**COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

POVERTY OF PLACE

REPORT OF THE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION MANAGER

**CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CIO1: Delivering Customer Focused Services;
CIO4: Improving Partnership Working To Deliver 'One City'.**

1.   Reason for Report

1.1   To highlight to the committee current research as regards poverty of
place in relation to understanding community safety and the relationship
with community cohesion.

1.2   To suggest that the committee has a site visit to both an area where
poverty of place is currently having an adverse impact and an area where
environmental work has had a positive impact upon community cohesion.

2.   Outline of Issues

2.1   Poverty of place is becoming increasingly important in understanding
poverty in general and in particular child poverty.

2.2   It is linked to issues such as social and cultural capital which are being
increasingly used as non-financial indicators of poverty, recognising that
there is a need to broaden the definition of poverty beyond financial
measures if we are to properly address its impact upon real lives.

2.3   Poverty of place refers to, for instance, the way the look of an area can
increase fear of crime, can reinforce low aspirations and can reduce
opportunities for social mixing thereby reducing opportunities to build
bridging and linking social capital[1].

2.4   Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has shown that if an area
suffers from poor environmental quality (litter, graffiti, unkempt patches of
land, poorly maintained footpaths, boarded up buildings and so on)
people are less likely to move about in or through that area. This means
that despite there being services supplied relatively close to those who
need them, the take up is poorer than anticipated.

2.5   This is particularly so with regard to families with children in the most
deprived areas of our city and means that it becomes harder for these
families to escape from the cycle of poverty as they are unable to make

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[1] Bridging and linking social capital refers to the links people and communities make beyond
their closest family and neighbours, for instance to people in organisations or service providers
who will help to encourage people to take up opportunities.

the most of the opportunities they do have.

2.6 A vicious circle of deprivation is thus created whereby a poor environment declines even further because those who are using it do not value it, they exacerbate the already poor quality of the environment thus making it even less likely that others will move through it in order to access services.

2.7 The impact on families and specifically on child poverty is multiple in that:

- Poor environmental quality is linked to a perception that the social norms of wider society are breaking down (social norms being the reason why people don't litter, vandalise, graffiti and so on) where this is the case there can either be an actual or a perceived increase in anti-social behaviour and property related crime.

- As the environmental quality declines families become more isolated and unable/unwilling to travel even short distances to take up services thus limiting the choices and options for those families.

- As families become more isolated the social and family networks that might have supported them break down thus leading to further isolation with communities becoming more and more insular and atomised.

2.8 The problem of insular communities and the breakdown of traditional extended family networks is a significant problem in Sunderland, particularly in the most deprived areas, and was commented on by the Institute for Community Cohesion in its Review of Community Cohesion carried out in 2007/08.

2.9 The problem is associated with a decline in bridging and linking social capital - i.e. those networks and connections that allow people to take up services and opportunities and influence their provision - which has a negative impact upon community cohesion. In effect those children who live in such insular communities do not simply suffer from financial poverty they also suffer from social and community (network) poverty and poverty of place and these aspects of poverty also need to be addressed.

3. Current situation

3.1 There are a number of areas in Sunderland where the impact of poverty of place can be seen to be having effect.

3.2 A number of agendas and initiatives are looking at ways of dealing with this, including the 'Responsive Local Services' aspect of the Community Leadership Programme and the activities of a number of members of the Attractive and Inclusive Delivery Partnership including Groundwork and Gentoo.

3.3 An understanding of the impact of poverty of place on child poverty is

being incorporated into the Child Poverty Strategy with actions to address some of the issues being incorporated into the action plan for the delivery of that strategy.

4.   Recommendations

4.1   That the Community and Safer committee invite members of the Environment and Attractive Scrutiny Committee and the Sustainable Scrutiny Committee to accompany them on a site visit to look at areas where poverty of place is evident and also projects where it is being addressed.

4.2   Suggested areas include Fencehouses where at the LMAPS there is a repeated concern with community cohesion and community safety issues arising from poor environmental quality.

4.3   Also Hendon Community Allotment where a project by Groundwork is actively addressing some of these issues.