



Finland 2004

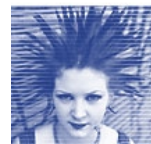
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HYVE – Citizens’ social support networks model

A model of building local
partnerships in the
context of universal
welfare in Finland

Comment Paper,
United Kingdom





Part 1 – Introduction

It seems appropriate to introduce the comments in this paper by reference to the current situation within the United Kingdom.

The UK National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2003-2005 outlines the most important issues for the United Kingdom in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. It is the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Union's long term goal that there should be a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty across Europe by 2010.

Tackling and social exclusion is primarily the responsibility of United Kingdom authorities, whether the central, regional or local. The Government is committed to the Lisbon agenda which seeks to create more and better jobs leading to greater social inclusion and less poverty. It is committed to achieving this goal in a way that is recognisable to people in local communities, not just in terms of official statistics.

The UK Government, along with its devolved administrations accept their responsibility for addressing these problems, but also understand that progress can only be made by working with others.

Local Government throughout the United Kingdom has also given priority to social inclusion. In the context of this peer review it is important to note that the UK's vibrant and innovative voluntary and community sectors are indispensable to the task of building an inclusive society. The UK Government recognises the important role that these partners can play in an effective anti-poverty strategy and it has increasingly sought to work together with them to provide joined up support for those at risk of exclusion.

In looking at the HYVE programme it is important to note the recognition that people with a direct experience of poverty have much to offer a successful anti-poverty strategy. This is beginning to transform the UK's approach. This participative approach coupled with the broader understanding of the issues derived from experiences from other member states within Europe provides further impetus to the fight against exclusion.

As with the HYVE programme, it is acknowledged, within the United Kingdom, that for people of working age, a job is the best route out of poverty. Efforts



have been concentrated on strengthening active labour market policies, making work pay, primarily through tax credits and a minimum wage and developing the skill base of the workforce. However, this cannot be the only strand of policy. Other key approaches include ensuring that those who cannot work have a decent safety net of support and that all people, including those in the most disadvantaged groups or deprived areas are given access to public services.

While household income has an important impact on wellbeing, there are many other factors that can help or hinder efforts to transform the lives of those suffering from poverty. Housing, Health, Education, and employment status may all have a role to play.

A major Government policy that is being developed, is the measure of child poverty for which it has committed itself to reducing child poverty within the United Kingdom by half by 2010 with its eradication by 2020.

An interesting dimension of the unemployment analysis in the UK currently shows that economic success has continued to grow despite ongoing global uncertainties. This growth rate has continued in a period which has seen the longest sustained economic expansion on record. The UK employment rate is the second highest in the G7 group of countries and is well above the EU average. Unemployment continued to fall over 2002, contrary to the overall EU trend and is now around 5% which is significantly below the EU average of 8.1%. However, some groups continue to struggle to find work. These include those on benefits that are not conditional on job search, particularly those people who are sick or disabled people and lone parents. People from ethnic minorities have disproportionate difficulty in finding work, as do the long term unemployed, older people and people with few or no qualifications. Therefore whilst unemployment is at record low levels, the numbers of people who are without a job are still of concern.

Joblessness is now a far more significant driver of social exclusion than unemployment. In the UK the main groups of people at risk of exclusion include children, large families, people from ethnic minorities, older people, disabled people.

The priorities for the UK's anti-poverty strategy 2003-2005 reflect these issues.



Since the HYVE has had major involvement from the NGOs it is perhaps worth mentioning that the UK Government has been building a dialogue with representatives of non-governmental organisations, Local Government and others, including people with direct experience of poverty, to support work in this area. An important forum for this dialogue has been discussions between officials and the social policy taskforce which is an ad hoc NGO umbrella group constituted to discuss national action plan issues, and to work together on other areas of mutual interest for example, the measurement of child poverty. An integral part of the way in which the Government has approached its work has been to ensure that the participation of people with direct experience of poverty throughout.

Local Government is in a unique position to influence the work going on in communities to tackle exclusion, for example by supporting individual and families suffering isolation by offering self-help services to form community groups. Local authorities take a leading role in local strategic partnerships which are helping to join up essential services provided to the public. These and other local partnerships play a unique role in bringing the European Union dimension down to a local level.

Local Public Service Agreements have been developed to free up English Councils to deliver services in response to local needs while meeting and exceeding national targets. Local Authorities agree to tough targets in return for improved public services. They are rewarded for this financially and by a more “hands off” approach from central Government. These Agreements have resulted in over 10,000 people being helped to get their correct benefit and pension entitlement. Central government has also agreed Partnership Accords with a number of local authorities which commit both parties to working together to help the hardest to reach into work, tackle child poverty and increase the take up of Pension Credit.

Part 2

The understanding gained prior to the Peer visit is that the HYVE project is positioned to deliver a co-ordinated partnership approach to issues of social exclusion and poverty.



The Citizens Welfare Networks (HYVE) is a regional model where local authorities, the Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health, together with various stakeholders seek to secure local partnerships taking into account local conditions with the common goal of reducing social exclusion. NGOs are integral to this approach.

The project, as far as is discernable, seeks to promote innovative responses which the richness of partnership, working to a common goal, can produce.

Network models can work well providing parameters and roles and responsibilities are well defined.

Such networks only work well if all partners are not averse to taking risk and are keen to obtain clearly identified outcomes.

The UK would be interested to learn more about the role of personnel training and the joint research which will be required at the outset.

The UK would be interested to understand the framework agreement between the Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health and the relevant local authorities.

The UK would be interested to understand how finances are controlled and whether there is an element of pooled budgeting.

The UK would be interested to learn how management structures work laterally across various contributing partners.

Part 3

In trying to understand the processes and relationships which contribute to the HYVE, this is always difficult when reading an abstract paper.

The paper covers a lot of background issues which are systemic in its nature.

The issues which the UK would wish to understand more fully are:-



- a) What are the overriding goals and ambitions for the project(s) and can they be measured?
- b) How is the contribution of the stakeholders determined?
- c) What are the outcomes for the partners?
- d) More importantly, what are the outcomes for individuals who benefit from the project? Can these be measured for each individual and in aggregate form?
- e) How do the partners evaluate success?
- f) How does the Finnish Government measure success?

With the limited information available, it is thought that there might be valuable opportunities for the UK in studying the HYVE through the peer visit.

At the beginning of this paper, an abridged analysis of the UK National Action Plan was outlined. It is clear on two key appropriate issues:-

- a) It is committed to joint partnership work.
- b) It is committed to listening to the views of people who have had experience of social exclusion themselves.

Therefore an initial assessment would lead us to believe that there is an interest in exploring how HYVE might contribute to the UK's approach to social exclusion.