinder successful community-government partnerships.

A further section has been added subsequently to draw readers' attention to the Geddis review, a significant European report published after the writing of this report had been completed.

Identifying from the material surveyed what models of community-government partnership exist and their effectiveness in achieving welfare goals was complicated because of hazy definitions of community and partnership; and the lack of details on partnership structures, roles of partner agencies, objectives, and outcomes achieved. Establishing the effectiveness of the community-government partnership approach was also problematic because of difficulties in attributing changes in outcomes to particular interventions, and because many partnerships (and projects) were evaluated before changes in outcomes were likely to occur.

Partnerships addressing welfare issues recognised problems were multi-factorial and shaped by forces outside the community as much as by forces within it. While not conclusive, the literature suggests that partnerships can be used successfully to achieve some welfare goals, particularly those aiming to strengthen families and improve childhood outcomes. The partnership approach appears less successful in creating opportunities for people to work, as the factors driving unemployment are often less able to be influenced by local (and often short-term) initiatives.

The literature does not answer the question of whether partnership models offer any benefits over other models in terms of the achievement of welfare goals. However, one author (Hastings 1996) notes that throughout the literature there is a strong assumption (borne out by Geddis' findings) there is something in the *process* of partnership that is valuable. While there is not a coherent body of literature which rigorously assesses factors critical for community-government partnerships to succeed, the following factors emerged as common themes:

- involving a broad section of the community, including the projects' target participants

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[1] Since 1 October 1999, the Social Policy Agency has been part of the Ministry of Social Policy which devolved from the Department of Social Welfare.

- ensuring there are sufficient ongoing resources
- having realistic time-frames (ie three to ten years)[2]
- employing a skilled, full-time, paid coordinator
- demonstrating commitment from a senior level within all partner organisations
- building and nurturing shared vision and trust
- establishing shared, clear, tangible, flexible, and realistic objectives based on assessed needs
- developing a clear and flexible strategy for achieving these objectives
- supporting community partners to play a full role and valuing their contribution
- adopting knowledge-based and learning-based frameworks (ie integrating findings of existing research, and other partnerships' experience into processes and projects, as well as evaluating and learning from own experience on an ongoing basis)
- having organisational structures that support the partnership (ie ensuring support by the macro-environment (eg legislation and government policy)
- maintaining a balance between flexibility and formal structures.

The literature also identified the following risks and pitfalls:

- there may be a lack of clarity between partners about what the partnership can realistically be expected to achieve, and in what time-frame
- communities may be disillusioned if expectations are raised and not met
- vulnerable communities (particularly their leaders, activists, and community organisations) may experience burn-out if too many requirements are placed on them, or if the partnership is not sufficiently resourced
- government partners may find it difficult to adapt to the needs of community partners and may limit community input to service delivery rather than to broader policy issues
- there may be difficulty reconciling the government partners' need for formal accountability with the need to share power with the community partners
- the community partners may not be accountable to the community itself, thereby depriving the partnership of its democratic legitimacy.

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[2] Note, however, that Geddis suggests that time-frames of three to five years are likely to be too short.

2. Introduction

The Social Policy Agency commissioned this literature review to identify models of community-government partnership, and to assess the effectiveness of these partnerships in achieving welfare goals (creating opportunities for work, strengthening families, and improving childhood outcomes).

To focus the research on areas relevant to the Department of Social Welfare the following definitions were used:

- *government* – includes both central and local government agencies

- *community* – includes non-government organisations and the private sector where the community partner operates at the local level

- *partnership* – where a contractual arrangement of some kind exists, with shared commitment to achieving agreed objectives, focused effort in a particular locality, and shared responsibility and active participation by partner agencies. It does not include a simple funding arrangement whereby government provides funding to a community group but has no other significant role.

Library searches were conducted for books, articles, and reports discussing community-government partnerships with broad welfare goals. This was supplemented by unpublished material relating to New Zealand projects obtained from the Social Policy Agency, personal contacts, and internet sources. Finally, a further section (section 7) has been added to take into account a new European report (the Geddis report) on research on the effectiveness of partnerships facilitating social objectives. The report was published shortly after the literature review was completed. While it was not possible to integrate fully its findings into the body of this review, the extent of the study and similarities in the directions of its findings with those of the literature review suggest that its existence and findings should be noted.

A large number of documents were identified for the literature review. The majority, however, did not fit within the definitions used for this project. In many cases the literature did not make clear what was meant by the term 'partnership'. These items were therefore excluded from the study.

The literature considered for the study fell broadly into the following categories: case study/ comparative case study evaluations; critical analysis of processes used; and guidelines for partnerships. Comparisons between different pieces of literature were complicated by the fact that they employed vastly different methods and theoretical frameworks.

There was an enormous variety in the partnerships (and their programmes and projects) described in the literature in terms of size, time-scales, objectives, structure, philosophy, and

community participation.[3] The literature was therefore analysed to draw out the implications of different partnership approaches where this was not explicit.

Concepts behind 'partnership' and 'community'

'Partnership' has become a very popular concept in government and welfare sectors in recent years. Unfortunately the term partnership has often been used with more rhetorical than real meaning, and as a term it is "…overused, ambiguous and politicised" (Hastings 1996).

For example, some writers saw a purchaser/provider relationship as a form of partnership (see for example, Taylor 1998). Others stressed the need for both partners to be seen as contributing valued resources to the relationship. A number of projects confused the concepts of 'partnership' with the less extensive concept of 'consultation', but the majority of writers clearly distinguish the two.

As noted, this review focused on partnership arrangements where partner agencies worked together to achieve broad welfare goals, or a mixture of welfare and other goals (eg economic, health, or community development goals).

The term 'community' was also used and understood in many different ways in the literature. For example, Carter notes:

> *'Community' is one of the most complicated words in the English language.… In sociology the word 'community' has been pressed into service for many years in many different settings … to describe social arrangements above the individual but below the societal. These arrangements may have to do with the relationship between people and territory. … Like motherhood and apple pie, everybody is in favour of it.* (Carter 1997)

To ensure the literature review provided information relevant to achieving the Department of Social Welfare welfare goals, this report has focused on partnerships which involved central and/or local government and/or businesses, the community sector, and grass-roots community working together to achieve agreed outcomes for either a geographic location, a community interest, or a community of identity.

Drivers for developing community-government partnerships

The emphasis on developing localised community-government partnerships has been driven by the limitations of the traditional social service delivery to effect changes to fundamental social problems (see for example, Sabel 1996, 35–6).

Community-government partnerships are seen as a mechanism to help create social capital and social cohesion. For example, the then Prime Minister Jim Bolger stated:

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[3] Examples of partnerships and the programmes and the projects they run are described in section 6.

> *It is now recognised that Big Government didn't work in the economic field and my argument is that by itself it can't deliver in the social field either, and that we need a partnership between government and the community to start rebuilding the 'social capital' of the nation.* (Cited in Davies 1997, 41)

The impetus for community-government partnership has also come from the voluntary sector. As Nowland-Foreman states:

> *The relationship between government and voluntary organisations can be seen as one of interdependence and complementarity – which is fostered by mutual respect.* (Nowland-Foreman 1995, 32)

This review identifies the structures and features of a range of partnerships that fall within the definitions provided above. To the extent that the literature enables it, the review then identifies factors critical to the success of such partnerships, and looks at their success in identifying welfare goals. Section 6 provides further information on relevant partnerships, and Section 7 is a very brief summary of the main findings of the Geddis report (1998). A conclusion follows.

3. Models of community-government partnership

This section examines the diversity of existing models for community-government partnership. It then considers the structure, funding, and accountability arrangements they use. In many cases the literature did not examine these issues with great clarity or detail, and so there are large gaps in our understanding of the different organisational features of each partnership model and how they impact on outcomes. Finally, the range of goals that the partnerships are intending to achieve is discussed. Again, there is huge variation in the type and scale of goals different partnerships have adopted. (For further details of the partnerships discussed, see section 6.)

Distinguishing programmes from projects

It is important to distinguish the partnership itself from the programmes and projects a partnership runs. The partnership is the group of organisations and individuals who enter into a relationship in order to run projects or programmes. In practice there may, however, be an overlap between the two terms. For example, a small partnership may exist only to run a specific project and may be defined by that project (Sabel 1996).

Types of community-government partnerships

Three very broad categories of partnership models can be identified, and these are described below.

Multi-agency partnerships based on internationally-promoted themes

One of the most common partnership approaches involves large multi-agency partnership programmes based on internationally promoted themes such as safer cities/safer communities crime prevention programmes, and healthy cities/healthy communities models *(see pages 20-1)*.

These partnerships tend to have a high degree of government involvement (central and local) and highly formalised structures. They focus on multiple government agencies coordinating initiatives to pursue shared objectives, but also include coordinating and involving communities and the not-for-profit and for-profit sectors. They tend to build and promote an approach based on theory and knowledge to addressing issues. The models are promoted around the world and adapted to meet different countries' circumstances. They do not often have defined time periods (particularly end points).

Multi-agency partnerships targeted at geographic locations

The community-government approach is also used in international and national large-scale partnership programmes, such as the European Union's Poverty 3 programme (and its predecessors), and the British City Challenge programme *(see pages 30-1 and 28-9)*. These are programmes in which government funding is offered to geographic areas for partnership

projects that meet specific criteria. They appear to be more localised and more finite than the first category. They also appear to be premised on setting criteria for allocating funding, in comparison to the first category's emphasis on promoting theory and knowledge-based models.

Small-to-micro-scale partnerships generated at a local level

The remaining category consists of an immense range of small-to-micro-scale partnerships generated at a local level. These may be part of national programmes, for example the Australian Commonwealth Department of Social Security's Community Research Project (*see pages 33-4*), and the New Zealand Department of Social Welfare's Creating Opportunities for our Children, and From Welfare to Well-being programmes (*see pages 37-8*). They may also be demonstration projects such as the Opotiki Development Project, or local initiatives such as Wellington City Council's Flat Out project. Some locally developed projects may be subsequently adopted as a national model, as in the case of the Waitakere City's Effective Practice Project.

Key features of partnerships' structure, funding, and accountability
Structure

Limited information is available about the structures of many of the partnership types. What information there is indicates that a variety of structures have been adopted. Crime Concern (1993) suggests three models of management structures are most likely to be adopted, the:

- *independent model* in which the partnership's steering group is independent of the participating agencies
- *local authority-led model* in which there is a committee led by the local authority, often chaired by the chief executive and supported by a council officer, usually with other agencies coopted into the partnership
- *department-led model* where the local departmental head chairs a multi-agency group, services the initiative, and negotiates the establishment of individual projects.

These models need not be permanently fixed, and one may evolve into another or into an alternative structure (Crime Concern 1993).

From the literature, the independent model appears to be the most commonly chosen model. Within it a variety of structures are adopted, ranging from joint venture approaches to informal issues-based networks (O'Neil 1997). Examples of the independent model include the Irish partnership programmes such as the Pilot Area Programme for Integrated Rural Development and the LEADER 1 (Sabel 1996, *see pages 22-3).*

The Australian Commonwealth Department of Social Security's Community Research Project found that partnerships which encouraged involvement from partner agencies were more likely to succeed (Smith and Herbert 1997).

The From Welfare to Well-being approach being promoted to mayors of local authorities by the Department of Social Welfare may lead to partnerships which use the local authority-led approach. The Opotiki Development Project is a combination of both the department-led approach (with the department taking on the role of lead agency) and the local authority-led model *(see pages 37-8).*

Funding

The desire to make better use of existing resources (sometimes referred to as resource synergy) is often a motivation for embarking on partnerships. It is assumed that by combining efforts better coordination can be achieved, duplication can be avoided and that this will lead to more efficient use of resources. The literature indicates that this is true to some extent, but that coordinating and maintaining partnerships can themselves be costly.

A number of partnerships were also set up on the assumption that they will help lever private funds for projects. This potential has, in fact, proved to be limited (see for example Mayo 1997 in relation to the Deptford Partnership).

On the whole partnerships tended to be funded largely or wholly by local, regional, or national (ie European Union) governments. In many cases, government funds are taken from the existing funding streams of the government partner agencies, or allocated as part of a special funding stream, or top-sliced from other projects with similar goals. The British City Challenge programme, for example, had funding top-sliced from other projects, and this created controversy and ill-feeling (Tye and Williams 1994, 14).

In other instances, such as the Irish partnerships and the Scottish Urban New Life partnerships, resources came from existing funding streams, with formal or informal dispensation for them to be spent on partnership projects (Hastings 1996, Sabel 1996). This funding approach allows for flexibility and avoiding bureaucratic structures in the initial stages of a partnership, but may create problems for sustainability and credibility of the partnerships in the long run (Sabel 1996).

The European Union also funds local partnerships in disadvantaged areas, including many Irish and British partnerships. However, it is questionable whether the momentum of these partnerships will be sustainable when the European Union funds finish (Sabel 1996).

In the majority of cases it appears that community partners (community organisations, the business sector, and grass-roots) are expected to meet their own costs of participating in the partnership. This can create tension in disadvantaged communities and act as a barrier to participation for individuals and organisations already strapped for resources. Some partnerships do, however, provide limited support – eg the Deptford City Challenge provided assistance with childcare and transport to enable community representatives to attend meetings.

Accountabilities of each of the partners

Partnerships have a diversity of stakeholders to whom, arguably, they should be accountable. These include the participants, the grassroots community, the partners (government and non-government), and any additional funders. A brief description of the main types of partners is given below, as well as a brief discussion on how representative and accountable the partners are of their community.

■ *Individuals as representatives of a locality or a community of interest or identity.* Within communities, people take part in informal and formal networks to varying degrees. Community-government initiatives may seek to tap into informal community networks or communities of interest or identity which have not previously been organised, although it is often hard for people outside a specific community to identify how it operates and who its representatives are. This is made more difficult by the fact that membership of formal organisations has declined over recent years, and may also be lower amongst those groups experiencing the greatest disadvantage.

■ *The community sector* consists of a diversity of organisations and includes the community, voluntary, non-government, or not-for-profit sector. It encompasses organisations with philanthropic origins, organisations seeking social change, service providers, and self-help groups. Workers and management may be paid (professional or wage earners) or unpaid volunteers.

   Relationships between the sectors can be an issue. Shaver notes that in Australia "non-government welfare organisations are now so closely connected to the public welfare state that they are in a real sense part of it" (Shaver 1991, 12, 16). A number of commentators have noted the same phenomenon in New Zealand and the difficulties this has created for the ability of the community sector to respond and develop along its own lines.

■ *Businesses* are stakeholders in communities, but the ways in which they are part of the community vary. For example, in terms of a geographically-based community, local businesses are located within it, their owners may be community members, and they will often both employ other members of the community and rely on the community as customers.

   Large national and multi-national businesses are not generally representative of local communities in the same way. They will, however, usually have an interest in the community's welfare as employers of community members, and because they rely to varying extents on the stability and security of the location for business, and on community members as consumers. There may be greater grounds for identifying a large business as part of the local community where it has decentralised operations down to a local level, as occurred in several of the Irish partnerships (Sabel 1996).

■ *Government* Central and local government agencies are in some senses representatives of the community. Shaver argues that from the 1940s through to the 1970s the welfare state was seen by many as:

> *the modern embodiment of community, organising altruistic exchange according to the needs and capacities of individuals. It gives community a new and larger meaning, for the exchange is rightly and necessarily to be between people who are strangers to one another. The welfare state represents the 'imagined community' … of the nation.* (Shaver 1991, 12)

Local government is a stronger contender for community representativeness than central government. In New Zealand, for example, this is acknowledged in the Director-General of Social Welfare's moves to encourage mayors to adopt welfare to well-being strategies. Local government tends to be included as part of 'community' rather than part of 'government' in the literature.

Achieving accountability

How accountability is achieved is a crucial issue for partnerships. While governments have set formal accountability requirements, a true partnership also demands accountability to the other partners – ie the community. There is no obvious way to achieve this and the literature did not include any examples of successful mechanisms for community accountability.

Partnerships need to address the questions of: "Who are their constituents? How many citizens affected by their actions approve or reject what is done in their name?" (Sabel 1996, 86) If not addressed, issues of representation and democratic legitimacy may threaten the credibility of partnerships. For example, Sabel (1996) argues that partnerships rely on a consensus of goodwill and enthusiasm. Without accountability to the community this may not be sustainable. The evaluators of the Irish partnerships argue that partnerships may in the long run fail due to accountability issues (Sabel 1996, Smith and Herbert 1997).

There are widely held fears among the community sector that 'community' may be re-defined by governments to exclude those who challenge government policies and assumptions. This can have a negative effect on the ability of those who are supposed to represent the community to advocate for their needs, and can stifle the innovative spirit which the partnerships are intended to release.

A number of commentators note that partnerships in Britain have been equated with central government moves to reduce the power of local authorities, and that this has led to ill-feeling. Concerns are also expressed about the proliferation of non-elected representatives (see, for example Tye and Williams 1994).

The requirement on governments to be accountable for use of public funds can lead to bureaucratic structures and excessive monitoring which undermine the partnership by destroying enthusiasm and spirit as well as eating into scarce resources. The challenge is to find ways to make partnerships accountable, without losing flexibility, innovation, and community buy-in.

Types of services provided

The diversity of services being provided by community-government partnerships is enormous. Partnerships in the United Kingdom initially had a property development focus for urban regeneration. They have subsequently moved to a wider approach and offer education and training, enterprise development, community development, and social services (Hastings 1996, Munt 1991, Tye and Williams 1994. McArthur 1993, Mayo 1997).

Smith and Herbert (1997) identify the wide range of services offered by the partnerships involved in the Australian Community Research Project. The researchers found that these could be grouped into the categories of community development, support networks, and individual case management *(see pages 33-4)*.

Sabel (1996) notes the services offered by Irish partnership projects include (among other things):

• business training networks
• building potentially self-sustaining firms that provide both training and jobs for unemployed people
• advocacy and information for beneficiaries
• tenant management of housing estates
• programmes for early school leavers and single mothers
• business development in rural areas to re-build communities depleted by out-migration.

Goals community-government partnerships hope to achieve

The partnerships considered in this study were aiming to achieve either broad welfare goals, or a mixture of welfare and other goals (eg economic, health, and community development). Key concepts included empowerment, community development, strengthening communities (including improving safety, health etc), improving childhood and youth outcomes, and training and employment.

The Australian Community Research Project was based on a framework for "living decently in the national community" involving concepts of citizenship, civil society, social capital, and systems theory. The outcomes targeted (listed below) were based on research into living standards by the Australian Institute of Family Studies that stresses that living standards are "a function not only of cash income but also of other economic and 'way of life' (social) factors" (Smith and Herbert 1997, 4).

Smith and Herbert (1997, 11) list the eight living standards targeted for the Australian Community Research Project:

• family relationships
• social and political participation

- reduced costs
- non-cash income
- access to information
- participation in the formal labour market
- personal well-being
- participation in the informal labour market.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Development Employment Scheme has a goal of increasing labour force participation in communities where there is little employment available *(see pages 36-7)*. This is also a major goal of European partnership programmes for rural areas, such as LEADER 1 *(see page 23)*.

Irish partnerships seek to reduce the incidence, and mitigate the effects, of unemployment by devising new models for transferring marketable skills to vulnerable groups (Sabel 1996). Regenerating depressed urban areas has been the dominant goal of the British partnerships.

Smaller-scale partnerships tend to have more limited goals. For example Flat Out has the goal of providing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth in the Wellington area with "a range of recreational activities where queer youth can socialise with their queer peers in an 'out' and safe way" (Wellington City Council 1997).

4. Factors affecting community-government partnerships

There is no coherent body of literature that rigorously assesses which factors are critical to the success of the different models of community-government partnerships.[4] Many of the authors who concentrate on critical factors offer only limited information about how they have chosen which factors to include. Other authors who take a case study approach do not then extrapolate what the critical factors for success would be in other circumstances. The following section is therefore based on an analysis of factors that appear to have been critical to a number of partnerships.

In particular, *A Practical Guide to Crime Prevention for Local Partnerships* (Crime Concern 1993) and the Australian Department of Social Security's *Report of the Community-based Action Research Project* (Smith and Herbert 1997) postulate critical factors derived from research into partnerships. Communities that Care (1997), Sabel (1996), and Taylor (1998) also provide useful guidelines.

Factors that help or hinder community-government partnerships

The following table summarises the key factors which can help produce successful community-government partnerships, during development, implementation and in maintaining ongoing sustainability:

Table 1. Factors that help community-government partnerships

Development
- participants are involved from the beginning
- there is sufficient start-up funding
- there is shared vision and trust between partner agencies
- there is demonstrated commitment to the partnership, eg through senior officials becoming involved
- the partnership is located in an area with a history of community activism
- a needs assessment has been undertaken to ensure the partnership focuses on real issues
- one of the first projects undertaken addresses an immediate, achievable need that has been identified by the community
- a knowledge-based approach is taken so that action is guided by evidence of what works best for whom, and under what circumstances.

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[4] Much of the available evidence is self-reported by people who were involved in the partnerships and highly committed to them. The most useful evaluations tended to use a case-study, or comparative case-study approach, and be undertaken by independent evaluators. Several authors provide guidelines, based on research into a number of partnership arrangements.

Implementation

- there is transparent and participative decision-making
- the partnership's activities and interventions focus on achieving tangible outcomes
- the partnership provides a range of responses to identified needs
- the partnership cements trust and commitment by achieving an immediate goal
- there is flexibility to meet new community needs
- there is adequate resourcing
- the time-frame for achieving results is realistic (ie three to ten years)[5]
- there are efficient, accountable, and transparent administrative structures
- a paid coordinator is appointed early on, and has a clear job description
- the partnership nurtures human resources, and provides a safe, non-threatening environment
- community partners are supported to play a full role (eg childcare and transport assistance are provided to attend meetings, meetings are held at convenient times and places, community partners can be briefed before attending meetings).

Sustainability

- there is ongoing and committed funding
- there are clear roles and accountabilities for all involved
- there is flexibility to adapt to new or recently revealed community needs
- the partnership is supported by the macro-environment (eg legislation and government policy)
- the partnership establishes a learning culture, where the impact of interventions are assessed to establish and refine understanding of what works best for whom, and under what circumstances
- evaluations of partnerships show positive outcomes
- mechanisms are established for sharing knowledge and experiences with other partnerships
- all partners perceive that they have benefited from being involved in the partnership.

The following table summarises the key factors which can hinder successful community-government partnerships during development and implementation, and in maintaining ongoing sustainability:

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[5] See fn 2 above.

Table 2. Factors hindering community-government partnerships

Development

- the interventions focus on 'guessed' needs
- the partnership excludes the community sector, grass-roots community, or by-passes local authorities
- there are insufficient start-up funds
- there is insufficient start-up time
- there are unrealistic expectations.

Implementation

- there is little room for flexibility when implementing either the partnerships or the projects they manage
- there is a lack of clear direction
- the partnership culture excludes or inhibits community members' involvement (eg officials making decisions by informal negotiation before formal partnership meetings)
- front-line staff are not supported to act in a way that reflects the partnership spirit
- there is a lack of funding
- the time-frames for achieving results are unrealistic
- there are onerous monitoring and accountability procedures
- there is a failure to network with other partnerships and providers
- when involvement in the partnership over-stretches resources of partner organisations (particularly community and small business)
- community partners' input is limited to service delivery (not policy development).

Sustainability

- the time-frames for achieving results are unrealistic
- there is no ongoing funding
- there is over-optimism about the ability of the partnership to lever funding or to be self-funding in the future
- the partnership does not show results
- some partners' commitment wanes
- government partners are unwilling or unable to adapt their cultures and ways of working in response to community needs and preferences
- community partners feel their contribution is not respected
- there are legislative or government policy constraints
- only some segments of the target community benefit from the partnership.

5. Achieving welfare goals

This section considers the extent to which community-government partnerships are successful in achieving welfare goals, while noting the literature is not conclusive on this issue. There are examples of community-government partnership projects that appear to have made an impact on achieving limited welfare goals, although their success has not been clearly demonstrated. It appears that partnerships that aim to strengthen families and improve childhood outcomes may be more likely to succeed than those that focus on reducing welfare dependency and poverty.

Most importantly, the literature does not answer the question of whether partnership models offer any benefits over other models in terms of achieving welfare goals. It appears that the desire to create community-government partnerships stems from philosophical beliefs about community empowerment, and/or awareness of the political value of partnership rhetoric. Hastings notes that it appears to be assumed that there is something in the *process* of partnership that is valuable, but that policy-makers are not explicit about why this is (Hastings 1996). Evaluation of the costs and benefits of community-government partnerships in comparison to other approaches is lacking.

Partnerships with similar welfare goals and the extent to which these have been achieved

The majority of partnerships and partnership programmes recognise that welfare issues are multi-factorial and shaped by forces outside the community as much as by forces within it. They tend to recognise the limitations of the partnerships' ability to have more than a partial impact on welfare issues, and therefore adopt more limited goals that they are more likely to achieve.

For example, Sabel discusses the limits of the "local solution to local problem" approach in relation to a disadvantaged Dublin suburb:

> *Local problems are so severe that an institution with resources as limited as those of the Tallaght Partnership cannot, and knows it cannot, hope to solve the problems of unemployment and marginalisation – certainly not by itself and not, in any case, immediately. The situation in Tallaght is too powerfully shaped by forces largely beyond local control for such a simple remedy.*
> (Sabel 1996, 54)

The literature did not show clear evidence of achievements in terms of reducing benefit dependency, strengthening families, or improving childhood outcomes. This may be to do with the great difficulties involved in attributing outcomes to a particular intervention in the welfare area, and also to the fact that the evaluations generally took place after the partnership had been operating for a relatively short time (usually between one and five years).

Creating opportunities for work

A pilot programme conducted by the Combat Poverty Agency between 1991 and 1993 is reported to have demonstrated that:

> *when targeting the needs of unemployed people in specific geographical regions, substantial outcomes in formal labour market participation can be expected if a community-government partnership approach is used.* (Smith & Herbert 1997, 6)

Unfortunately further details of this programme were not available *(see page 26).*

A number of other Irish and British partnership projects have been designed to increase labour force participation. Irish examples include the Speedpak packaging firm and a number of business development projects *(see pages 25-6)*. The evaluators found that some of these projects had the potential to have some impact on unemployment and under-employment, but were unable to answer the question of whether they had in fact done so (Sabel 1996).

The evaluation of Deptford City Challenge in South East London revealed considerable scepticism within the community about the ability of the partnership to create local jobs. There was a perception that "training was being provided for training sake" and that the proliferation of 'CV Shops' was unhelpful (Mayo 1997, *and see pages 28-30).*

The Australian Community Research Project included goals of reduced costs, non-cash income, and participation in the formal and informal labour markets, all of which can be related to reducing benefit dependency *(see pages 33-6)*. The broad goal was, however, improving living standards. The research was unable to report significant success in the area of increasing participation in the formal labour market (Smith and Herbert 1997).

The Opotiki Development Project *(see pages 37-8)* and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Development Employment Scheme *(see pages 36-7)* both aim to reduce welfare dependency. The Department of Social Welfare and the District Council initiated the Opotiki Development Project in 1995 because of concerns about the high rate of unemployment in Opotiki and the impact on children growing up in welfare-dependent families. The project evolved to include other central government agencies and seeks to address social as well as economic development in Opotiki. The development and implementation of the project has recently been evaluated.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Development Employment Scheme has generally only been able to provide part-time, low-paid, low-skilled employment and has not led to better employment opportunities in the mainstream labour market. Nor has it been successful in reducing poverty. It has, however, remained popular among many Aboriginal communities, possibly because it has allowed for the "Aboriginalisation" of work, allowing a variety of culturally-focused employment. This, it is argued, has positive effects on the self-

esteem of individuals and families, on pride in Aboriginal identity, and on building supportive networks (Smith no date).

Strengthening families and improving childhood outcomes
These two goals are considered together, as they are inter-related in the practice of many partnerships.

Communities that Care (UK) is a new programme with the goal of building safer communities where children and young people are valued. It is a long-term, knowledge-based partnership programme that aims to develop local action plans to support and strengthen families, promote school commitment and success, encourage responsible sexual behaviour, and achieve a safer, more cohesive community. It is based on extensive research and appears to promise results It will be some time before its effectiveness can be evaluated (Communities That Care 1997 *see page 30).*

Many of the British urban regeneration partnerships also included components relating to strengthening families and improving childhood outcomes.

Australian projects that were part of the Community Research Project included Grandparents Caring For Kids, a youth and family support centre, and an Aboriginal court support programme. The evaluation found that most of these projects had some positive outcomes. Those which emphasised tangible short-term outcomes were the most successful (Smith and Herbert 1997).

Within New Zealand, the Waitakere City Effective Practice has been adopted as a model for Strengthening Families nationwide. A formal evaluation of this project is currently underway (Oliver et al 1998). The Department of Social Welfare is backing a Creating Opportunities for our Children programme *(see page 38).*

There are also an enormous number of micro-scale partnerships that have strengthening families or improving childhood outcomes as goals. Two local examples are partnerships that the Wellington City Council has entered into with local communities. The Nga Te Kau Marae-based Holiday Programme aimed to provide culturally appropriate holiday activities for children and their whanau (Little et al 1997). Flat Out has underlying goals of strengthening families and improving outcomes for young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, through facilitating positive recreational and social activities. These partnerships have not been formally evaluated, due to their very small scale. Flat Out has, however, been positively received and is being considered as a model in other regions (Wellington City Council 1997).

6. Examples of partnerships, their programmes, and projects

This section describes the most relevant partnerships from those discussed above, along with those aiming to achieve welfare goals similar to those of the Department of Social Welfare.

Medium- to large-scale partnerships are described first, then the smaller scale partnerships. Examples are set out by country, in the following order:

- *international* – safer communities/safer cities programmes
- *Ireland* – Area-based partnerships (ABPs), Pilot Area Programme for Integrated Rural Development (IRD), LEADER, county enterprise boards (CEBs), Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development, Combat Poverty Agency
- *United Kingdom* – Urban Development Corporations (UDCs), City Challenge, Communities that Care
- *European Union/Scotland* – Scottish Urban 'New Life' partnerships, Poverty 3, the Pilton Partnership
- *Australia* – Community Research Project, Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander Community Development Employment Scheme
- *New Zealand* – Waitakere City Effective Practice, Opotiki project.

International

Safer communities/safer cities[6]

Safer communities/safer cities programmes are large multi-agency partnership programmes based on an internationally promoted theme. The partnerships tend to have a high degree of both central and local government involvement and highly formalised structures. They focus on coordinating multiple government agencies in pursuit of shared objectives, but also include coordinating and involving communities, the not-for-profit, and for-profit sectors.

Safer communities and safer cities programmes aim for a comprehensive approach to crime prevention. They may include a focus on strengthening families as one strategy in preventing crime. Successful crime prevention may also strengthen families by addressing the causes of crimes which occur within the family (eg domestic violence).

Improving childhood outcomes may also be both a strategy for crime prevention – if outcomes for young people are improved they are less likely to become involved in criminal behaviour – and an outcome of successful crime prevention – outcomes for children are improved when they are not subjected to crime.

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[6] These programmes have most relevance for New Zealand welfare outcomes in terms of strengthening families and improving childhood outcomes.

Issues such as community development, poverty, (un)employment, education and training, childcare, transport, and urban regeneration are often part of safer communities and safer cities programmes. These relate to wider welfare outcomes, and may impact on peoples' ability to find work.

A number of these programmes have been well evaluated. For example, Crime Concern found that successful projects were those where:

- the project had been rigorously appraised and guided by a project plan
- they were tightly managed
- leadership was assigned to one individual
- the distinctive contribution of the individual partners had been clearly thought through
- local people were fully involved in the planning and management
- they retained the services of officers in key posts for two to three years
- they paid attention to public relations (Crime Concern 1993, 13).

Ireland

Area-based partnerships (ABPs)

The Irish government has in recent years introduced a series of local development initiatives aimed at reducing the incidence, and mitigating the effects, of long-term unemployment. Key to this are the 38 ABPs in urban and rural communities that have been created by the Irish government and the Structural Fund of the European Union since 1991. These attempt to "address issues of social exclusion [ie poverty, long-term unemployment, isolation, marginalisation etc] in a more flexible, decentralised and participative way" (Sabel 1996, 3). They aim to:

> reconsider the problems of un- and under-employment within their home jurisdictions and devise effective responses to them that the central government alone could not discover, but to which it may refer in reforming its own administrative structures and, above all, in improving the connection between these structures and local communities. (Sabel 1996, 9)

Pilot Area Programme for Integrated Rural Development (IRD)

The Pilot Area Programme for Integrated Rural Development (IRD) ran from 1988 to 1990 and focused on brokering relations between local development groups/individuals and public and private funders. It was a modestly financed programme organised by the Department of Agriculture to raise income levels in rural areas, principally by increasing employment opportunities. It ran in 12 independent regions, each of which was assessed as forming a cohesive economic unit with a maximum population of about 15,000. A local coordinator facilitated activities, firstly by organising a core group of eight to ten members representing voluntary organisations. Considerable emphasis was placed on the groups visiting their counterparts and learning from each other.

An evaluation of the programme showed that:

> many of the 400 projects launched under its aegis involved significant local co-ordination of interests and funding, and, conversely, few would have been undertaken in the absence of some form of brokerage. (Sabel 1996, 44)

LEADER

IRD was followed by the LEADER I initiative, a continent-wide European Community programme, designed to identify innovative solutions to economic stagnation, out-migration, and under-employment in rural areas. In Ireland it provided for the establishment of 16 local development "companies" which operated between 1991 and 1994 with budgets of around (Irish) £2–3 million each. A number of these were based on IRD initiatives.

LEADER partnerships are constituted as legal limited-liability companies, or in some cases as cooperative associations, with a variety of board structures, compositions, sizes, and decision-making processes. Community and voluntary interests, sectoral interests such as farming groups and chambers of commerce, and state agencies are represented. Local governments may also be represented.

An evaluation of the LEADER programme was largely positive but found that there had been over-optimism about start-up times and the length of funding commitment required (Sabel 1996, 46).

LEADER I was followed by LEADER II, which covers an expanded area (though without a proportionate increase in funding).

County enterprise boards (CEBs)

County Enterprise Boards (CEBs) grew out of a pilot small-business grant support scheme that operated in ten counties and focused on project-by-project grant provision. Applicants were assessed locally according to nationally established criteria. It became a national scheme in 1993, and eventually the CEBs' role was expanded "to include the provision of a wider range of business support services and responsibility for the development of an enterprise development plan for their county" (Sabel 1996, 47).

Unlike the boards of ABPs or LEADER companies, the boards of CEBs are required to include local authority representatives. They appear to be more closely tied in with both local and central governments than the other partnership schemes.

On paper CEBs have broad strategic responsibilities for enterprise and job creation, with the task of providing:

> [a] suitable top-down framework by which the government and the EU can further facilitate co-operation between the State development agencies and local authorities on the one hand and the local community groups involved in enterprise development on the other. (Sabel 1996, 47)

In practice, however, the place of the CEBs within the wider structure was for a long time unclear, and the CEBs were reluctant to go beyond their original role of grant support (Sabel 1996).

Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development

The Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development, 1994–99 has been co-funded by the European Commission and the Irish, and its structures have been endorsed by the social partners in the Irish Programme for Competitiveness and Work (a national partnership that includes key players such as the government and trade unions). It is the first formal attempt to integrate the rural and urban experiments in partnership, and indicates that parties have endorsed, and been satisfied with, the pilots and partnerships so far.

Advantages of the Operational Programme are that it provides more secure funding for a longer time than the ABPs or the CEBs, and that it provides an opportunity to coordinate operations.

County strategy groups have been created to integrate the activities of all local development groups in their areas. The OECD evaluation of Irish partnerships (undertaken in 1996) found that it was too early to make any assessment of how successful these would be. The evaluators do, however, highlight some concerns about the approach:

> The paradox of decentralisation from the centre manifests itself as institutional confusion. Acting on delegated authority from above, local programmes create projects that in turn cross and confuse boundaries between local jurisdictions and various levels of the national bureaucracies. Initiatives such as the CSGs, [county strategy groups] that aim to reintroduce order to the result may achieve their purpose, or add further clutter to the confusion. Partnership extends the possibilities of participation in economic and social reconstruction to wider and wider groups, but the place of elected officials becomes harder to define. (Sabel 1996, 50)

Irish projects

The OECD evaluation team visited a number of partnership projects which the partnerships themselves saw as successful. These were run under various partnership programmes (Sabel 1996).

In urban areas, they included business mentoring programmes; packaging firms; employment registers and counselling; and programmes focusing on unemployed peoples' rights, information, and advocacy. In rural areas programmes attempted to address under-employment and population loss through small enterprise development in tourism, speciality food production (including aquaculture), and community housing.

Plato[7]

The Plato model is a business training network where the partnership encourages local owners and/or managers to learn from one another and from the advice of local large enterprises. Sixty local companies and ten large "parent" firms (including big names such as Hewlett Packard, Johnson & Johnson, and Nestle Rowntree) took part. The project was successful in Tallaght, Dublin in terms of participant satisfaction and perceived improvements in operations, marketing, and financial management. The average increase in turnover of the companies involved was 19 per cent and there was a 24 per cent increase in employment (93 new jobs).

The evaluators conclude that:

> *In theory, the Plato model is portable because it is, at heart, a general method for transferring knowledge from those with more experience of a particular environment to those with less. The particular institutions for transferring the knowledge will vary according to the environment and the know-how appropriate to it.* (Sabel 1996, 57)

This means that, in practice, the model can only work if the actors can accurately judge who can teach and who can learn what from whom. The idea that little firms can grow by listening to big ones is simply too vague (Sabel 1996, 57).

Plato's success in Tallaght relied on specifics of the location such as the presence of large firms with managers who have:

> *a good grip on the new disciplines needed for international competition, and are familiar with the many dynamic, local small firms, from whom they purchase components or services.* (Sabel 1996, 57)

Sabel notes the potential risks of confusing form with substance in attempts to find other areas suited to the model, and suggests that an alternative approach might be to find ways of reinterpreting mentoring to meet the needs of different locations. For example, the South Kerry Partnership is considering a system whereby "start-ups in complementary activities" in this remote area can "mentor" each other or organise "joint study tours to review best practices elsewhere in Ireland and abroad" (Sabel 1996, 58).

Speedpak[8]

The Northside partnership is also located in Dublin. The area has high unemployment and although there are successful nearby industrial estates, these generally do not hire people from the area.

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[7] This project is best linked to New Zealand welfare outcomes in terms of increasing opportunities for work.

[8] This project has most relevance for New Zealand welfare outcomes in terms of increasing opportunities for work.

The partnership set up Speedpak, a company providing short-run, contract packaging, and subassembly:

> *This choice of line of business and market were determined by the firm's goal of teaching the unemployed, including many with little work experience at all, a skill that would increase their chances of long-term employability, and doing so under conditions as demanding as those they would find in any well-organised company.* (Sabel 1996, 59–60)

A consultant undertook an informal survey of over 100 business managers and found that craft skills, by themselves, were no longer highly valued. Team problem-solving abilities – "the ability to work with others in detecting and resolving problems in work set-up or organisation" – were seen as essential (Sabel 1996, 60).

The partnership therefore sought to establish:

> *a firm that regularly "produced" the kinds of problems teams would need to solve…. Shrink-wrapping items for time-sensitive markets provided the right combination of technical simplicity and organisational rigor, while meeting the additional criterion of potential commercial viability.* (Sabel 1996, 60)

The evaluators found that Speedpak did indeed teach employees team-problem solving skills. There were, however, questions remaining. The evaluators were unclear whether Speedpak would ever be able to survive without subsidies, especially considering that it had to train a constant stream of new employees as it 'graduated' the more advanced into jobs in other companies. They wondered:

> *whether Speedpak is best judged as a firm or a new kind of vocational school, and if the latter, then how commercial discipline can be maintained without imposing impossible budgetary constraints on the organisation.* (Sabel 1996, 61)

They were concerned about the lack of attention given to these questions in relation to Speedpak and other, similar projects, and the implications of this for any wider influences these projects could have on the future of vocational training and employers' attitudes to the capabilities of unemployed people.

Combat Poverty Agency

A pilot programme conducted by the Combat Poverty Agency between 1991 and 1993 is reported to have demonstrated that:

> *when targeting the needs of unemployed people in specific geographical regions, substantial outcomes in formal labour market participation can be expected if a community-government partnership approach is used.* (Smith & Herbert 1997, 6)

> *The program tested an area-based response to long-term unemployment, whereby local communities were directly involved in planning and implementing a range of projects that focused*

> *on training and education, enterprise and job creation, and changing community attitudes about long-term unemployed people…. [It] built partnerships across all levels of service provision community agencies, local government, the national government, and unemployed people themselves.* (Smith and Herbert 1997, 6)

Unfortunately, further details of this programme could not be obtained.

United Kingdom
Urban development corporations (UDCs)

For the last 15 years, the British government has promoted multi-sectoral partnerships as an important means for dealing with severe urban problems. Partnership is viewed as "fundamental" to these programmes, yet a number of commentators have noted a lack of explanation as to why this is so (Hastings 1996).

The literature from the United Kingdom describes a number of major partnership projects focusing on regeneration of urban areas. The first of these were urban development corporations (UDCs) which were established from 1981.

This style of partnership was linked to the British Conservative government's restructuring and privatisation of urban policy, as well as to the promotion of an "enterprise culture" (Hastings 1996). The focus in Britain has been on the "development of public sector partnerships with the *private sector*, as well as with voluntary and community sector organizations" (Mayo 1997). The government's action to curtail the power of local authorities was also a crucial influence on the types of partnership developed at this time and attitudes towards them (Tye and Williams 1994, 18).

The UDCs were designated, empowered, and financed by central government and accountable to it. They were appointed bodies:

> *intended to eliminate the political uncertainty produced by local democracy, which the government (particularly during the Thatcher years), regarded as a major deterrent to private investment.* (Tye and Williams 1994, 13)

Boards typically had a strong business dominance, with construction interests highly represented. They had extensive powers, including powers of compulsory land acquisition.

The UDCs' emphasis on property-led urban regeneration diluted wider social goals of urban policy. The London UDCs, particularly Docklands, were heavily criticised for having negative effects on local communities (eg Tye and William 1994, Munt 1991). Thus:

> *By the end of the decade many were arguing that urban regeneration required a wider vision and broader package of programmes for finance, education, training, enterprise development and social provision than an agency single-mindedly devoted to physical regeneration could achieve.* (Cited in Tye and Williams 1994, 13)

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Initiatives in the 1990s have generally adapted the UDC model to take account of social and community factors to varying degrees.

City Challenge

City Challenge sought to coordinate policies and resources in five year programmes of action. The government announced City Challenge in May 1991 and gave the local authorities of 57 designated districts in England and Wales the opportunity to bid for funds by submitting innovative plans for economic and social regeneration. The programme stressed the importance of involving the local private sector, housing associations, local voluntary organisations, tenants groups, and other local community representatives (McArthur 1993, 307).

The bidding process involved a first round of selecting "winning" proposals based on set criteria, followed by a process of negotiation between the local authority with potential public, private, and community partners. Action plans were developed setting out the roles of participating organisations. If deemed suitable by the government, it entered into an implementation agreement that key partners endorsed.

The general model was for a company to be set up at arms' length from the local authority to progress the regeneration strategy. Representatives of all of the stakeholder sectors had a place on the company's board of directors (McArthur 1993, 307).

The competitive nature of the process and the fact that funding was top-sliced from other programmes were controversial (Tye and Williams 1994, 14). Those bids for City Challenge funds which were successful "tended to acknowledge an implicit agenda of changing the culture of local government" (Hastings 1996). The policy thrust "can be broadly characterised as exclusionary" and the "potential contribution to policy of those who did not speak the language of 'enterprise' was minimised" (Hastings 1996).

Deptford City Challenge

Deptford is a "dense residential, multi-racial inner city area" in South East London with very high levels of unemployment, poverty and social deprivation, and declining levels of manufacturing and industry (Mayo 1997, 15–16).

The Deptford City Challenge (DCC) partnership involved the government, local authority, private sector, voluntary sector, and local tenants and residents in an inner city area with a population of around 30,000 (Mayo 1997).

The DCC's second strategic objective states:

> *Partnership … [is] at the heart of the City Challenge Process, with a particular focus upon community participation … to empower all sections of the community to profit from and play a full part in the regeneration and sustained growth of Deptford.* (Cited in Mayo 1997, 15)

The partners are formally represented on a board. In addition there is a business forum, a community forum, and a tenants' and residents' forum, that feed into the formal decision-making structures. Monitoring and evaluation is carried out by Goldsmiths College, University of London.

The partnership was supported by around £37.5 million from public funds over five years, as well finance gained from attracting some private investment to the area. The extent to which the partnership was successful in levering private investment is unclear. An evaluation carried out in 1994 suggested that one of the flagship projects, a new sports stadium with associated leisure and housing developments, would have taken place anyway. On the other hand, a community health project does appear to have successfully used the "multiplier effect"
(Mayo 1997, 17).

The evaluation found, however, that the value of the community's human resources has not been fully realised and community participation and empowerment have been problematic in practice, despite attention being paid to the issue.

The local authority appointed two "community enablers" to facilitate community participation. A participation fund was established to provide things like childcare for residents attending meetings. There were small grants for office equipment and events to support tenants' involvement. Specific provision was made for "capacity building".

> It was planned that the Deptford Dividend, a fund to support projects to meet local needs would result in some 60 local initiatives, 50 per cent of which would be run by new local community groups, with a significant proportion of these run by black and ethnic minority groups and/or disabled people's groups; through this process it was intended that some 200 local people would be trained in project management and committee skills. (Mayo 1997)

There was considerable conflict over how these resources, which represented a relatively small proportion of the total budget at stake, should be allocated. According to Mayo:

> This … raises fundamental questions about the value of engaging communities in very time-consuming exercises, potentially setting one community interest up against another in a scrabble for crumbs from the wide "Partnership" budget. (Mayo 1997)

Existing strengths and capacities were insufficiently valued and existing community organisations were by-passed. There were also difficulties in engaging the small businesses who were struggling to survive in a difficult economic climate.

Meanwhile local people believed that little was being achieved in terms of local jobs being created. Rather, they believed that "training was being provided for training sake" rather than for real jobs, and there was concern that "there was a proliferation of 'CV shops' ".

There was also criticism that there was a preoccupation with quantifiable performance indicators, and with "hard economic outputs" ahead of social objectives. Short-termism was another concern. Exit strategies were on the agenda from the start, but residents felt, " 'When

the Deptford City Challenge have gone, the rest of us will still be here, and so will Deptford', not to mention its problems" (Mayo 1997, 20). This perception was exacerbated towards the end of the project as workers started to leave to find jobs elsewhere.

Issues of how the community should be represented continued throughout the life of the partnership. These were complex issues due to the diversity of groupings and interests involved, including a range of ethnic minorities.

Communities That Care (UK)

Communities that Care (UK) is a new programme with the goal of "building safer communities where children and young people are valued". It can be viewed as a development of the wider safer communities/safer cities movement. It is a long-term, knowledge-based partnership programme that aims to develop local action plans to support and strengthen families, promote school commitment and success, encourage responsible sexual behaviour, and achieve a safer, more cohesive community.

Communities that Care is based on extensive research and appears to promise results (Communities That Care (UK) 1997). It will be some time before its effectiveness can be evaluated.

European Union/Scotland

Poverty 3 and the Pilton Partnership

Poverty 3 is a European Community programme that started in 1989. Twenty-nine 'model action' projects were developed under the programme.

> *The programme's emphasis was on those who are already excluded from participation in society and those who run a high risk of becoming excluded in the future, and it emphasised the need for social solidarity. Hence, one of the key principles was the participation of the least privileged – the poorest – in the management and control of operations.* (Breitenbach 1997, 159)

Esther Breitenbach has reviewed the way in which community participation was encouraged in one of the partnerships, the Pilton Partnership in North Edinburgh (Breitenbach 1997).

The area is a disadvantaged peripheral estate of approximately 23,000 people. The partnership has six legal partners: two local authorities, the local enterprise company, a housing quango, a local small business association, an enterprise trust, and a locally-based private sector financial services company. The Scottish Office is not a partner, but contributes funds. The partnership's budget was £2 million over four years. Childcare, unemployment and employment, education and training, and welfare benefits were prioritised in the partnership's strategy (Breitenbach 1997, 160).

The Pilton Partnership ran activists' days, increased the number of community representatives on the management committee to allow for geographic and interest group representation, and

ensured community representatives were able to go through agendas and papers prior to management committee meetings. The partnership also provided a paid worker to assist with community organising in one geographic area that was having particular difficulties (Breitenbach 1997).

Breitenbach notes that whereas the Pilton Partnership started with geographical representation and later moved to include interest groups, the Brownlow Poverty 3 project in Northern Ireland started out with a model of participation based on interest group representation but over time added geographical representation (Breitenbach 1997, 161). Thus the two partnerships came to the same conclusion about the best model for representation, despite starting with different approaches.

The evaluation of the partnership found that community participation did impact on decisions. In particular, it resulted in childcare being placed high on the strategic agenda. It also enhanced the capacity of the local community, but "…. the majority of participants did not perceive the partner organisations to have changed their operations significantly" in response to community input (Breitenbach 1997, 163–4). The exceptions were the urban dedicated aid budget and the business support group.

Breitenbach considers that the community representatives might have underestimated their own power, and not challenged the partner organisations as strongly as they might have. She also questions whether the enhanced community cohesion would be able to continue once the support of the partnership was gone.

She notes that "some of the partner organisations appear to have drawn negative conclusions about the value of so direct a form of participation," and that another urban project in the area has made it "clear that there is no place for 'community representatives' on its managing body" (Breitenbach 1997, 163). In light of this, she suggests that when community participation is effective as more than a public relations exercise, "the powers which instigated the participation in the first place may rapidly withdraw", and questions whether it was really a good idea (Breitenbach 1997, 167).

Evaluation of the previous European Community poverty programme, Poverty 2, had found that "projects which had a history of community involvement which pre-dated their involvement with Poverty 2 achieved most in terms of community participation and control" (Breitenbach 1997, 164).

Scottish Urban "New Life" partnerships
In Scotland four urban partnership areas have been established in large disadvantaged rented housing estates. The partnerships were initially intended to address physical and economic problems, but "the focus has gradually broadened to include social issues such as the lack of local facilities, or crime and safety" (Hastings 1996).

Each has a multi-agency partnership committee made up of representatives of local and central government, public agencies, and local business and community representatives that meets regularly to oversee implementation of a comprehensive area regeneration strategy. The strategy is usually for a ten year period (McArthur 1993, 307).

Each partnership has a board chaired by a senior civil servant from the Scottish Office, with senior representatives from the ten or so partners as members. The partners agree on a regeneration strategy that provides the framework within which the partners agree common policies and programmes. An implementation team is responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

Annette Hastings describes them as a "fairly minimalist approach to partnership":

> They are basically voluntary associations of the organisations involved. Crucially, they do not involve the decentralisation of the organisations to the particular housing estate and there is no delegation of authority to the Partnership. (Hasting 1996)

There is also no devolved budget. This is in contrast with the English City Challenge companies, for example. The Scottish partnerships aim to find new and better ways to manage existing resources rather than delivering new funds to an area, although the Scottish Office has provided some funding (less that £2.5 million in 1993/94) to fund the partnership process itself. In 1990 and 1991 the Scottish Office also provided a total of around £30 million in an Innovative Fund which was open to competitive bids between the partnerships for housing initiatives involving tenure diversification and private-sector involvement.

Hastings reports on two of the partnerships which were researched through interviews with stakeholders after five or six years of operation. The partnerships are Castlemilk in Glasgow and Wester Hailes in Edinburgh.

She argues that the Scottish Office's intention was that the partnerships would create "resource synergy" through better coordination that would allow existing resources to go further. Only a minority of the residents' representatives involved in the partnerships, however, thought that improved inter-agency coordination was one of the partnerships' aims. The residents' representatives saw the important feature of the partnerships as being the potential to generate new policies or programmes tailored to the specific needs of the estate.

A number of stakeholders, including councillors, senior employees of local government, and private-sector representatives believed transforming local government through contact with the private sector was an important government aim of the partnership. This transformation was seen to be a one-way process with, for example, no opportunity perceived for local authorities to "educate" the private sector to more social goals. Council officials did perceive an opportunity to educate the community representatives about the constraints they faced, assuming that the community representatives would become "more pragmatic and less demanding" as a consequence (Hastings 1996).

Some community representatives felt threatened by the "'danger' of being manipulated or incorporated by participating in such an initiative" and "there was widespread dissatisfaction amongst community representatives from both estates with their involvement with the Partnerships" (Hastings 1996). On the other hand the community representatives did perceive benefits in terms of senior officials hearing about problems from the people who were close to them.

Australia

Community Research Project

The Commonwealth Department of Social Security initiated a Community Research Project that ran from July 1994 to June 1997. This examined the potential of community-based services to enhance particular aspects of the living standards of people on low incomes. The projects are important because they are based in relatively small communities in a society similar to New Zealand, and they are well researched (Smith & Herbert 1997). The potential relevance of the various initiatives to aspects of New Zealand's welfare objectives are identified.

A framework for "living decently in the national community" was developed, involving concepts of citizenship, civil society, social capital, and systems theory. The outcomes targeted were based on research into living standards by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, which stresses that living standards were "a function not only of cash income but also of other economic and 'way of life' (social) factors" (Smith and Herbert 1997, 4). The eight living standards targeted for the project were family relationships, social and political participation, reduced costs, non-cash income, access to information, participation in the formal and informal labour market, and personal well-being (Smith and Herbert 1997, 11).

The action research component of the project sought to answer four questions:

- does involvement in community-based, self-help initiatives improve living standards?
- which particular initiatives contribute most to living standard change?
- does the way in which community-based initiatives are delivered make a difference to the achievement of living standard improvements?
- does access to an electronic information network … enhance the efficiency or outcomes, or both, of community-based initiatives? (Smith and Herbert 1997, 14)

There were eighty individual projects spread over four geographic regions: Gympie and surrounds, the northern suburbs of Brisbane, the northern suburbs of Adelaide, and Tasmania. Generally they were areas undergoing economic decline, with high levels of unemployment and dependence on income support. Disadvantaged communities of interest such as young unemployed people, indigenous people, and retired people were generally identifiable within the areas.

The projects were each funded for about 12 months at an average cost of Australian $18,208 per project. They were all proposed by individuals or groups in the research sites and were all managed and implemented by local people.

The projects had a variety of management structures. The project groups contracted with the Department of Social Security to research the projects' impact on selected living standard areas.

> *The Department administered the projects locally, using departmental project officers based in Area or Regional offices. These officers were familiar with research sites and the local community service sector. This effectively resulted in the decentralisation of the Department's management of the project and placed responsibility for day-to-day accountability and contract-related decisions in close perceptual and geographical proximity to the local initiatives.* (Smith and Herbert 1997, 15)

Smith and Herbert (1997) identify the ten categories into which the projects fell:
- development of community resources (6 projects)
- facilitating access to community resources (16 projects)
- community skills development (10 projects)
- consumer cooperatives (7 projects)
- producer cooperatives (13 projects)
- reciprocal trade exchanges (LETS) (5 projects)
- support networks (5 projects)
- individual case management (5 projects)
- information technology training and support (8 projects)
- information technology mini-networks (4 projects).

As noted above, the researchers found that these could be regrouped into the categories of community development, support networks, and individual case management.

The projects were assessed based on their first 12 months of operation. Qualitative data showed that participation in 59 per cent of the projects was likely to produce observable benefits in a range of living standard areas. The researchers distinguished between first- and second-order outcomes for each living standard area (Smith and Herbert 1997, 27–41).

A number of characteristics emerged as pertinent to the partnerships' success. These were:
> *needs assessment; transparent and participative decision making; a range of activities; tangible outcomes, a flexible approach; nurturing human resources, opportunities and processes for networking; activities linked to skills and knowledge development; a safe, non-threatening environment; small, efficient, accountable and transparent administrative structures; and 'seeding' funding as opposed to recurrent funding.* (Smith and Herbert 1997, 42)

Community development initiatives[9]

Community development-oriented initiatives that reported substantial gains in the targeted living standard areas – particularly "social participation", "access to information", and

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[9] These initiatives are relevant to New Zealand welfare goals in terms of strengthening families and improving childhood outcomes.

participation in the "informal labour market" – tended to exhibit the following characteristics – namely they:

- provided a range of activities
- adapted to meet the changing needs of participants
- aimed to produce 'here and now' tangible outcomes
- assessed need by using both service users' and local providers' knowledge
- employed staff with high level skills in community development
- focused on social participation as a major component of project activity
- viewed training activities as an opportunity for participants to gain new skills
- established and maintained strong links with other agencies
- nurtured a strong human resource base
- had small and efficient administrative systems
- encouraged participants to take on the role of producer-participant (Smith and Herbert 1997, 46–7).

Most of these projects were instigated by people who were members of the target group. Projects included a community resource centre, a savings and loans group, a youth and family support centre in a rural area, and a migrants' agricultural cooperative.

Support networks[10]

Support network type projects that reported substantial first and second order outcomes in the areas of social participation, personal well-being, and family relationships were those which emphasised tangible, short-term outcomes.

The projects were generally proposed by community agencies. Skilled staff and participant involvement were important as was maintaining strong links with existing agencies and developing a broad range of activities in a safe, non-threatening environment. They included a women's group, a group for grandparents caring for children and computer networking projects for people with disabilities and their carers. With the exception of the IT-based projects, the support network type projects were all to some extent sustainable after the project funding came to an end.

The research found that two support network type projects which adopted a direct service-delivery focus and were based on a "guessed" assessment of the extent of the target groups' needs were unable to adapt to participants' changing needs and circumstances, and experienced instability in participant numbers. Both these projects placed users in the role of

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[10] These initiatives are relevant to New Zealand welfare goals in terms of strengthening families and improving childhood outcomes.

"consumer-client" and neither developed mechanisms for networking with other providers (Smith and Herbert 1997, 48–9).

Individual case management[11]

The most successful individual case management-type initiatives were those which placed a strong emphasis on:

> *assessing local needs, providing a range of activities, adapting services to the changing needs and circumstances of participants, developing strong links with other agencies (particularly for referral), promoting self-determination through project activities, employing staff with skill and experience (particularly in counselling, network building, and group facilitation), using social participation to promote personal growth, and producing tangible 'here and now' outcomes.* (Smith and Herbert 1997, 49)

The main gains were in the areas of access to information, personal well-being, and family relationships. Projects included a financial counselling service and an Aboriginal court-support project.

The successful case-management type initiatives were all either part of existing agencies or received substantial support from them. The majority of participants came from referrals from existing services. Questions remained about long-term independent viability.

> *Although they were sustainable to some extent beyond Community Research Project funding because they were absorbed by other services, recurrent funding would be required so that the skilled staff essential for the delivery of quality outcomes could be employed.* (Smith and Herbert 1997, 50)

Unsuccessful case-management type initiatives were the ones which were:

> *largely directive in nature, were unable to adapt to the changing needs and circumstances of participants, did not aim to produce tangible outcomes, and were not based on a recognised or articulated need. Nor were they established around existing groups of service users or providers.* (Smith and Herbert 1997, 50)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Development Employment Scheme[12]
Another major Australian scheme with partnership components is the Community Development Employment Scheme run by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. The scheme is primarily aimed at unemployed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, particularly those in communities where there is little employment available. Individuals forgo their usual Jobstart or Newstart entitlements, which are instead pooled into a central fund managed by an incorporated body. The commission provides additional grants to supplement this money. The scheme commenced in 1976. By 1993 there were 200

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[11] This style of intervention is relevant to New Zealand welfare goals in terms of: strengthening families

[12] This scheme is most relevant to New Zealand welfare objectives of creating opportunities for work.

communities and groups involved in the scheme, with about 21,000 people participating (Whitehouse 1994, 6–7).

The project has been criticised, particularly for providing generally only part-time, low-paid, low-skilled employment, and for not leading to better employment opportunities in the mainstream labour market. Nor has it been seen as successful in reducing poverty.

It has, however, remained popular among many Aboriginal communities, possibly because it has allowed for the "Aboriginalisation" of work, allowing a variety of culturally focused employment. Thus, it is argued that it has positive effects on the self-esteem of individuals and families, on pride in Aboriginal identity and on building supportive networks (Smith, Diane no date).

New Zealand

Waitakere City Effective Practice[13]

The community-government partnership in Waitakere City provides one of the best known New Zealand examples. The City Council has developed a partnership approach with the local community and central government agencies in order to provide the best possible support for young people and their families who are receiving assistance from more than one statutory agency.

The partnership focuses on local coordination and case management and on providing training to ensure staff are able to implement effective practice successfully. There is a representative management group drawn from the statutory and community agencies involved (Waitakere City Effective Practice 1998).

An evaluation is currently underway. Findings so far indicate that differing resources and requirement for statutory and community agencies are an issue for the partnership (Oliver et al 1998).

Opotiki[14]

The Opotiki Development Project is an example of a partnership where central government has played a more leading role. The Department of Social Welfare is the lead agency for the partnership.

> *Independent of community interest, the DSW aim for the project was to reduce the current level (30%) of welfare dependency, and thereby the level of government expenditure through benefit payments, in the Opotiki district within the next five years.* (O'Neil 1997, 28)

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[13] This project is relevant to New Zealand welfare objective of strengthening families.

[14] This project is relevant to New Zealand welfare objective of creating opportunities for work.

The Department aimed to form strategic working relationships with other central government agencies, local government agencies, non-government organisations, and service deliverers. The project identified local and central government, non-government organisations, business interests, public authorities, and Maori to be key stakeholders (O'Neil 1997).

Unlike many overseas projects, local residents in general and the target group in particular were not seen as key stakeholders. O'Neil writes:

> *The success of the initiatives is dependent on the social and economic changes being relevant and significant enough to change the behaviour of beneficiaries (ie. move off benefits and into a position of financial independence), but they are not seen as key players in making this happen.* (O'Neil 1997, 40)

Small scale community–government partnerships

Partnerships promoted by the Department of Social Welfare

Partnerships within New Zealand include the raft of projects which the Department of Social Welfare is promoting under two styles of initiatives. Under the banner of "Creating Opportunities for our Children", projects have been developed in association with local community groups. Funding has been, or is being, sought from clubs, organisations, and businesses for the projects to proceed (Department of Social Welfare no date). The Department has also encouraged mayors of local authorities to be involved with community initiatives under the heading "From Welfare to Well-being" (Department of Social Welfare 1997). The majority of initiatives under both of these headings are of small scale. The projects are linked to welfare outcomes to varying degrees.

Local authority/community initiatives

Numerous local council/community initiatives exist in New Zealand and internationally. Two New Zealand examples are the Nga Te Kau Marae-based Holiday Programme and Flat Out, both of which involved the Wellington City Council.

The Wellington City Council worked in partnership with the Wellington Tenths Trust to develop Nga Te Kau Marae-based Holiday (Little, Mellish & Talivai 1997), and in partnership with the Wellington Women's Centre to develop Flat Out, a recreation group for queer youth (Wellington City Council 1997).

The Nga Te Kau Marae-based Holiday Programme was a pilot programme that aimed to provide culturally appropriate holiday activities for children and their whanau. Flat Out has the underlying goals of strengthening families and improving outcomes for young gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people through facilitating positive recreational and social activities. These partnerships have only been subject to informal evaluation, due to their very small scale. Flat Out has, however, been positively received, and is being considered as a model for other regions.

7. The Geddis report: *Local partnership – a successful strategy for social cohesion?*

Introduction

In 1998, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions published a report summarising the findings from a three year study of 84 local partnerships[15] across Europe. This included 30 in-depth case studies. The research assesses the effectiveness of local partnerships in combating unemployment, poverty and social exclusion,[16] and in promoting social cohesion, and identifies how local partnerships can be strengthened and made more effective.

The report's particular focus was on partnerships where a formal structure was used to achieve the goals noted immediately above. Such aims are broadly similar to those partnerships surveyed by the Social Policy Agency's review which has looked at the ability of partnerships to create opportunities for work, to strengthen families, and to improve childhood outcomes.

Geddis reports similar problems to those encountered in the review in identifying the exact nature of partnership models. Similarly the effectiveness of the models he researched was also difficult to establish, given the range of other factors (eg the economy, social conditions, etc) that influence such outcomes, the short-term funding arrangements, and tendencies to evaluate before welfare outcomes had time to happen.

The partnerships

Most partnerships reviewed involved some mix of central and local government, the voluntary and community sectors, businesses, and local communities. Local partnerships tended to be developed to supplement traditional social policies and services with more integrated and multi-dimensional approaches – seen as being better able to address the complex causes of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

Most of the local partnerships reviewed focused on one or more of the following activities:
- economic development and job creation
- training and education
- physical, housing, and environmental renewal
- public service provision
- income and welfare support
- community safety and crime prevention
- health/community development.

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[15] The report's section 6 gives details on each project's location, origins, partners, funding, and key issues.

[16] Social exclusion describes more than just material deprivation, and recognises the *"accumulation and combination of several types of deprivation… lack of education, deteriorating health conditions, homelessness, loss of family support, no participation in regular life of society, and lack of job opportunities…"* (European Commission 1997d, Modernising and Improving Social Protection in the EU. Com (79) 102, Brussels).

What worked

The research project found that local partnerships were characterised by the following. They:

- *built on existing* networks by providing a framework which involved local actors (eg local community and excluded groups), and forgied links between formal and informal networks
- *promoted innovation* through involving new actors, increasing the potential for cross-fertilisation of ideas, and providing an environment which encourages experimentation and learning from experience
- *pooled resources* (eg knowledge, skills, and money) and enhanced the value obtained from resources by using them more effectively
- *shared risk* when undertaking experimental and pilot projects
- *provided strategic direction* by negotiating a common perspective among different interests thus producing a more effective and coherent approach to tackling problems. This also helped to coordinate policies and programmes between different actors and agencies
- *increased interest and leverage* to obtain political support and access to additional resources
- *improved service delivery* by enhancing the performance of mainstream economic, welfare, and environment policies and service delivery, by tailoring them to local needs and capacities and ensuring they targeted and responded to local needs
- *improved outcomes* by helping combat economic and social exclusion, particularly through local job creation, and improved local service provision.

Factors that help partnerships work

Building and maintaining a partnership and a strategy for action involves the collaboration of unequal partners with widely differing resources, expertise, culture, and interests. Partnerships appear to work best when the following factors were in place:

- *strong leadership* leaders respected both inside and outside the partnership are critical
- *committed partners* who are actively involved in shaping and implementing the strategy and in undertaking practical projects
- *shared vision* on what the partnership is aiming to achieve
- *clear identification of needs to be addressed* and negotiation of a common strategy and agenda for action
- *commitment of mutual resources* and cooperation to obtain new resources
- *clear roles and responsibilities*
- *sharing of risk (eg resources) and benefits (eg publicity/recognition)*
- *a spirit of innovation* to see new solutions to problems
- *an environment of trust and respect* so these characteristics underlie the working relationships
- *organisational structures which support the partnership* eg use of sub-committees, working groups, project teams etc
- *ability to build on existing collaborative work and relationships*
- *realistic time-frames* allowing for the time and patience needed to build a partnership and for many of the desired outcomes to be achieved.

Factors that reduce partnerships' effectiveness

Local partnerships do not always work effectively. Developing and maintaining a strategic direction was a challenge for the large-scale partnerships. Other factors that threatened partnerships working effectively were:

- *no strategy or commitment* to manage the disparities in power, knowledge, expertise, and resources available to partners

- *diversity in values*, interests, and working styles

- *legal wrangles* over definitions of partnerships

- *lack of collaboration* between agencies

- *unclear divisions of tasks* or responsibilities

- *high costs* in establishing the partnership

- *complex organisational frameworks,* and high transaction costs

- *lack of skills* needed to help the partnership function smoothly (eg management, negotiation, financial control)

- *insufficient resources*

- *short time scales* with insufficient time to establish the partnership and achieve results.

Main limitations to the local partnership approach

Local partnerships tended to focus on a specific area and were often short-term and experimental. This reduced their ability to address structural problems (eg deficiencies in economic and social infrastructures, or poor performances by mainstream services), or to reach excluded groups within largely prosperous areas. The experimental nature and limited scope of many local partnerships also limited the extent to which findings can be used to inform mainstream policy and services. There was also a danger that partnerships could end up duplicating local government.

Strengthening the local partnership approach

The research report identified key limitations or risks associated with local partnerships, and made suggestions on how these could be addressed to strengthen the local partnership approach.

Community representation

The report found that in many cases community interests and excluded groups were not directly represented on local partnerships. The report suggested local partnerships could be strengthened if more thought was given to ensuring partner interests (including community and excluded groups) were better represented within partnership structures, and that the gender and ethnic composition of partnership was more balanced.

Feedback on the strategy, progress, and success

The report found that often too little information on, for instance, the overall strategy, key projects, and successes was fed back to the community and partner agencies about the partnership. It recommended clarifying and improving the mechanisms used for reporting and feeding back information to partner agencies and the community.

Building the partnership's skill-base

Developing an effective partnership and strategy for future action requires specialised skills. The report recommended ensuring partnerships had people (or trained them) in the range of professional, managerial, and communication skills needed (eg negotiation and communication, service provision, local economic and community development, management, networking, project and personnel management, accounting and financial control).

Funding and timescales

Local partnerships were often funded on a short-term basis only, reflecting their status as pilots or experimental initiatives. The research project clearly showed that short-term funding (usually three to five years) were seldom sufficient to allow partnerships to develop and become effective. The research found that the trust, collaboration, and reciprocity needed for partnerships to work effectively took considerable time to develop, and could be undermined by insecure and short-term funding.

The report noted that while successful partnerships could often survive through securing successive short-term funds, this reduced security and added transaction costs (eg adjusting to different funding regimes). There was also much evidence to suggest that tackling unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion is not possible through short-term initiatives. Such short-term investment in local partnerships often represented a poor or wasted use of resources by governments and that greater efforts were need to ensure partnerships and programmes that seemed effective or promising were funded for realistic periods of time.

Research and evaluation

The report found that if evaluations were undertaken they focused on monitoring and evaluating ongoing work rather than assessing impacts and outcomes. This in part reflects the difficulties in designing evaluations which can assess the effect of interventions on broad welfare outcomes, when these outcomes are also influenced by a range of other factors (eg the economy, social conditions etc). Difficulties in establishing the impact of partnerships and programmes were also exacerbated by the fact that evaluations often take place before changes in welfare outcomes were likely to occur.

The focus on monitoring ongoing work reduced the ability to assess the effectiveness of local partnerships in reducing unemployment or social exclusion. The report identifies a priority need to undertake better monitoring and evaluation of local partnerships, and in particular to assess the benefits, costs, and effectiveness of the partnership approach in achieving desired outcomes.

8. Conclusion

Identifying from the literature what models of community-government partnership exist and the effectiveness of these approaches in achieving welfare goals was made difficult by the loose assignment of the terms 'community' and 'partnership'; and the lack of details on actual partnership structures, roles of partner agencies, objectives, and outcomes achieved.

Establishing effectiveness of the community-government partnership approach was also problematic because of difficulties in attributing changes in outcomes to particular interventions, and the fact that many partnerships (and projects) were evaluated early on, often before changes in outcomes were likely to occur.

Partnerships addressing welfare issues recognised problems were multi-factorial and shaped by forces outside the community as much as by forces within it. While not conclusive, the literature suggests that partnerships can be successfully used to achieve some welfare goals, particularly those aiming to strengthen families and improve childhood outcomes. The partnership approach appears less successful in creating opportunities for work (although Geddis identified job creation, with consequent improvement in social areas, as possibly achievable). Lack of success in job creation was seen as largely due to the fact that the factors driving unemployment are often less able to be influenced by local (and often short-term) initiatives.

The literature does not answer the question of whether partnership models offer any benefits over other models in terms of the achievement of welfare goals. However, Hastings (1996) (and Geddis' work seems to bear this out) states that throughout the literature there is a strong assumption there is something in the *process* of partnership that is valuable.

What partnerships can achieve

Both the SPA literature review and the European research project found that community-government partnerships assist in:

- *building on existing networks* and improving links between formal and informal networks
- *promoting innovation* through involving new actors, and seeking new solutions
- *pooling resources* eg knowledge, skills and money
- *sharing risks (eg cost) and benefits* (eg publicity)
- *providing strategic direction* by negotiating a common perspective among different interests, and producing a comprehensive and coordinated response across agencies
- *increasing interest* and obtaining political support (and sometimes levering additional resources)
- *improving service delivery* by tailoring mainstream services to better meet local needs
- *improving outcomes* eg through improved local service provision; increased local job creation; and improved family and parenting skills and childhood outcomes.

Limitations of the partnership approach

Both studies found that the often area-specific focus and short-term and experimental nature of partnerships could limit their ability to address structural problems (eg deficiencies in economic and social infrastructures, or poor performances by mainstream services), or produce findings relevant to mainstream policies and services.

Factors that support partnerships to work effectively

Consistent themes emerged on factors which can help partnerships work effectively and achieve results. These are summarised below.

People

- strong leadership, and involving senior members of partner agencies
- partners who are committed to, and actively involved in, shaping and implementing the strategy and in undertaking practical projects
- community representation in the partnership particularly when drawn from the population whose needs the partnership hopes to address
- community partners are supported to play a full role in the partnership eg provided with childcare and transport assistance to attend meetings
- appointment of a paid coordinator to support the establishment and management of the partnership, programmes, and projects.

Commitment to achieve common goals

- shared vision on what the partnership is aiming to achieve
- clear identification of needs to be addressed to ensure the partnership focuses on real issues and on achieving tangible outcomes
- negotiation of a common strategy and agenda for action with one of the first projects addressing an immediate, achievable need that has been identified by the community
- flexibility to respond to new or recently revealed needs
- commitment of mutual resources and cooperation to obtain new resources

Operating environment

- clear roles and responsibilities with a sharing of risk (eg resources) and benefits (eg publicity /recognition)
- ability to build on existing collaborative work and relationships
- a spirit of innovation to see new solutions to problems
- an environment of trust and respect with good, respectful working relationships, and transparent and participative decision-making
- organisational structures which support the partnership eg efficient, accountable, and transparent administrative structures and the use of sub-committees, working groups, project teams etc

- a knowledge-based approach is taken where action is guided by evidence and evaluations are undertaken to assess what works best for whom, and under what circumstances
- resources are committed on the basis of positive evaluations as this builds and sustains commitment
- the partnership is supported by the macro-environment eg legislation and government policy.

Time-frames and resources
- realistic time-frames as time and patience are needed to build a partnership, and many of the outcomes sought take time to achieve
- realistic resourcing with on-going and committed funding.

Factors that can hinder partnerships from working effectively

Both studies found that partnerships do not always work effectively. Developing and maintaining a strategic direction was a challenge for the large-scale partnerships. Other factors that threatened partnerships working effectively were:

People
- lack of skills needed to help the partnership function smoothly (eg management, negotiation, financial control)
- no strategy or commitment to manage disparities in power, knowledge, expertise, and resources available to partners; or the diversity in their values, interests, and working styles
- front-line staff are not supported to act in a way that reflects the partnership spirit
- partnership excludes the community sector, grass-roots community, or by-passes local authorities

Commitment to achieving common goals
- lack of clear direction, and the interventions undertaken focus on 'guessed' needs
- government partners are unwilling or unable to adapt their cultures and ways of working in response to community needs and preferences
- the partnership does not achieve what it set out to do
- some partners' commitment wanes

Operating environment
- disputes over definitions of partnerships
- failure to network with other partnerships and providers
- unclear divisions of tasks or responsibilities
- lack of collaboration between agencies
- high costs in establishing the partnership, complex organisational frameworks, and high transaction costs

- onerous monitoring and accountability procedures
- involvement in the partnership over-stretches resources of partner organisations (particularly community and small business)
- there are legislative or government policy constraints

Time-frames and resources

- short time-scales, with insufficient time to establish the partnership, and for results to be achieved
- insufficient resources and no ongoing funding.

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