Data Sharing

Solving the problem

Data Sharing

Summary

Data sharing between partners is essential to effective use of evidence in neighbourhood renewal strategies and service delivery - but is beset by many barriers. NRU research in the North West has reviewed the nature and causes of these obstacles, and identified successful practice in addressing these. Solutions relate to strategic leadership, agreement on boundaries and terminology, protocols, training, information sharing networks, use of ICT systems, and partnership skills.

Contents

Outline of the solution

Data sharing at the heart of successful approaches to neighbourhood renewal

The cross-cutting nature of neighbourhood renewal places a high priority on partners being able to draw on good quality data across all neighbourhood renewal themes. Data *sharing* is thus at the heart of concerns for local partners, such as:

- are we doing the right things?
- are we targeting the right people? the right places? the right services?
- what impact are we having in 'closing the gap' for our poorest neighbourhoods?
- how can we demonstrate to local people the value of what we are doing?

Obstacles to data sharing recognised at the outset of the National Strategy

The PAT 18 report, *Better Information* (1999), prepared as an input to the National Strategy on Neighbourhood Renewal, identified a number of serious barriers to data sharing, including:

- low priority given to small area information by people responsible for collecting data
- confusion about the law on data protection and sharing of statistics
- poor or inconsistent geographical referencing of data (which makes it difficult to aggregate and compare data at different spatial levels)

The PAT 18 report instigated major developments on information for neighbourhood renewal, most notably the development of the Neighbourhood Statistics Service (NeSS) by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). This has facilitated access to relevant *national* datasets.

Needs in LSPs and LAAs

Meanwhile, needs for better information have been cast into sharp relief by LSP experience of Performance Management reviews and Floor Target Action Planning. These have highlighted a range of weaknesses, eg, in baseline data, the adequacy of national and local data sets, and capacity for data analysis, and continuing obstacles to data sharing. Many LSPs have identified in their Improvement Plans needs relating to better use of data, including more attention to 'drilling down' to neighbourhood level and disadvantaged groups (including BME groups – with issues highlighted in the piloting by LSPs of NRU guidance on Ethnic Monitoring). More recently, the piloting of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) has demonstrated the need for a sound local evidence base and cross-partner performance management systems.

Barriers found in the North West	Research for the NRU in the North West found evidence of range of barriers which tend to limit data sharing and its effective use. These include: • limited knowledge of how data protection legislation works - and a lack of confidence in what is lawful to share • actual or perceived costs and risks in sharing data (eg, costs in providing data for partnership rather than internal purposes; risks that data will be misinterpreted or sensitive information divulged) • different definitions (eg, of terminology, boundaries, geographical units, and ethnic groups) and different methods (eg, in planning surveys) • available resources and capacity to undertake tasks such as developing collaborative IT systems and data sharing arrangements, managing larger surveys, and carrying out analyses which cut across neighbourhood renewal themes • culture and attitudes, notably risk averse behaviours where people seek reasons not to co-operate or act, or fail to see opportunities
Range of applications of shared data: tracking change, targeting services, etc *Different histories of data sharing amongst neighbourhood renewal themes*	## What worked where and why? The research in the North West found a range of approaches to sharing and improving the use of data, which were making quite a difference in a range of applications, eg: • tracking neighbourhood change • targeting services (eg, for helping people on Incapacity Benefit into work) • undertaking Floor Target Action Planning • monitoring integrated Community and neighbourhood renewal strategies The most developed arrangements for data sharing related to: • community safety, where the Crime and Disorder Reduction Act 1998 "allows and requires" data sharing in support of local Crime and Disorder Strategies (eg, in undertaking crime audits and in identifying for crime and anti-social behaviour 'hot spots') • children and young people, where there is a major national push under the 'Every Child Matters' policy. (Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 introduced a "duty to co-operate", and the Government is expecting local authorities and their partners to address systemic and cultural barriers to information sharing) It is essential to **understand the legal basis for data sharing**, and why there is a need to balance protection of individual privacy with

the common good. The principal legislation is the Data Protection Act 1998 which takes as its starting point whether a public body has the *power* to share data. Agencies must then observe the Human Rights Act, the common law on confidentiality and observe DPA principles (on appropriate and fair use of data, arrangements for keeping data secure, etc). Importantly in the neighbourhood renewal context, the DPA allows the further processing of personal data for *research* purposes which relate to the original intentions in collecting the data. This is provided that the data are not used in ways which lead to measures or decisions affecting particular individuals, nor used in ways which cause substantial damage or substantial distress to individuals. It may be helpful to **provide training in data sharing**, to build staff confidence in what data they can share and under what circumstances.

Partners may choose to **formalise data sharing arrangements**, primarily through data sharing protocols. Protocols can be used as a means of helping to build - and maintain - partnerships involving data sharing, clarifying the process and types of information that may be exchanged – important in managing the potential uncertainties about what is legal and what is not. They cover topics such as: the purpose, objectives and scope of the data sharing; principles and relevant legislative powers; partner undertakings; risk management/ indemnity; and DPA compliance. As in Liverpool, they may be set up on more than one level, with an overarching protocol setting out the strategic purposes and principles to be adopted by partners, and more detailed protocols covering more specific themes (eg, community safety or children and young people's services) and operational requirements.

Agreeing **common boundaries and definitions** can be a fundamental building block for data sharing - without this, data sharing can be very difficult, very time consuming or impossible. The North West research found various examples where police, fire and local authority boundaries had been aligned at sub-district or neighbourhood level, and progress towards using ONS Super Output Areas (the new building blocks for Census and related geographical analysis, with fixed boundaries) by public agencies. Common approaches to performance management (eg, Liverpool Single Targeting Framework on employment) have prompted agreement of common terminology.

Information sharing networks can play a helpful role in developing collaborative relationships and providing a vehicle for implementing joint projects. In Wigan, such a network created an information sharing database (to help practitioners and analysts appreciate the scope and potential of local data sets) and provided a platform for a range of subsequent data sharing arrangements. In other areas, data sharing is being promoted through other groups, eg, LSP

	performance management sub-groups.
	# What explains what works?
Good practice in partnership working	Success in promoting data sharing essentially reflects **good practice in partnership working**, at both strategic and operational levels. The North West research found data sharing initiatives characterised by clearly articulated common goals, mutual advantage to the participating organisations, fair sharing of contributions, risks and rewards, and 'can do' attitudes. Leaders on LSPs can create the climate for better use and sharing of data, act to resolve specific barriers and support change, eg, in introducing common monitoring systems and processes. Partners have typically worked hard to build trust - crucial given the nature of some of the barriers described above. They have done this through, eg: • respecting confidentiality and keeping promises • being responsive to partner concerns and taking care how shared data is presented in any publication • giving partners the opportunity to comment on how their data has been used and interpreted • winning and sustaining the support of their colleagues for data sharing • keeping an eye on their own organisation's adherence to partnership agreements, including data sharing protocols Co-location of services, secondments and 'hot desks' in partner organisations have been ways of fostering such partnership working.
Skills in making the case	**Making the case for data sharing** has been a critical skill in building commitment and overcoming barriers, importantly helping other parties see the benefits from their perspective. This has been the key to unlocking partner support, eg, in accessing Accident and Emergency data for crime reduction purposes or in improving services to elderly people. Skills in persuasion are closely linked with skills in communication, with examples where analysts have been able to make the data come to life for audiences and readers.
Role of ICT systems	**ICT developments** have opened up new possibilities for enhanced data sharing and analysis, sometimes as part of local e-Government strategies. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) are increasingly used in crime mapping, informing strategy review and operational targeting, and in seeking to understand housing market dynamics and neighbourhood change in Liverpool and Manchester. Greater Manchester Against Crime (GMAC) has a particularly well developed example of crime mapping, which brings together information from

	the health service, ambulance, fire and transport, probation, community safety and drug action teams, youth offending teams and local authorities – along with socio-economic data. Their system has been used by local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to research crime and anti-social behaviour hotspots and devise successful responses. It also frees time for such analytical work, previously absorbed in dealing with data quality problems. ICT-based performance management systems are also being developed by LSPs, eg, Performance Plus in Wigan and the Impact extranet in Manchester.
Action by leaders *Action by those in delivery and analytical roles*	## Checklist **for those in strategic leadership roles** • **Take a strategic view of data for performance improvement**, identifying future requirements for data access and quality to underpin strategic decision-making, service improvement, tracking of neighbourhood change, robust performance management and public accountability • **Help create the conditions for more effective data sharing**: argue the case for more joined-up approaches to performance management and the use of evidence; foster a 'can do' approach; and promote local good practice in data sharing and analysis • **Appreciate the high level issues relating to data sharing and data protection** - including powers under administrative law relating to public bodies and the scope for lawful sharing under the DPA. Consider adopting a high level data sharing protocol **for those in delivery and analytical roles** • **Invest time in building relationships with partner agencies**, in ways which will build the mutual understanding and trust necessary for successful data sharing. Behave in ways which give others confidence in the integrity of your use of data (eg, in consulting data sources on use of the data supplied; ensuring data quality standards are maintained in your own organisation) • Ensure that you - and your partners - **understand the legal basis for data sharing**, including the specific powers which apply in any given context • **Develop capabilities in negotiating and persuading**: understand how to make the business case for ICT and other developments which will strengthen data quality; appreciate the concerns of other parties and put forward compelling cases for data sharing - and develop these skills as part of wider skill sets for multi-agency project working (including, eg, change management and stakeholder analysis)

	• Make the most of opportunities for **co-location, secondments and 'hot desk' arrangements**
	• **Develop action-oriented task groups on information sharing**, to plan improvements in data quality and access and act on local data sharing barriers (eg, agreeing common definitions and boundaries; assessing software which can enable anonymised sharing of data)
	• **Formulate specific protocols to strengthen data sharing arrangements** (where warranted) and ensure that all staff involved understand the rationale and their personal responsibilities
	• **Plan ahead in setting up data gathering systems**: build in consent requirements to cross-agency access for stated purposes and flag possible future uses
	• **Explore scope for greater collaboration** in research and analytical practices (across themes, across areas)
	• **Keep up-to-date on national developments** which offer potential for improving data access and data sharing, especially relating to local e-Government and Neighbourhood Statistics

Want to know more

Contacts

SELD (Supporting Evidence in Local Delivery) pilot projects in the North East, North West, South West and West Midlands offer a range of information and advisory services and events promoting more effective use of evidence for neighbourhood renewal.

Name	Telephone number	Email address
SELD North East (ERS)	0191 261 177	info@seld-ne.org.uk
SELD North West (CLES)	0161 233 1924	stuartmacdonald@cles.org.uk
SELD South West (South West Observatory)	0800 328 3234	seld@swo.org.uk
SELD West Midlands (RegenWM)	0121 202 3260	seld@regenwm.org

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Department for Constitutional Affairs (2003) Public Sector Data Sharing: Guidance on the Law
www.dca.gov.uk/foi/sharing/toolkit/lawguide.pdf

Johnstone D, Johnstone S and Garrard S (2005) Data Sharing for Neighbourhood Renewal: Lessons from the North West
www.neighbourhood.gov.uk

NRU (2005) Ethnicity Monitoring Guidance Pathfinder Project - Report of the Findings
www.renewal.net/Documents/RNET/LSP%20Delivery%20Toolkit/EthnicityReportFindings.doc

ONS (2005) National Statistics: A guide to legally sharing data for statistics
www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/Info.do?info=link.jsp?page=DataAccess.htm

PAT 18 (1999) Better Information
www.socialexclusion.gov.uk/publications.asp?did=131

Further Reading

Department for Constitutional Affairs - Data Sharing Toolkit
www.dca.gov.uk/foi/sharing/toolkit/index.htm

Home Office - Using Intelligence and Information
www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/ui00.htm

local e-Government
www.localegov.gov.uk/en/1/localegov.html

Illustrations from the North West

Greater Manchester Against Crime
www.gmac.org.uk/

Liverpool Single Targeting Framework
www.liverpool.gov.uk/Business/Economic_development/Key_Statistics_and_Data/Single_Targeting_Framework/index.asp

Examples of relevant LSP data/ intelligence sites

Brighton and Hove Citystats
www.citystats.org/

Cornwall LINC
www.linc4info.org.uk/cms/index.html

Leeds Statistics
www.leeds-statistics.org/

Leicester Shire Online Research Atlas
www.lsora.org/commport/

Nottingham NOMAD
http://webgis.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/website/nomad/index.asp?service=public_statistics&layers=statistics&

Rochdale Stats and Maps
www.statsandmaps.org.uk

Oldham Info
www.oldhaminfo.org/

Plymouth Informed
www.plymouth-informed.org.uk/