



Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland



Community Planning: how do we do it?

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Definition

Community planning is a process by which the council and its community planning partners identify long-term objectives for:

- (a) Improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the district and contribute to sustainable development in NI; and
- (b) Identifying actions to be performed and functions exercised by the council and its community planning partners

The Process

An overall vision/mission statement for the Council area.

- A small number of **high-level cross-cutting themes** which require collaborative actions across community planning partners with an identified lead organisation.
- An action plan linked to the cross-cutting themes with measurable targets and outputs.
- A formal commitment to the community plan by partners through their own internal planning and decision making processes.
- Monitoring and evaluation of progress in meeting the targets/outputs outlined in the community plan



Proofing

- High level commitments to ‘what we will do’ – these must add value to the existing work of planning partners.
- Limit the number of actions but make them truly collaborative, realistic and achievable – in other words, partners need to co-operate to make them happen (cross-cutting, joined-up commitments).
- Measurable targets associated with ‘how we will do it’.
- Community plan should be ‘budget neutral’ – making better use of existing resources.
- Ultimate test of community planning is whether its implementation improves the quality of peoples’ lives in district council.



Quality of Life Improvement

- Adapting QoL indicators to the circumstances of Northern Ireland (Audit Commission)
- Moving out of the 'comfort zone' of service-specific targets.
- Greater transparency and accountability for improving things that matter to the quality of citizens' lives.

See example in policy briefing



Issues

- Role of local authority in the process (*primus inter pares*)? Will LA gain respect of partners? Who will be at the table?
- Commitment of partners ('promote and encourage community planning')
- Dual accountabilities – horizontal and vertical
- Role of voluntary/community sectors
- Funding – 'cost neutral'?



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