



## Communities First

### Introduction

The Communities First programme was announced by the Welsh Assembly Government in April 2001, and is a 10 year programme which aims to improve the opportunities and quality of life for people living and working in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. The eligible Communities First areas are the 100 most deprived electoral divisions as identified by the 2000 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, 32 areas at sub ward level where pockets of deprivation have been identified and 10 partnerships based on 'imaginative proposals'.

A new Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation was published in November 2005 and succeeds the first Index released in 2000. The new Index provides a more detailed and up-to-date picture of disadvantage in certain areas of Wales, highlighting new areas for consideration. Key stakeholders in the 46 areas that are now in the top 10% most deprived and not currently designated as Communities First areas have been invited to submit applications to become part of the programme<sup>i</sup>.

Communities First funding focuses on the staffing costs of Communities First Partnerships and small scale capacity building projects. Therefore, key to the success of the programme is the ability of other policies and programmes to be targeted at Communities First areas resulting in increased sums of public money going into these communities<sup>ii</sup>.

In 2003, a review of the Communities First programme was carried out by the Deputy Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration<sup>iii</sup>. In September 2006 Cambridge Policy Consultants published a final report on the interim evaluation of Communities First<sup>iv</sup>, which was a three-year evaluation study. A Baseline Report<sup>v</sup> was produced by the Assembly Government in 2006, which presents a range of baseline statistics for Communities First areas.

The Welsh Assembly Government funds support for the Communities First programme through the Communities First Support Network and other support organisations<sup>vi</sup>. The Communities First Support Network is a formal partnership of nine national voluntary sector organisations that offer dedicated support to the Communities First programme.

### Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

There is no Field under Schedule 5 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006* that relates specifically to community regeneration programmes, however Measure-making powers concerning community regeneration initiatives could possibly be sought through Legislative Competence Orders under other Fields, such as Field 15 - Social Welfare or Field 4 - Economic Development.

The following responsibilities relating to Communities First fell within the portfolio of the Social Justice and Regeneration Minister during the Second Assembly:

- Communities First;
- Cross cutting responsibility for Anti-Poverty initiatives;
- Regeneration of urban areas in Wales.

### Key Welsh Government documents from the Second Assembly

Community Strategies Booklet – outlines the Community Strategy policy for the Welsh Assembly Government<sup>vii</sup>.

