

**Stevenage Borough Council
Social Inclusion Strategy
2007 - 2010**

Contents

Foreword	3
Section 1: The National Context for Social Inclusion	
1.1 What is social inclusion?	4
1.2 Why promote social inclusion?	5
1.3 The national approach	6
1.4 Related national agendas and themes	7
Section 2: Stevenage Borough Council's Social Inclusion Strategy	
2.1 Strategy development	9
2.2 Strategy vision	9
2.3 The East of England Regional Assembly's Social Strategy	10
2.4 Relevant Stevenage Borough Council strategies	10
Section 3: Social Inclusion in Stevenage	
3.1 Stevenage profile	12
3.2 History and communities	12
3.3 People and place	13
3.4 Individuals and groups at risk of exclusion in Stevenage	14
3.5 Next steps	16
Section 4: Stevenage Borough Council's Programme for Change	
4.1 What we've done and why	17
4.2 What we will do and why	17
4.3 Programme for change	20
4.4 Performance targets	33
Bibliography	34
Appendix A: Stevenage profile	38
Appendix B: Groups at risk of social exclusion	43
Appendix C: Some work to promote social inclusion	47

Foreword

Social inclusion is at the heart of Stevenage Borough Council's aims and I firmly believe that everybody in the town should have the opportunity to achieve their potential in life.

We already do a lot of work toward promoting social inclusion in Stevenage across all our services. This includes high profile projects such as the development of Children's Centres, the Summerfest activities programme for young people, and holidays for older people, as well as many other less obvious ways such as making council information more accessible.

We need to make sure that social inclusion in Stevenage continues to be a high priority. This strategy aims to do this in two ways, by ensuring that social inclusion is a mainstream activity – not one that is 'bolt on', as and when time and resources permit, and by ensuring that efforts to promote social inclusion are coordinated with good practice widely shared across the organisation.

Although the issues dealt with are not easy to solve, this strategy and accompanying 'Programme for Change' show our determination to make Stevenage a place with a strong sense of community where everyone is valued.

Cllr Sue Myson
Executive Councillor for Community and Culture

Section 1: The National Context for Social Inclusion

1.1 What is social inclusion?

In 1997 the newly elected Labour Government developed a wide-ranging and ambitious social policy programme to tackle the high levels of poverty and inequality being experienced in the United Kingdom at the time. As part of this programme the Government established the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) which aimed to develop 'joined up working solutions' to address the 'joined up problems' of social exclusion.

The Social Exclusion Task Force (SETF) replaced this unit in June 2006. The Task Force now aims to extend opportunities available to the vast majority of people in the UK, to all the people whose lives have been characterised by deprivation and exclusion. The Social Exclusion Task Force are also working with other Government departments to ensure that the needs of the most socially excluded are addressed.

Social inclusion and social exclusion are broad, complex terms that are not easily defined. The terms have replaced a number of old political phrases relating to multiple deprivations, including anti-poverty and social development work. As a result, the variety of issues that the terms now cover cut across a wide range of Government, Council (and partner) services.

The Social Exclusion Task Force provides the most recent national definition of social exclusion:

“Social exclusion is about more than income poverty. It is a short-hand term for what can happen when people or areas have a combination of linked problems, such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown. These problems are linked and mutually reinforcing. Social exclusion is an extreme consequence of what happens when people don't get a fair deal throughout their lives, often because of disadvantage they face at birth, and this disadvantage can be transmitted from one generation to the next” (SETF, 2006).

The Social Exclusions Unit's national definition of social inclusion remains unchanged:

“Social inclusion is not quite the mirror image of social exclusion. Social inclusion is sometimes described as citizenship, but also incorporates the idea that people are not only able to make choices but feel that what they choose to do will make a difference to themselves, their families and their communities, i.e. a sense of control” (EERA, March 2004).

1.2 Why promote social inclusion?

In 1997 the Social Exclusion Unit identified some of the root causes of social exclusion in the UK. These included:

- increasing (long term) unemployment;
- increasing numbers among very disadvantaged groups; and
- children growing up in workless households, (partly due to an increase in single parent families, and rising levels of crime, drug misuse and anti social behaviour).

They highlighted that the causes and consequences of social exclusion are both multi-dimensional and can pass from generation to generation. As a result, individuals suffering from social exclusion could be subject to a lifetime of disadvantage. A child who experiences poverty and poor educational attainment is at risk of entering a life cycle of deprivation and in the longer term having a lower life expectancy (SEU, 2004).

The priority that the government has given to its social exclusion agenda since 1997 has been reflected in its budget and spending reviews. New policies have been developed, focusing on improving quality of life for vulnerable people by:

- addressing individual needs;
- improving access to work;
- tackling child poverty;
- promoting life opportunities;
- supporting communities; and
- tackling the most disadvantaged.

The policies have all emphasised prevention, early identification and joined up partnership working (SEU, 2004).

A number of area-based initiatives have been developed to tackle social exclusion at local level. These have included:

- New Deal for Communities;
- Neighbourhood Renewal Fund;
- Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders;
- Employment Zones;
- Pathways to Work;
- New Deal for Disabled People;
- Sure Start for Later Life; and
- Education Health and Sport Action Zones.

These have all been aimed at enabling and empowering disadvantaged people in the UK's most deprived wards (SEU, 2004).

Since 1997, there has been record levels of employment, crime levels have fallen by 44 percent, 19 out of 20 individual's income has risen by 2 to 3 percent, 800,000 children and 1 million pensioners have been lifted out of

poverty, and there have been year on year increases in educational attainment and life expectancy (SETF, 2006).

However, a recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation highlights that “where the Government has acted, change has happened. Where it has not, previous trends have continued” (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2006). Progress has been made on reducing child poverty, but has fallen short of the government target to take one million children out of child poverty. There has been a reduction in poverty among pensioners, however poverty among working age adults has not been reduced. There remain inequalities in income and pay; health by social class; and exclusion by institutions, in particular the work place. Although there has been improvement in the numbers of students reaching minimal education standards, this has diverted attention from the failure to improve outcomes of the quarter of 19 year olds who fail to reach them (The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2006).

1.3 The national approach

Reaching out: an action plan on social exclusion

The Social Exclusion Task Force’s first publication ‘Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion,’ details the government’s current approach towards tackling social exclusion and promoting social inclusion in the UK.

The revised Government agenda concentrates on tackling the persistent exclusion suffered by a small minority of ‘harder to reach’ people in the UK. The action plan focuses on a ‘lifetime’ approach, in which the Government aims to intervene early and persistently to prevent individuals and families at very high risk of exclusion from experiencing a lifetime of disadvantage. The document also highlights that the government cannot tackle social exclusion alone. Individuals, the private sector and the wider community have a role to play in achieving the new agenda. People who are suffering from social exclusion must want progress for themselves and those around them.

Five key principles are used to summarise the overall approach:

- **Better identification and early intervention**
To identify people who are at risk of experiencing disadvantage, so that the problems can be addressed before social exclusion takes place.
- **Systematically identifying what works**
To find out which social exclusion and social inclusion projects really make a difference to individuals lives and the communities they live in. These projects can then be used more widely across government, council and partner services.
- **Promoting multi agency working**
To make sure that the government, councils and partners share information and work together to tackle social exclusion and promote social inclusion.

- **Personalisation, rights and responsibilities**
To develop projects that are based on strong relationships with people and families at risk of social exclusion so that we can address their individual needs more effectively.
- **Supporting achievement and managing underperformance**
To challenge local areas to develop appropriate and imaginative proposals to address the needs of the most excluded.

Social exclusion: some possible broader areas of concern

In September 2006, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation also produced a document titled 'Social exclusion: some possible broader areas of concern.' The document identifies three larger groups in society who are at risk of problems linked to social exclusion. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation argue that alongside the small groups in need, currently targeted by the Social Exclusion Task Force, the needs of these three larger groups must also be addressed.

Within the three groups, two different, but overlapping problems exist. These are; 'incomplete transitions' and 'insecure groups':

Incomplete transitions

- People who fail to reach minimum educational standards at age 16, 19 and beyond. People in this situation face higher risks of low income, unemployment and worklessness.
- People unable to find independent affordable housing. This problem is not restricted to those suffering from income poverty.

Insecure groups

- A set of problems relating to people living alone, people who are disabled, and people who are in workless households. They are more dependant on family and friends who do not live with them (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2006).

1.4 Related national agendas and themes

There are a number of other national agendas and themes that relate to the national social inclusion agenda. These include 'Community Cohesion', 'Equalities and Diversity', 'Access to Work', 'Education and Skills', 'Affordable Housing', 'Innovation through IT' and the 'Respect' agenda.

These agendas and themes have different priorities to the national social inclusion agenda. For example, while the national social inclusion agenda focuses on promoting life opportunities to all in the UK, the community cohesion agenda focuses on promoting citizenship, and the respect agenda aims to promote positive relationships between young and older people.

Although the focus of these agendas and themes are different, they are often interlinked. This means that Government actions taken as part of the community cohesion and respect agendas can also contribute, both directly and indirectly, towards more effective promotion of social inclusion.

Section 2: Stevenage Borough Council's Social Inclusion Strategy

2.1 Strategy development

Stevenage Borough Council is committed to promoting social inclusion in Stevenage. A position statement on social inclusion was produced in 2003, but this needed to be refreshed partly to reflect changes in service delivery since this time. The decision to develop a social inclusion strategy for Stevenage reflects the Council's ongoing commitment towards driving forward strong policies that respond to building a prosperous and inclusive place to live, work, invest, do business and visit (Primera Corporation Ltd, 2006).

Social exclusion can impact on an individual throughout the course of their life. Public sector organisations need to work together in partnership with the private, voluntary and community sectors to break this cycle of deprivation. In order to engage with these stakeholders five Social Inclusion Strategy consultation workshops were held. These were held with Councillors, Council officers, the Stevenage Partnership (which includes partners from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors) and its Social Inclusion Forum, and a community focus group.

This series of consultations has been fundamental in helping to shape this strategy and input has helped to provide a better understanding of the way that different service providers work together. It has also improved communication between stakeholders and highlighted objectives that will promote positive change and an all-inclusive strategy for Stevenage (Primera Corporation, 2006).

2.2 Strategy vision

The overarching aim of this strategy is to improve the life chances of people who experience disadvantage or discrimination, and are at greater risk of social exclusion in Stevenage. In order to continue to grow and prosper there are a number of issues regarding excluded communities and pockets of deprivation across Stevenage that must be addressed. To do this there must be a commitment to, and understanding of, the complex issues and needs that create excluded communities. Through early identification, support and preventative action positive change is achievable.

In partnership with the Stevenage Partnership and the Stevenage community we aim to consider social inclusion when allocating resources and undertaking work in the community. By working together we can take action towards tackling social exclusion, and promote social inclusion across the whole of Stevenage ensuring that life opportunities are extended to all.

2.3 The East of England Regional Assembly's Social Strategy

The following seven objectives were developed as part of the East of England Regional Assembly's Social Strategy published in March 2004. They were adapted as action areas in Stevenage Borough Council's 2003 position statement on social inclusion.

- To tackle poverty and reduce income inequalities
- To promote access to work, tackle low pay and improve conditions of work
- To improve the life chances of children from disadvantaged families and support vulnerable young people in the transition to adulthood
- To improve the life chances of adults through learning and skills development
- To reduce social exclusion of older people
- To support the development of sustainable communities
- To improve access to information and services, especially for disadvantaged groups
- To develop social networks, community assets and promote community cohesion.

The Regional Social Strategy set out a vision to achieve social inclusion throughout the East of England over a ten-year period. The strategy is being refreshed and reviewed at three-year intervals with annual reports on its progress.

During the consultation workshops those who attended felt that these objectives were still relevant to Stevenage. It was agreed that social inclusion issues relating to the regeneration of Stevenage and housing development, should come under the objective to develop sustainable communities.

2.4 Relevant Stevenage Borough Council strategies

Social inclusion is a priority for both us and for the Stevenage Partnership and this is reflected in a number of our existing strategies.

The Community Strategy was first published in 2003, and after three years it is now being refreshed. In the revised Community Strategy the vision is to create "a town that is prosperous, healthy, clean, green and safe...a town with a strong sense of community in which people are proud to live, work visit and do business". The Community Strategy is now shaped around headings taken from the four block themes of the Local Area Agreement; 'Children and Young People, 'Healthier Communities and Older People, 'Safer and Stronger Communities' and 'Economic Development, Enterprise and the Environment.'

Promoting social inclusion comes under the heading of 'Safer and Stronger Communities' and is the main focus of the priority 'Increase Community Cohesion'.

This priority highlights that we want Stevenage to be a town that is inclusive with a strong sense of community identity where everyone is valued, regardless of race, religion, disability, age or gender. We also want people to

have a real say in the decisions that affect their lives and to be proud of their town.

Social inclusion also comes under our ambition for 'Community Leadership' and the priority for a 'Fair and Inclusive Community' in our Corporate Business Strategy.

The need to promote social inclusion in Stevenage feeds into a wide range of other council and partner strategies and plans. These include the Best Value Performance Plan, Consultation Strategy, Communications Strategy, Equalities Strategy, Housing Strategy, Affordable Housing Strategy, Play Strategy, Arts Strategy and the Community Safety Strategy.

Section 3: Social Inclusion in Stevenage

3.1 Stevenage profile

In order to identify gaps in our current approach towards promoting social inclusion in Stevenage we need to look at the town's profile in 2007.

3.2 History and communities

Stevenage was the first post war new town developed under the 1946 New Towns Act. The town is different to many of its neighbouring districts. It is a medium sized town of 80,000 people set in a relatively wealthy semi-rural county, but unlike most other Hertfordshire districts it has the kinds of needs and problems usually associated with large urban areas. There is a danger that the different needs of the community are overlooked when presented to national, regional and county-level decision makers (Stevenage Borough Council, 2004).

Stevenage in common with other former new towns has specific social characteristics. These originate in the uprooting of families from East London and the replacement of the extended family network with a nuclear family structure. Stevenage was originally planned as a network of neighbourhoods, each set around 20 to 30 shops and local amenities.

The town's heritage is reflected today in the strong sense of community spirit still evident in some of its wards. These characteristics are attributable to both the compact communal nature of the town's design, and also to the large number of original residents and families who still live in the town today.

There are a variety of neighbourhood-based communities in Stevenage, supported by our area committees. There are also a number of community-based groups run by community and voluntary sector organisations.

We aim to support and enable the diverse range of communities that exist in Stevenage. Our approach to promoting social inclusion reflects our role as a community leader and a partner within the Stevenage Partnership.

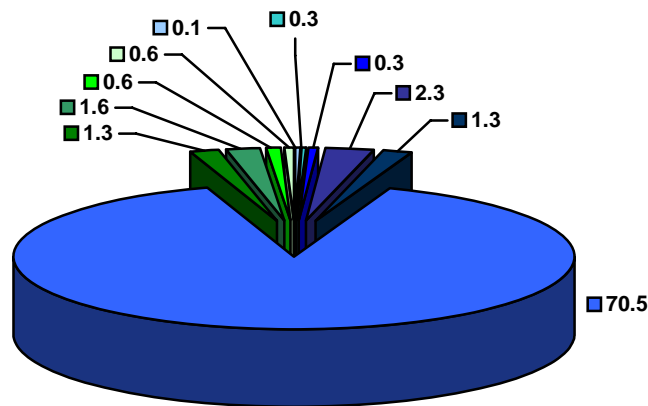
3.3 People and place

Stevenage's population of 80,000 in 2002 accounted for 7.7 percent of Hertfordshire's total. It is forecast to increase by 5.5 percent by 2009. This is amongst the highest growth rates in Hertfordshire. Decreases are forecast for the 5-15, 25-35 and 65-74 year old age groups, but there is a very large increase forecast in the number of 20-24 year olds (38 percent). The numbers in the 83+ are expected to rise by 22.5 percent (Jaye, 2006).

Stevenage has a higher average number of young people, a lower than average number of people of pensionable age, and a relatively low proportion of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. The proportion of BME communities is estimated to have increased in recent years. It is estimated that 92.8 percent of the population are white, and 7.1 percent of the population non-white, an increase of 1.7 percent, from 5.4 percent in 2001.

This estimated increase may result from an increase of BME people moving into Stevenage from other areas in the UK or abroad. Alternatively, the increase may result from an increase in the number of Stevenage residents choosing to register their ethnicity as 'mixed' instead of 'white', a choice that may be influenced by recent international conflict, or cultural change in the UK.

The following chart illustrates the resident population estimates by ethnic group in Stevenage for 2004, by the Office for National Statistics.



- White: British
- White: Irish
- White: White Other
- Mixed: White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed: White and Black African
- Mixed: White and Asian
- Mixed: Other Mixed
- Asian or Asian British: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Other Asian
- Black or Black British: Caribbean, African and Other Black
- Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Chinese and Other Ethnic Group

**Graph 1:
Resident
population
estimates by
ethnic group
in Stevenage
for 2004**

Source:
Statistics
provided by
the Office for
National
Statistics

In Stevenage two thirds of the population state their religion to be Christian. There are also a number of other religious groups in the community, including Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh.

The town has the highest number of people living in local authority housing in Hertfordshire.

Locally, big issues relate to young people (teenage aspiration), schools (low literacy and educational attainment) and families (dependence on income support). Appendix A details some of the issues that the strategy aims to address under each of the East of England Regional Assembly's objectives for social inclusion.

3.4 Individuals and groups at risk of exclusion in Stevenage

When the Social Exclusion Unit was established in 1997, its work covered two main areas: neighbourhood renewal and tackling the exclusion of marginalized groups. The Social Exclusion Unit produced a number of reports on marginalized groups including:

- Excluded pupils
- Rough sleepers
- Teenage parents
- Ex-prisoners
- Children in care
- Older people
- Asylum seekers
- Gypsy and traveller people
- Black and minority ethnic communities
- Faith communities
- Carers
- People with long term illnesses
- Disabled people
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people

This list is by no means exhaustive.

In order to promote social inclusion across the whole of Stevenage we believe that it is first necessary to tackle the root causes of social exclusion and to address the needs of harder to reach groups in the community. By reaching out to these groups, and tackling barriers to social inclusion in Stevenage, it will be possible to progress towards achieving our ambition of 'A Fair and Inclusive Community.'

During the Social Inclusion Strategy consultation workshops a number of groups were identified as being at risk of social inclusion in Stevenage. These include:

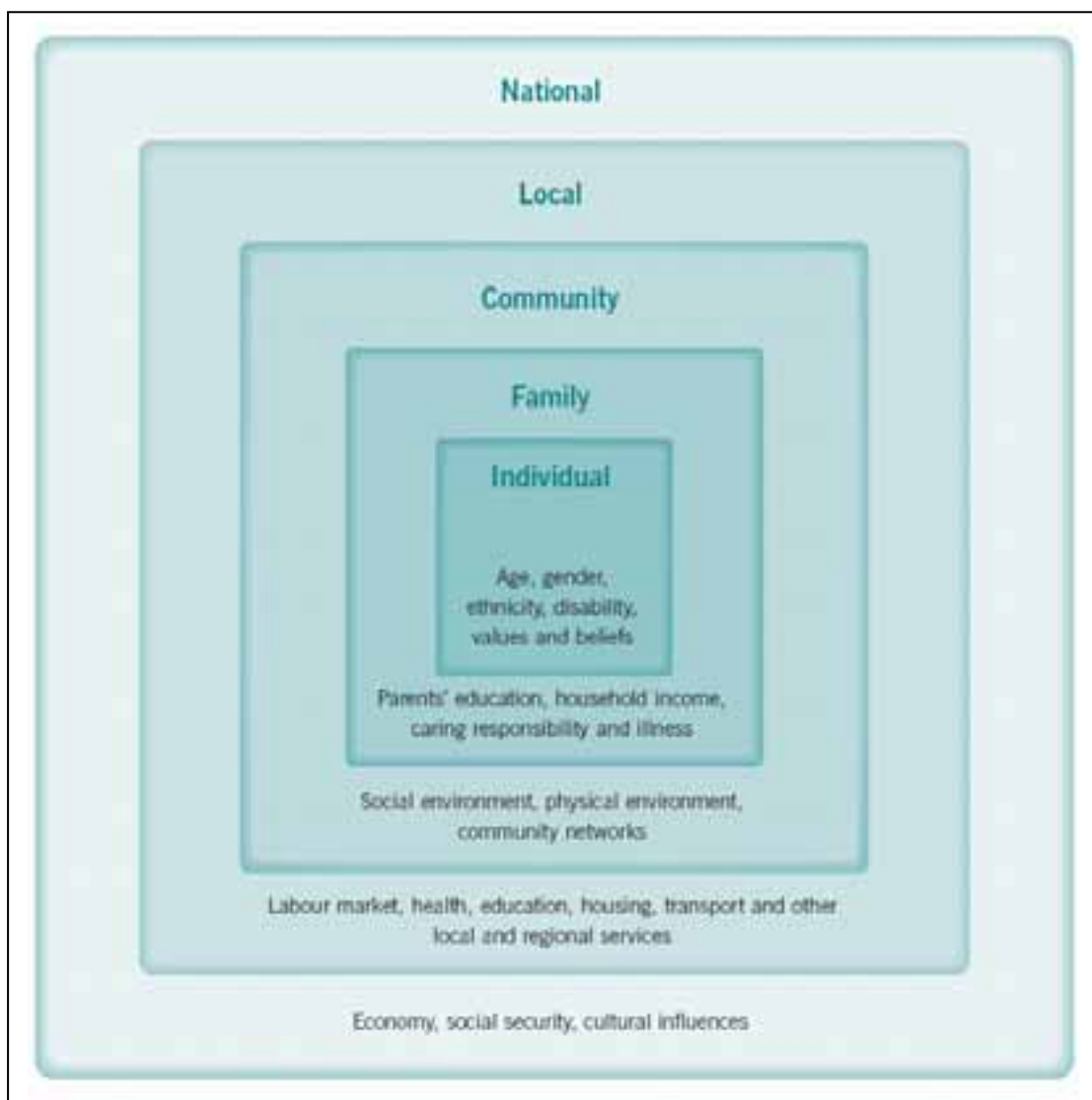
- Children and young people
- Teenage parents

- People with low income or unemployed
- Older people
- Disabled people
- People with a long term illness
- Black minority ethnic people
- Faith communities
- Gypsy and traveller people
- Groups or individuals not already in contact with us

Appendix B includes a description of each of the groups identified above and the barriers to social inclusion that they may be facing in Stevenage.

The East of England Regional Assembly has also produced a diagram illustrating a framework of opportunities and obstacles to social inclusion that individuals or groups may be facing in the East of England. This is illustrated below.

Framework of opportunities and obstacles



3.5 Next steps

In order to promote social inclusion effectively in Stevenage we must address the barriers identified in Appendix B.

It is important to note that the groups listed in this appendix are not the only groups at risk of experiencing social exclusion in Stevenage. Individuals can also be at risk of exclusion without belonging to a particular group. Individuals identified as at risk of exclusion in these groups, may not necessarily experience social exclusion in their lifetime. The risk of social exclusion is highest for those individuals who experience multiple disadvantages.

Within the Council two barriers to the effective promotion of social inclusion in Stevenage have been identified. Firstly, there is an issue surrounding the continuation and mainstreaming of projects that are funded from a variety of sources, when the funding runs out.

Secondly, a lack of effective communication and information sharing between service delivery units and with our partners was identified as a significant barrier. This has resulted in a lack of coordinated action taken towards promoting social inclusion.

We must consider the impact of our decisions, use of resources, and work on harder to reach groups in Stevenage. It is essential that these groups have equal and fair access to services, information and support.

To resolve these issues a 'Programme for Change' within the organisation and in the town will be implemented as part of this strategy. This is described in Section 4.

Section 4: Stevenage Borough Council's Programme for Change

4.1 What we've done and why

We are already doing a lot of work towards promoting social inclusion in Stevenage across all of our service areas. Some of the work that is already being undertaken towards each of the seven objectives outlined in the East of England Regional Assembly's Regional Social Strategy is detailed in Appendix C.

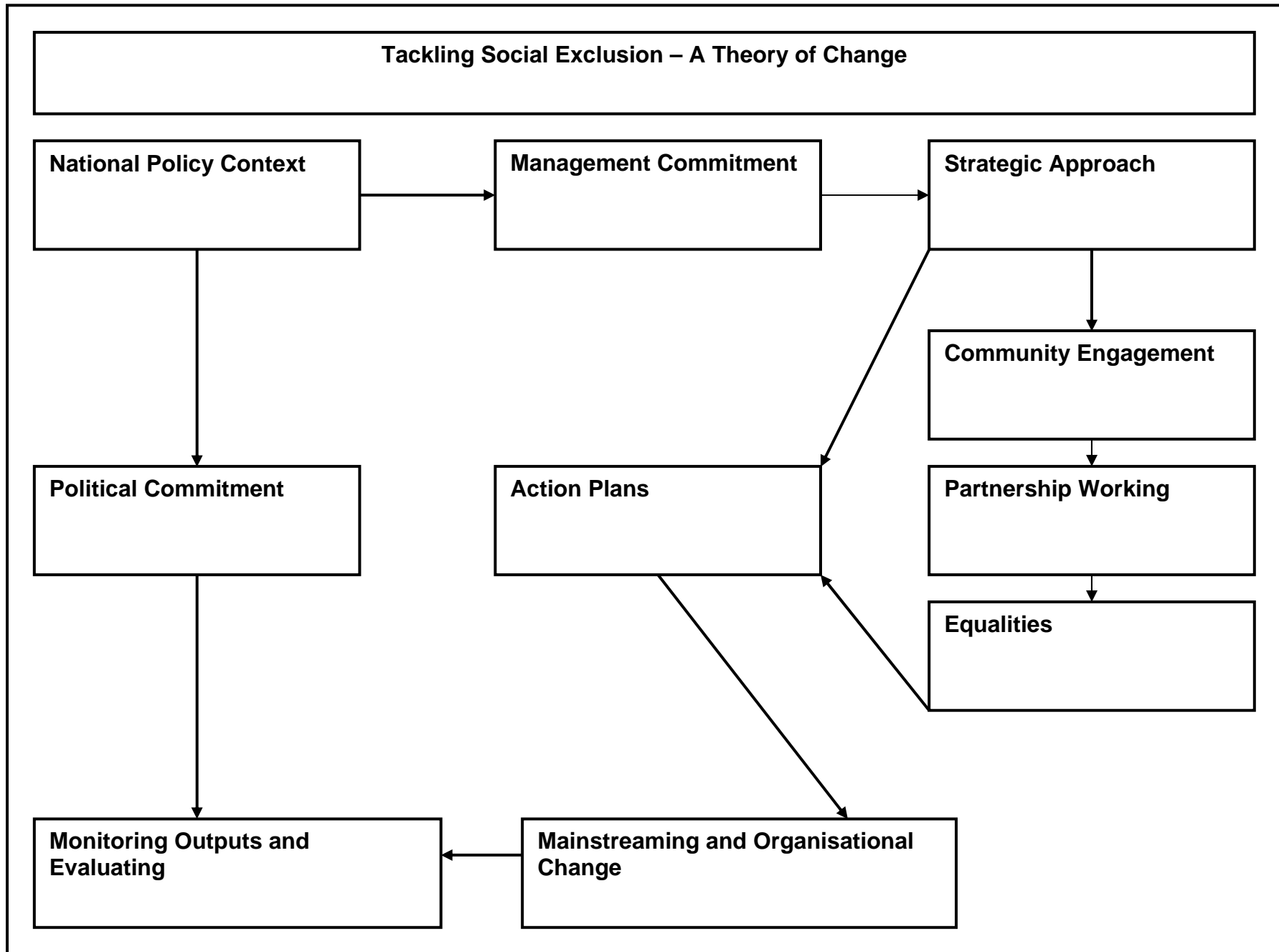
In order to coordinate and mainstream the work that is already taking place across the Council, and consider future areas for action on social inclusion in line with the Social Exclusion Task Force's objectives, it has been necessary to develop a 'Programme for Change'. This programme is designed to create increased awareness of social inclusion issues across all council services areas and to initiate a joined up approach towards action on social inclusion in Stevenage. The impact of our work towards promoting social inclusion will be monitored through performance targets detailed at the end of this section.

4.2 What we will do and why

Our programme for change is an adaptation of 'a theory of change model' taken from a benchmarking best practice publication, jointly produced by the Warwick Business School and the Local Government Information Unit. The work reinforced in the publication, which supports the theory is based on research with the LASE (Local Authorities Social Exclusion) Network run by the Local Government Centre at the University of Warwick.

The LASE Network is a research and learning network that was set up in 1999 to provide a forum for leading local authorities to share their capacity to make the maximum contribution to policies promoting a socially inclusive society. Part of the network's work is a 'peer review' process that looks at managing organisational change within local authorities to address poverty and exclusion (LASE, 2003).

The theory of change model provides the base for the peer review process undertaken by the LASE network. The model illustrates a chain of nine linked themes representing activity that is required to improve local authority implementation of social inclusion policy; moving from theory to practice. A number of local authorities have adopted this model as an effective framework for bringing about change within their organisation.



The theory of change model illustrates a process of organisational change aimed at implementing social inclusion policy into all Council and partner service areas.

The model shows that for a social inclusion strategy to be implemented effectively political and managerial commitment is essential. It indicates that a strong approach and a process of engagement with all key stakeholders and service providers is also necessary. For a strategy to be successful in effecting change there must be an action plan that has specific, measurable, targets. These must be monitored, and outputs recorded and evaluated. The social inclusion strategy should fit with our Equality and Diversity Strategy and other strategies such as the Corporate Business Strategy.

Through changes to the way information is made available; reducing barriers to information and services; partnership working and prioritising funding; and organisational change, effective promotion of social inclusion in Stevenage is possible. Monitoring and evaluating what we are already doing across all service areas, and coordinating these actions reduces the necessity to commit large amounts of additional funding to the Social Inclusion Strategy.

Through ongoing evaluation of current projects it will be possible to identify where we are not already making progress on social inclusion and forward plan bids can be made for funding of projects to tackle these gaps. Where funding is secured for projects, a risk strategy for how to maintain the project when or if the original funding runs out, should be in place from the outset. For neighbourhood projects the aim should be to empower community members to continue projects after the funding source runs out, through skills and leadership training.

In order to achieve effective mainstreaming and organisational change we must make changes to each of the nine themes of the theory of change model.

The following programme for change illustrates actions in each of these nine areas, and an additional section detailing future actions.

The strategy and programme for change will be reviewed at the end of these three years, to consider progress, identify gaps and enable future implementation of a revised Social Inclusion Strategy and action plan from 2010 onwards.

4.3 Programme for change

Theme	Work so Far	Action to be taken	Resource	Person or unit responsible	Time Scale	Progress	Status R/A/G
Political Commitment	Members' social inclusion strategy briefing	Ensure 'access for all' is a corporate aim endorsed by all Members. Profile of social inclusion to be maintained	From existing budget	Elaine Wright / Tim Weetman	From Sept 2007	To link to refresh of the Corporate Business Strategy	
	Member endorsement of link to corporate aims and Stevenage Community Strategy	Members approval of Social Inclusion Strategy	From existing budget	Jo Wilkinson / Executive	To be taken to Executive in Sept 2007	In progress	
Management Commitment	Social inclusion strategy development workshops held with SBC Heads of Service, and Officers	Profile of Social Inclusion Strategy to be maintained	From existing budget	Tim Weetman	From Sept 2007 and on-going	On-going	
		Social Inclusion guide lines to be developed and published on intranet	From existing budget	Tim Weetman	From Sept 2007	Action to link to project case study database on the intranet	
Strategic Approach	Strategic Links with other council strategies explored. Promoting a fair and inclusive community is a key theme of the community strategy and corporate business strategy. Social inclusion is also considered in a wide range of existing Stevenage Borough	Social inclusion consideration in the Community Strategy refresh.	From existing budget	Jo Wilkinson	From April 2007	In progress. Draft Community Strategy to be prepared by Sept 2007	
		Social inclusion consideration in the Corporate Business Strategy refresh.	From existing budget	Elaine Wright	From Sept 2007	Not started	
		Social inclusion consideration in development of the Stevenage Neighbourhood Strategy.	From existing budget	Jo Wilkinson / Tim Weetman	From Sept 2007	Scoping paper to be considered by Executive in September	

	Council strategies.						
		Social inclusion consideration in the Affordable Housing Strategy. The Housing Development team aim to forge stronger relationships and better dialogue with communities on affordable housing in Stevenage. This will involve targeting specific groups to ensure that an all inclusive strategy is developed to meet the needs of all communities across Stevenage	From existing budget	Richard Protheroe	From Jan 2007	Approved by Executive in June	
		Social inclusion consideration in the Generic Equality Strategy, to incorporate Race Equality Scheme, Disability Equality Scheme and a Gender Equality Scheme	From existing budget	Shahzad Choudhry	From Sept 2007	In progress	
	Stevenage profile work undertaken and information collaborated from various sources. Maps illustrating indices of deprivation in Stevenage provide ward data of social inclusion issues in Stevenage.	Use of information to inform Social Inclusion Strategy and performance indicators	From existing budget	Clare Nugent	From Jan 2007	Achieved	

	Series of consultation workshops with SBC staff, the Social Inclusion Forum and LSP, and a Community Focus Group	Reports for each workshop available for reference and sent to attendees	From existing budget	Clare Nugent	From Jan 2007	Achieved	
	Draft Social Inclusion Strategy developed and published	Implement Social Inclusion Strategy and monitor progress	From existing budget	Tim Weetman	From Sept 2007	To begin once approval from Executive confirmed. To be done on a six monthly basis.	
	Review of Strategy in 2010	To take stock of progress, and refresh strategy	From existing budget	Tim Weetman	From Sept 2010	Future action	
Community Engagement	Community Conference held summer 2006	Community Conference being held 21 July 2007	From existing budget	Rehana Mohamed	July 2007	Achieved	
	Vox Pops Consultation with Stevenage's Young People 2006	Feedback to schools	From existing budget	Rehana Mohamed	March 2007	Achieved	
	Stevenage Youth Council	Ensure representation of disadvantaged groups on the Stevenage Partnership. Consider development of a Stevenage Citizen's Panel	From existing budget	Jo Wilkinson / Emma Tucker	On going	Process for securing representation on Stevenage Partnership has been reviewed. Stevenage Partnership. Annual forum took place on 28 June.	

	Social Inclusion Strategy Community Focus Group held January 2007.	Consider further consultation with the community focus group as a reference group to monitor progress and test ideas for promoting social inclusion in Stevenage. Reach out to other groups and individuals that were not represented at the first focus group, for example young people.	From existing budget	Tim Weetman	From Sept 2007	Community Focus Group to be sent final version of Strategy once approved and kept up to date with developments	
	Stevenage Play Strategy	Encourage volunteering and participation through Play Associations for adults and children to contribute to future direction of services and raising competencies in running a community organisation. Operation of adult and young persons play work volunteer schemes at play sites operated by SBC Play Service	From existing budget	Graeme Buck	On going	Volunteering continually reviewed. Training offered through line management	
Partnership Working	Hertfordshire Local Area Agreement in place; SBC Safer and Stronger Communities Block Lead	LAA targets actively promote social inclusion in Stevenage. Align social inclusion with Local Area Agreement through Community Strategy Refresh.	From existing budget	Jo Wilkinson	From April 2007	Refreshed Community Strategy in line with LAA.	

	Stevenage Social Inclusion Forum in place and acting as a reference group for the Social Inclusion Strategy. Workshop held with Stevenage Social Inclusion Forum and Stevenage Local Strategic Partnership December 2006.	Promote multi agency work by maintaining the profile of social inclusion with the Social Inclusion Forum and the Stevenage Partnership. Encourage and support the Social Inclusion Forum to develop a partner Social Inclusion Strategy.	From existing budget	Tim Weetman / Ann Jansz	On going	Regular communication and promotion of Social Inclusion Strategy and Framework for Change, through appropriate channels	
	Stevenage District Children's Trust Partnership. SBC is a key partner in the delivering the Children's and Young Person's Plan	Focus on integrated services; early identification of need and intervention to improve outcomes for children. Inclusion of vulnerable adults and groups key to achieving these outcomes	From existing budget	Graeme Buck	On going	On-going	
Equalities	Level 1 of Equalities standard for Local Government achieved	Equalities and Diversity Officer working towards achieving level 2 of equalities standard for Local Government	From existing budget	Shahzad Choudhry	Jan 2008	In progress	
	Equalities Polices and Strategies Published. These include the Race Equality and Diversity Awareness Schemes.	Link Social Inclusion Strategy with equalities agenda	From existing budget	Shahzad Choudhry	From Sept 2007 and on going	In progress	

	Roll out of Grass Routes Diversity on line e-learning and workbook course; Disability Awareness Training for all Council Members and council employees	This is the first training course of its kind. Once all Members and employees have completed the training course and test, the Equalities Officer will identify those in need of additional in-house training.	From existing budget	Shahzad Choudhry	End March 2007	In progress	
	Equalities reference group in place	Maintain profile of social inclusion through updates to the equalities reference group	From existing budget	Shahzad Choudhry with Tim Weetman	From Sept 2007 and on going	In progress	
Mainstreaming and Organisational Change	New organisational structure will aid implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy, through improved communication and joined up working. Social Inclusion Strategy to be taken forward by the new corporate Policy, Performance and Partnerships Unit.	Community Development Section to form part of a new corporate Policy, Performance and Partnerships Unit with the Corporate Policy and Communications Unit under a new head of service. The Equalities Officer will also form part of this new unit. Community Leisure and Community Services to form a new Leisure, Children and Community Services section with first direct reporting to a Strategic Director.	From existing budget	Strategic Management Board	April 2007	Achieved	
	Advocacy Officer employed by Customer Service Centre effective from 1 January 2007, to support vulnerable customers in	Implement advocacy project	From existing budget	Kirsty Wilkinson	From Sept 2007	In progress	

	accessing information and services.						
	Two Social Inclusion Strategy consultation workshops with Stevenage Borough Council officers and front line staff	Develop a social Inclusion induction presentation to maintain profile as part of induction training for all new council employees	From existing budget	Tim Weetman	From Jan 2007 and on going	In progress. Presentation has been developed and delivered.	
	Initiation of Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children project to fulfil Stevenage Borough Council's statutory responsibilities	Development of a policy and implementation strategy and a toolkit for other District Councils in Hertfordshire	From existing budget	Graeme Buck	From Sept 2007	In progress. Draft policy about to be submitted to consultant.	
Monitoring Outputs and Evaluating	Social Inclusion Strategy	Monitor performance and evaluate outputs of social inclusion strategy. Review after three years.	From existing budget	Tim Weetman	From Sept 2007	In progress	
	Separate monitoring of social inclusion projects by the individual or unit responsible to systematically identify what works	Develop a project case study intranet database that evaluates the success of social inclusion projects across the council. This will enable the council to 'systematically identify what works' and to 'support achievement and manage underperformance'	From existing budget	Tim Weetman	From Sept 2007	Not started	
	Community Strategy: A Town with Strong Communities and Opportunities for all	Monitor targets and evaluate outputs	From existing budget	Tim Weetman	From Sept 2007	Not started. Targets in refreshed Community Strategy to be monitored	

	Best Value Performance Plan: A fair and inclusive community	Monitor BVPI targets and evaluate outputs	From existing budget	Tim Weetman	From Sept 2007	To be monitored annually	
Action Plans	Community Strategy Refresh Action Plan	Social Inclusion Strategy to be considered in the revised Community Strategy action plan	From existing budget	Jo Wilkinson	Sept 2007	In progress. Refreshed community strategy to be published in September	
	Equalities and Diversity Action Plan.	Implement action plan	From existing budget	Shahzad Choudhry	On going	In progress	
Future Actions	To tackle poverty and reduce income inequalities	Explore the benefits, cost and resources implications for implementation of a Citizen Card scheme	Subject to Forward Plan Bid	To be identified	From Sept 2007	Not started	
	To promote access to work, tackle low pay and improve conditions of work	Consideration of additional project to replace the Cement'a'Prize course at Ridgemoor training centre	Investing in Communities Funding	Kari Hall	On going	Cement'a'prize about to end. Continuation funding to be considered.	
	To improve the life chances of children from disadvantaged families and support vulnerable young people in the transition to adulthood	Ensure social inclusion is considered as part of the Every Child Matters agenda. Promote the use of preventative action to tackle social exclusion from childhood.	Central government funding through HCC	Graeme Buck	On going	6 Children's Centres established in Stevenage. Borough Council has agreed to become the lead agency for Children's Centre in Bedwell, Shephall, St Nicholas and Chells. The centres will promote better identification and early intervention.	

		Extended schools agenda to promote family activity in Stevenage and to work with building schools for the future to raise young peoples aspiration and school attainment levels in Stevenage	HCC	Graeme Buck / Aidan Sanderson	On going	In progress. Third consortia now established. Coordinator to be appointed by August. SBC input into BSF through a number of routes.	
		Development of Services through Children Centres and Extended Schools to support parents / carers / teachers to be confident in supporting children and young people's emotional health. To promote mentoring schemes and role models in schools.	HCC and from existing budget	Graeme Buck	On going	On going	
		Encouraging youth volunteering and participation in arts and cultural activity through the Stevenage Art Strategy in partnership with volunteer agencies.	From existing budget	Jo Ward	On going	On going	
		Deliver the Summer Fest summer activity programme for young people across the town in 2008	From existing budget	Fiona Plumridge	July 2008	Not started	

		Big Lottery Fund: Children's Play programme. Term-time after school and holiday play activities in schools and community spaces where there been now previous access. Improving health and building skills and social capacity of children.	BLF grant	Graeme Buck	On going	Grant approved by BLF. Start date 1 Oct 2007, subject to confirmation.	
To promote active ageing and reduce social exclusion of older people and to tackle poverty and reduce income inequalities	Ongoing development of Concessionary Fares Scheme to ensure that travel in and out of Stevenage is affordable for older people	Government Grant and from existing budget	Carl Roberts	On going	In progress. Scheme becomes a national project from 2008/09. SBC's role will be to administer passes.		
	Develop range of social activities in neighbourhoods for older people	From existing budget	Community Development Officers	On going	Support given to Friendship group at The Hyde, 50+ group at Great Ashby and Renaissance group at Chells Manor		
To improve access to information and services, especially for disadvantaged groups	Develop a customer-profiling scheme to identify and share information on individuals in areas that are struggling to access services	From existing budget	Angela Gee	From Sept 2007	In progress. Part of CRM.		
	Add a 'contact us box' onto the council website in six key languages to make council information more accessible to people	From existing budget	Paul Tyler and Shahzad Choudhry	From Sept 2007	In progress		
	Develop text messaging as an option for customers to access council information and services	From existing budget	Paul Tyler	Form Sept 2007	In progress. Report to be taken to Executive in September.		

		Consider Disabled Go as a scheme to increase access to information for disabled people and in Stevenage	From existing budget	Shahzad Choudhry	From Nov 2007	£16k forward plan bid secured. Further £20k to be sought from Stevenage Partnership members before project can commence.	
		Roll out of GIS mapping systems across the council to coordinate use of maps illustrating local statistics	From existing budget	Paul Tyler	On going	GIS rolled out. Currently exploring scope to provide additional content and analysis.	
		Develop a single intranet database of sources for accessing information on local statistics in Stevenage that can be regularly updated to improve access to information across the council	From existing budget	Paul Tyler / Tim Weetman	From September 2007	Not started.	
		In response to the Vox Pops consultation with Young People in Stevenage consider producing a guide about activities in Stevenage aimed at young people. Also review the distribution of the Chronicle magazine in schools to improve access to information.	From existing budget	David Loader / Nicola Pellegrini	From September 2007	Extended Schools consortia has produced guide about activities for young people over the summer holidays. Distribution of Chronicle in schools has been reviewed. Further review to take place later in year.	

	To support the development of sustainable communities	Develop two carbon neutral affordable home projects in Stevenage. These projects will provide frameworks for future environmentally sustainable and affordable housing developments in Stevenage	From existing budget	Richard Protheroe	Dec 2007	In progress. Feasibility study being done.	
		Revise the Council's domestic violence policy and local lettings policy to improve access to information and services and support the development of sustainable communities	From existing budget	Richard Protheroe	End Sept 2007	In progress	
		To ensure that social inclusion is considered as part of the neighbourhood renewal scheme to improve neighbourhood facilities in Stevenage	From existing budget	Adrian Knight	On going	In progress. Consultants appointed.	
		To finalise the offender and ex prisoner housing protocol to ensure that they have access to housing	From existing budget	Rosey Notley	From Jan 2007	In progress. Draft has been out for consultation	
		Community development team to conduct outreach work with the Gypsy and Traveller community in Stevenage and discuss setting up a residents group with them	From existing budget	Community Development Team Leader	On going	On-going. Residents group has been set up in conjunction with HCC.	

	To develop social networks, community assets and promote community cohesion	Social inclusion to be considered as part of the regeneration of the town centre, to develop community assets	From existing budget	Jonathan Entwistle	On going	Preliminary discussions taken place with VCS consortium about re-establishing CVS, CAB and Age Concern offices. Advice on negotiating with contactors being provided about establishing voluntary sector resource centre	
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4.4 Performance targets

It is important that people are able to tell if we are making a difference. The following performance targets have been created following issues raised during the Social Inclusion Strategy consultation workshops and based on the profile information outlined in Appendix A. The Policy, Performance and Partnerships Unit will monitor these annually for the duration of the strategy.

No.	Headline Performance Indicator	Target
1	Wards in the top 30 percent most deprived Super Output Areas in the country	Decrease
2	Rate of unemployment	Decrease
3	Disparity between resident based and work based gross weekly pay	Decrease
4	The number of Stevenage children participating in voluntary activity	Increase
5	Percentage of Stevenage pupils achieving grades A*-C or equivalent	Increase
6	Percentage of young people in education, training or employment	Increase
7	Under-18 conception rate	Decrease
8	Percentage of adults with low or no qualifications	Decrease
8	Life expectancy at birth	Increase
10	Percentage of residents who as satisfied with the facilities in the town	Increase
11	Percentage of residents who state that being attacked because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion is a problem in Stevenage	Decrease
12	Percentage of residents who feel unable to participate and influence decisions made by the council	Decrease

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Appendices

Appendix A: Stevenage profile

The following profile has been collaborated from a variety of sources. Primary sources used, which provide statistical information, include the Office for National Statistics, the Audit Commission's Area Profiles, the Department of Work and Pensions and Nomis Labour Market Statistics. Secondary sources used, which provide analysis of the statistical information, include reports by the East of England Observatory, Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council and our local partners.

To tackle poverty and income inequalities

The central feature of social exclusion is low income. Absolute poverty occurs when an individual is unable to purchase the minimum essentials necessary for living. Relative poverty is defined as 60 percent of the median income of the country after housing costs and is associated with many disadvantages that are perpetuated across generations (East of England Regional Assembly, 2004).

The Indices of Multiple deprivation and map 1 illustrate that income and poverty deprivation levels vary greatly from ward to ward in Stevenage.

The new Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 (IMD 2004) provides data on Super Output Areas (SOA). As ward data is not available, data is given for Super Output Area's within districts. These areas are similar to wards but are given identity numbers instead of a name. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 consists of measures of multiple deprivation for each SOA area, which are made up of seven indices. These indices are:

- Income deprivation
- Employment deprivation
- Health deprivation and disability
- Education, skills and training deprivation
- Barriers to housing and services
- Living environment deprivation and crime

Each domain contains a number of indicators. There are also two supplementary indices: income deprivation affecting children; and income deprivation affecting older people.

In the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 Stevenage is ranked 203 out of 354 districts for average score of deprivation in England (where 1 is the most deprived).

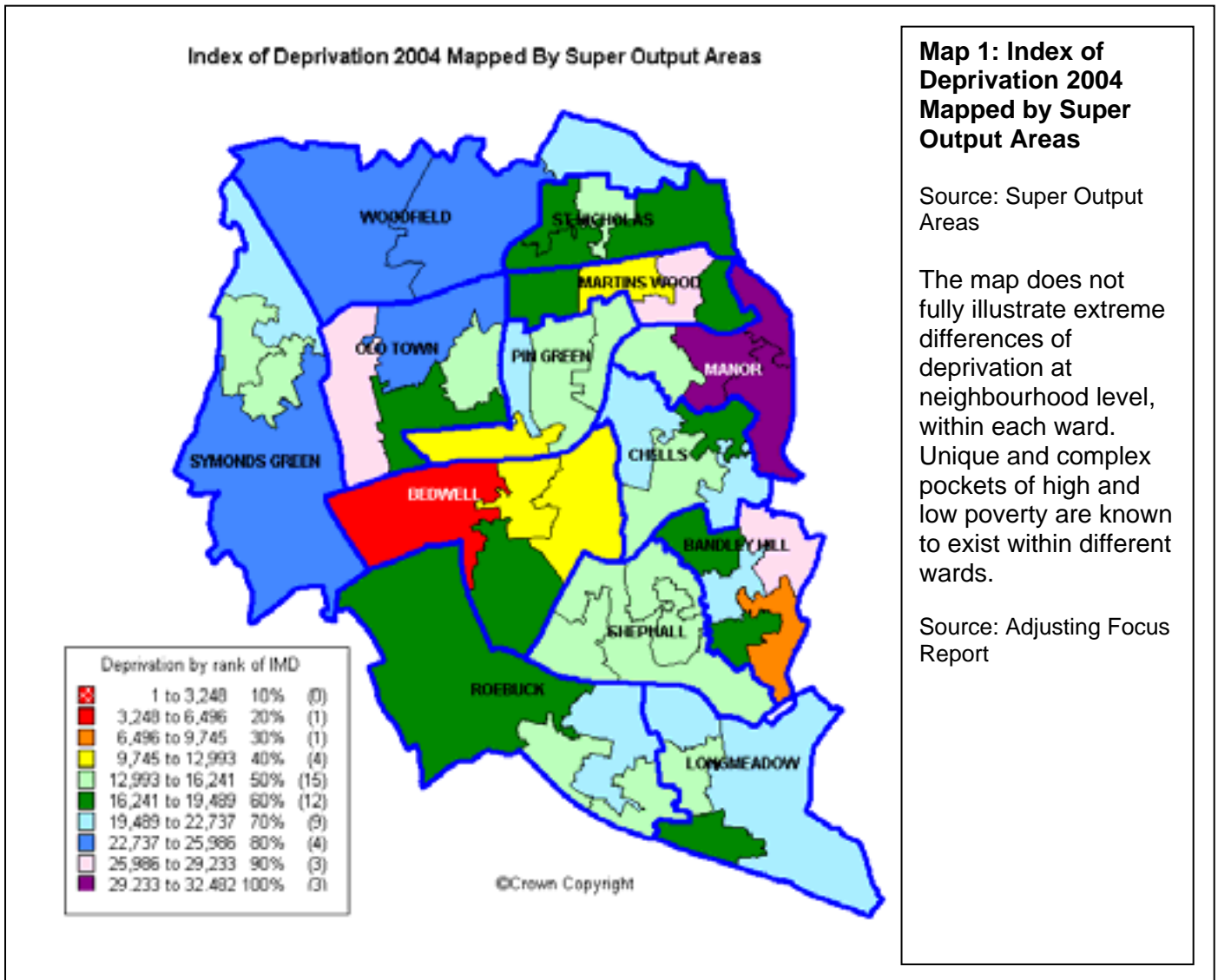
In Hertfordshire, Stevenage is the most deprived district with more Super Output Areas in the 25 percent worst in the region for the scales of income, employment, education and skills, and health than any other (Jaye 2006).

According to the income scale of the Index of Multiple Deprivation, Stevenage had 9,598 people affected by income deprivation, representing 12 percent of the resident population. According to the employment scale, Stevenage had

3,332 employment-deprived people, representing 6.8 percent of the population of working age people. On both counts Stevenage ranks first in the county. There are few Super Output Areas where there is deprivation in terms of housing and living (Jaye 2006).

Stevenage also contains some areas with low deprivation. For example, Chells Manor is among the 10 percent of Super Output Areas with the least deprivation in the region and amongst the 15 percent with the least deprivation in Hertfordshire (Jaye, 2006).

Map 1 illustrates the disparity in levels of deprivation between individual wards within Stevenage. The town has two wards within the most 30 percent deprived Super Output Areas in the country, Bedwell and Bandley Hill. Map 1 also highlights some additional areas for concern in Pin Green and Martins Wood wards.



This strategy aims to address social inclusion issues in wards with high deprivation in Stevenage. In doing so we must make sure that we do not exclude smaller pockets of deprivation across the town. We are committed to extending opportunities to all in Stevenage through social inclusion, not just those already known to be suffering from exclusion.

To promote access to work, tackle low pay and improve conditions at work

In comparison to national statistics, Stevenage has a higher than average percentage of its population in active employment at 88 percent, and an average number of claimants of job seekers allowance. However, when comparing the town to other areas in Hertfordshire, Stevenage has the highest rate of unemployment in Hertfordshire, 1.8 percent compared with a 1.3 percent county average, and the highest number of people claiming job seekers allowance in the county (Jaye, 2006).

Stevenage has a higher proportion of professional occupations than the county average and a lower proportion of process, plant and machinery operators and elementary occupations. Businesses in Stevenage account for only 4.5 percent of the total Hertfordshire business population, the smallest share in the county (Jaye, 2006).

Despite the high proportion of professional occupations in Stevenage, resident population earnings, gross weekly pay of £462.60 in 2006, are significantly lower than work-based earnings, gross weekly pay of £534.80 in 2006. This suggests that people who live outside of Stevenage occupy higher paid jobs in the town, rather than the town's resident workforce.

To improve the life chances of children from disadvantaged families and support vulnerable young people in the transition to adulthood

Stevenage has the second highest proportion of lone parent households in Hertfordshire. The town also has the lowest average total income per person in Hertfordshire, resulting in a relatively high proportion of children living in low-income households.

Stevenage has a relatively high infant mortality rate at 5.9 per 1000 births in 2003/04. This is higher than both the national and county rates, and second highest in the county after Watford. Despite this, the percentage of low birth weight babies born in Stevenage is significantly lower than both the national and county averages (Jaye, 2006).

Child protection registrations show that the Children Schools and Families North Quadrant, which includes Stevenage, had the highest number of re-registration on the child protection register in 2005/06 (Jaye, 2006).

The number of Stevenage children and young people participating in voluntary activity such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is relatively low in Stevenage in comparison to the rest of the county. Stevenage also has the

second highest rate of youth offending cases in all districts in Hertfordshire (Jaye, 2006).

The number of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) in Stevenage is on a par with other districts; however it has the 3rd highest rate of increase in the county. Stevenage has a relatively low number of primary school absences in Hertfordshire but a very high number of school absences above the 2004/05 average Hertfordshire rate of absence compared with other areas in the county (Jaye, 2006).

Despite this, Stevenage schools have a relatively low number of permanent exclusions in comparison to other districts in the county. Teenage conception rates are high in Stevenage compared with other districts in the county, however, they are decreasing: 52.4 in 2001-03 to 45.1 in 2002-04 (Jaye, 2006).

School based figures for Stevenage illustrate that 49 percent of Stevenage pupils achieved grades A*-C or equivalent in 2005, compared with 62 percent in the county and 55 percent nationally. In 2003/04 the proportion of young people in Stevenage (age 16-24) in full time education or employment was 80.5 percent. This has fallen from 87.5 percent in 2002/2003.

Stevenage has a low percentage of year 11 students staying in full time education after GSCEs in comparison to other areas in the county. A-level results are also lower than other districts in Hertfordshire; however there has been a significant improvement in results since 2005 (Jaye, 2006).

To improve the life chances of adults through learning and skills development and to promote active aging and reduce social exclusion of older people

Stevenage is the district with the highest number of households with no adult in work as a percentage of the population. There is also high percentage of population with low or no qualifications, and a low percentage of graduates in comparison to other areas in the county.

Stevenage residents have lower age expectancy from birth than residents in the rest of the county. There is a high mortality rate from cancer in men, and from respiratory diseases in men and women. In Stevenage 15.11 percent of the population have a limiting or long-term illness, health problem, or disability.

To improve access to information and services, especially for disadvantaged groups

Stevenage is a compact town with good transport infrastructure. In the 2003/04 Quality of Life Indicators 73.98 percent of residents thought that for their local area, over the past three years, public transport has got better or stayed the same. Stevenage has lower levels of car ownership than areas in the rest of the county.

In the 2005 Resident's Survey, 71 percent of residents stated that the quality of the Council's services are good overall.

To support the development of sustainable communities and to develop social networks, community assets and promote community cohesion

Figures from 2003 show that Stevenage's house price to income ratio remains above the national average. However, the average house price of £178,753 is lower than the county average of £278,704 (02.11.06). Stevenage has a lower percentage of owner occupied housing and a higher percentage of council owned housing than other areas in the county (The Land Registry, 2006).

Our 2006 Vox Pops project highlighted the need for improvements to some existing facilities in the town, for example the Skate Park Bowes Lyon Centre, and the introduction of additional facilities and activities such as graffiti walls and youth shelters, for young people in Stevenage.

Stevenage has low rates of domestic burglary and vehicle theft but high rates of violent crime and sexual offences in comparison to other areas in the county. However, high police presence on the Leisure Park may be contributing to an increase in the number of people reporting crime in Stevenage.

The recent analysis exercise of the Safer and Stronger Communities block of the Local Area Agreement illustrated strong correlations between crime committed per population and average household income, and deprivation levels and the number of total offences in Stevenage. The analysis also illustrated a correlation between the number of teenagers hanging around on the streets and the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ GCSE grade A* to C in the town.

In the 2005 Resident's Survey 84 percent said that people attacked because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion was a problem in Stevenage. In the survey, 95 percent of residents said they felt either very or fairly safe during the day in Stevenage, compared with 50 percent at night.

When residents were asked what are the worst things about living in Stevenage, young people hanging around the streets were ranked as the first of the top five mentions. Half of residents surveyed (49%) felt unable to participate and influence decisions made by the Council.

Appendix B: Groups at risk of social exclusion

Children and young people

Children who are born into disadvantaged families are at increased risk of experiencing social exclusion. Similarly young people, who experience poor educational achievement combined with a lack of interest in community activity during childhood, are more likely to enter into lifecycle of disadvantage as an adult.

This results in long-term consequences and costs for both the individual experiencing social exclusion and the services required to support them. Correspondingly successful policy interventions for these groups will result in significant reduction of social exclusion in the longer term (Hills and Stewart, 2005).

The profile information in Appendix A illustrates that children and young people in Stevenage do not always access opportunities available to them. Barriers to social inclusion for young people in Stevenage are believed to stem from low teenage aspiration and low expectation. This is in part due to a lack of strong family networks and positive adult role models. In particular, young males were identified as being at increased risk of social exclusion..

Teenage parents

Teenage parents on average are more likely to have children with lower birth weights and children at higher risk of infant mortality. The mother is at risk of experiencing disadvantage due to low educational attainment, low employment rates, low rates of partnership stability and greater risk of suffering from depression (Hills and Stewart, 2005).

The profile information in Appendix A illustrates that teenage pregnancies occur more often in Stevenage than in any other district in the county. As a result teenage parents are identified as a group that are at greater risk of experiencing social exclusion in the town.

People with a low income or unemployed

The loss of manufacturing industry in Stevenage has resulted in a lack of access to jobs for some of Stevenage's community. Over time residents working in these manufacturing industries have become unemployed and have found it difficult to access jobs in a similar field or to retrain for alternative employment.

The profile information in Appendix A illustrates that there is also a lack of access to higher paid jobs for Stevenage residents. Moreover, access to work for graduates in Stevenage is believed to be restricted.

These statistics indicate that people who access the higher paid jobs in Stevenage live elsewhere. This has undesirable economic impacts on the local

economy. It also has a negative impact on the local environment due to an increase in commuter traffic levels.

Older people

Exclusion can be particularly acute in later life for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it is rare that people who are excluded in mid-life are able to break the cycle of exclusion in later life; it can often become more acute. Secondly, the impact of key life events, such as bereavement, can lead people to become excluded in later life. Furthermore, the impact of age discrimination on both the aspirations of individuals and the environment within which they operate can lead to exclusion (SEU, 2006).

There is evidence that intergenerational connections have broken down in Stevenage in recent years, like many other areas in the UK. This can result in the exclusion of elderly people from family activities. It may also contribute to high levels of fear of crime at night in Stevenage and the negative stereotyping of young people in Stevenage.

Disabled people

The Duty to Promote Disability Equality Statutory Code of Practice defines a disabled person as, "*A person who has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out day-to-day activities*" (Stevenage Borough Council, 2006).

Disability equality means different things to different people. Disability occurs because barriers hinder disabled people from taking a full part in the community. This social model of disability argues that, "*the poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not the inevitable result of their impairments or medical conditions, but rather stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers*" (Extract from Statutory Code of Practice – The Duty to Promote Disability Equality). Stevenage Borough Council has adopted the social model of disability in its Disability Equality Strategy (Stevenage Borough Council, 2006).

Barriers to inclusion for disabled people include disability discrimination by other people and poorly designed elements of the built environment that restrict access. As a result of friction or problems encountered, disabled people can lose confidence, withdraw and become excluded from family and community life.

People with a long-term illness

People with poor mental or physical health are often at greatest risk of social exclusion. Recent investment in the health of the disadvantaged has had a considerable impact, but some significant problems remain (SEU).

The profile information in Appendix A illustrates that people living in Stevenage are at greater risk of experiencing long-term health problems than other districts in the county.

Black and Minority Ethnic people

Britain has always had minority ethnic groups, people with diverse, culturally rich backgrounds that have settled here since the beginning of recorded time. In 1991, nearly half of Britain's 7.9 percent Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population had been born in the UK, and about three quarters were British citizens. The overwhelming majority of non-white children under 16 were born in the UK (Commission for Race Equality, 2006).

BME people are at risk of experiencing housing, education, employment, health and criminal justice inequalities. This broad pattern of minority ethnic patterns has existed since early research evidence conducted in the 1960s, which documented disadvantage and discrimination in the lives of BME people (Hills and Stewart, 2006).

Although the profile information in Appendix A shows that Stevenage has a relatively low proportion of BME people in comparison to other districts in Hertfordshire and national averages, it is important that these groups have equal access to life opportunities. Barriers for BME people to social inclusion in Stevenage include language, and cultural barriers. For example, members of the Asian Women's Network in the town have experienced barriers to accessing leisure facilities in the town.

Our Race Equality Scheme actively promotes race equality within the Council and the town as a whole.

Faith communities

Faith groups may be at greater risk of discrimination or marginalisation by other people in society. They may also find themselves isolated because they have few links with other organisations or public bodies.

The profile information illustrates that a wide variety of faith groups exist in Stevenage. It is important to ensure that people who belong to these faith groups have equal access to information and services.

Gypsy and Traveller people

Gypsy and Traveller people are at greater risk of experiencing disadvantage than others due to discrimination and exclusion.

It is estimated that, on average, Gypsy and Irish Traveller women live twelve years less than women in the general population and Gypsy and Irish Traveller men live ten years less than men in the general population. Gypsy and Irish Traveller children, particularly those of secondary age, have much lower levels of school attendance than pupils from other groups. By Key Stage 3, it is

estimated that only 15-20 percent of Traveller pupils are registered or regularly attend school (Commission for Race Equality, 2006).

Many of the negative assumptions made about Gypsy and Traveller people are incorrect. For example, 72 percent of the 10,836 caravans are located on authorised sites (5,946 on local authority sites and 4,890 authorised private sites). Most Gypsy and Traveller people do work, and some are employed as teachers, academics, and health workers, while others work in the financial sector and in the sport, leisure and entertainment industries. Furthermore Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised ethnic groups for the purposes of the Race Relations Act (1976), identified as having a shared culture, language and beliefs (Commission for Race Equality, 2006).

In Stevenage there is an authorised Gypsy and Traveller site in Symonds Green. The Community Development team has undertaken some outreach work with this community and is currently in discussion regarding setting up a residents' group. However, more may need to be done to ensure that these people have equal access to life opportunities with other residents in Stevenage.

Groups or Individuals not already in contact with the Council

There is believed to be insufficient communication about information and services with harder to reach people who are not already in contact with the Council. An example of this is single fathers who are not eligible to access the same benefits as single mothers.

Council outreach work is needed to ensure that these groups have equal access to opportunities and services in the town. With regard to single fathers there is only a small token budget available in the tenancy deposit budget to offer help to individuals in need that are not already eligible for benefits. Additional or alternative funds or projects may be required in order to target under represented individuals and groups.

Appendix C: Some work to promote social inclusion

To tackle poverty and income inequalities

The North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Community Legal Service Partnership was established to promote take up of welfare and benefit by supporting the provision of information and advice, including legal help.

We support the Stevenage Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) by awarding grant aid of £148,000 subject to a service level agreement and free town centre premises. This, combined with the CAB's outreach services targeted at the most deprived neighbourhoods, has helped to increase household income of those in low income or unwaged households.

We also support the Stevenage Credit Union, a community bank offering low interest loans to encourage those suffering from financial exclusion to save. This helps to prevent low income or unwaged households from resorting to high interest loans and retains money within the local economy.

We continue to provide business support and training to increase employment levels. A community enterprise initiative was set up to promote enterprise and sustainable development at neighbourhood level. This initiative's outcomes include the development of social enterprise (Phoenix Fund) and the Stevenage Furniture Scheme (furniture for low income households).

Our Benefits team make a large contribution towards working with excluded groups and families trapped in a cycle of deprivation. This is balanced against a corporate debt policy to encourage and facilitate non-payment of benefits and council tax. In order to respond to challenges and understand the needs of their client group, the Revenue Section of the Benefits Service Unit works closely with the CAB. This service unit also recently ran a town wide benefits campaign to encourage residents eligible for income support, to access the benefits available to them.

Phase one of the transforming Revenue Services project (covering benefits, local taxation, and cash collection) has delivered a document management and workflow system, which has streamlined a number of key processes and assisted in improving the benefits service performance. Phase two of the Transforming Revenue Service project will concentrate on embedding the mobile working technology, improved integration with the Customer Service Centre and revising the staffing structure to reflect more efficient working processes.

To promote access to work, tackle low pay and improve conditions at work

We actively support the development of community and social enterprises, providing opportunities for people who face barriers to labour market participation. We also encourage organisations such as Business Link to become actively involved with community enterprise initiative. Through this

support community and social enterprises are able to access finance and business support resulting in enhanced employment opportunities for people facing barriers to employment.

We have secured £240,000 East of England Development Agency funding for Gunnels Wood Pocket Park (to provide amenity space for employees and to promote use of eco-friendly materials). Detailed designs are currently being worked up between the Council, Hertfordshire Highways and Green Herts. Partnership.

The Council have also secured £5.7 million to build 30,000 sq ft of small business grow on accommodation at the Business and Technology Centre.

The Regeneration team's External Funding Officer has focused on raising awareness of external funding opportunities amongst target groups, organising awareness events, assisting appraisal of funding bids, monitoring applications and success rates and persuading funding bodies to direct their resources into Stevenage. Considerable efforts have made in strengthening our links with the Lottery, in particular the Heritage Lottery Fund.

We are major employer in the town and our Human Resources team aims to ensure that vacancies are advertised as widely as possible. The department promotes working opportunities in schools through school visits and has links with a number of government programmes such as the Modern Apprenticeship scheme.

To improve the life chances of children from disadvantaged families and support vulnerable young people in the transition to adulthood

Initiatives already in place include:

- Stevenage's Children and Young Peoples Partnership
- Healthy Schools' initiative (including support to breakfast clubs and the provision of free school milk)
- Early Years Initiative
- Stevenage Early Years Partnership (promoting child care)
- Parenting support and early years education
- Baby and Toddler Initiative (providing advice, training and grants including specialist projects for teenage parents)
- Children and Play Rights Initiative (advocating children and young people's use of public space and community provision, and support for youth development programmes)

We support the Stevenage Youth Council, to give young people a voice in Stevenage.

We also support the provision of drug education, information and advice and teenage pregnancy work with the Stevenage Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Hertfordshire County Council Children Schools and Families.

The Play Development team works closely with the voluntary sector and schools. They are the first point of contact for residents, and deliver a service that fits with the Every Child Matters and the Extended Schools agendas. The Play service includes free open access supervised all year play schemes and holidays for disadvantaged children. It provides enhanced physical and emotional development for children, helps to reduce levels of anti social behaviour across the town. It works to prevent social exclusion and disadvantage by ensuring that the service is accessible to communities in need in Stevenage.

The Regeneration team supports skills initiatives aimed at young people. An example is the 'Innovation in Stevenage' project, which ran from January 2005 to October 2006. The project was in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and was 50 percent match funded by Stevenage Borough Council through NEWTASC funding. The project worked with every secondary school in Stevenage and engaged with over 2,700 students. As part of the project two national enterprise weeks' programmes were organised, and the Council interacted with over 200 businesses in Stevenage to help engage them in Education and Business Link (EBL) activities. The project has helped to secure external funding for EBL activities, has set up sustainable projects like business mentoring, and has helped raise the profile of schools and businesses involved in the programme. The project has seen the GCSE A-C attainment level rise in the town, year on year. It has also helped teachers and school senior management to engage in education business link (EBL) activities and has promoted Stevenage as a model for good EBL practice, at international, regional and local forums.

A one-day planning challenge event held in 2006 is a second skills initiative example. Fifty students from Stevenage schools were invited to participate in the challenge, to develop their skills, learn about the building industry, and work on real case planning scenarios.

To improve the life chances of adults through learning and skills development

We support the Stevenage Learning Forum, which promotes the development of adult literacy, language and numeracy. There have also been a number of community education projects, including basic IT training, advice and guidance.

The Regeneration team supports a number of initiatives aimed at creating opportunity for adults to develop skills. These have included Cement 'a' prize and the Hertfordshire Incubation Centre.

The Cement 'a' prize scheme was run in partnership with Dacorum Borough Council in which adults were trained in construction skills. The scheme was targeted at disadvantaged groups including ex-offenders, BME people and young people who are unemployed. The scheme based at Ridgemon training centre and Incredit in Stevenage. The Ridgemon training centre has recently closed and the Council are looking at alternative options for running similar training schemes using Investing in Communities (IIC) funding.

The Hertfordshire Incubation Centre provides access to information for new businesses. The scheme is funded through Stevenage Borough Council grant and run in partnership with the Stevenage Business Initiative.

To reduce social exclusion of older people

Our concessionary travel scheme, run by the Benefit and Revenue team, provides subsidised travel for older and/or disabled people. Community transport (dial a ride) also offers subsidised travel for older and/or disabled people.

The Community Development team helps facilitate a range of activities for older people in the town. This includes support to Douglas Drive Day Centre as well as to other older people's groups around the town.

To improve access to information and services, especially for disadvantaged groups

The Customer Service Centre (CSC) provides a front line service aimed at tackling needs, issues and enquiries relating to all service areas across the Council. The service provides an important face-to-face referral system to assist with benefits advice, poverty, debt and financial issues, and signposting people to the appropriate service or organisation. There are a range of measures in place to allow everyone access to council services. The customer service centre recently held an open evening with focus on hard to reach groups. Phase 1 of an upgraded Customer Relationship Management system has been completed to provide better information and improve customer service. The CSC is developing new information technology to provide a complete history of all interactions with customers dealt with via the CSC or another service. A customer database will also be developed.

Our Communications team provides a number of ways to communicate services. Although Stevenage does have pockets of deprivation that need to be tackled, this service area aims to promote a positive image of Stevenage that promotes the town's rich mix of services and facilities. The team links with a number of different services in designing campaigns, such as the benefits take up campaign through to local neighbourhood activity. Communications also produce the internal 'Link' magazine that keeps council employees up to date about services, initiatives and decisions and improves cross council communication. Communications have obtained accreditation for Plain English for both the 'Link' magazine and the Chronicle (residents) magazine and are developing improved Council branding through the Local Government Reputation Project to ensure people have a clear understanding of what services the Council provides to the community.

The e-ICT team is responsible for leading work to promote e-ICT across the Council. The team works closely with the CSC to provide information about the council's services online. The unit are currently looking to provide ICT access points in community centres to encourage communication and feedback from

the community. The structure, design and content of the Council's website has recently been improved. A broad range of services can now be requested online via the Council's website and national planning portal. Customers can report service failures online. E-forms will be available in 2007/08. Customers in the CSC have access to the website via self-service computer stations. Assistance is available and customers are able to apply for information and services online, including Choice Based Lettings and Homes4U bidding online.

The Corporate Policy Unit undertake consultation activity which is delivered using a variety of communication mediums to encourage the community to come forward with their comments. The Consultation Strategy supports the development of networks and partnerships to actively engage with local people and communities. This results in greater community participation and more inclusive policy and practice.

The town centre environmental enhancement scheme included the installation of interactive kiosks for users to find out about local services news and events. The Council are currently investigating the possibility of using the kiosks to consult electronically with customers.

The transition of our housing stock to the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Stevenage Homes Limited (SHL) was completed in October 2006. Stevenage Homes Limited introduced a new Tenant Participation Compact; the Compact was unveiled at SHL Customer Conference on 18th November 2006. The Compact ensures that tenants have the support and information they need to participate effectively. A new choice based lettings scheme in which housing applicants are awarded a number of points to bid for housing depending on their personal circumstances and need is now in place. This has improved customer choice when applying for housing.

The Stevenage Transport Plan promotes better access to local jobs and services through public transport, cycling and walking, reducing the need to travel and enhancing access to local services.

We also support measures to reduce accidents, particularly child pedestrian accidents.

To support the development of sustainable communities

The Council has enabled over 120 units of specialist accommodation providing support to vulnerable people covering vulnerable groups such as:

- People with a mental health disability
- People with a learning disability
- Women experiencing or at risk of domestic violence
- Young people
- Ex-offenders
- Single homeless people and rough sleepers

We also provide grant aid to support two refuges for women and their children that have suffered or at risk of experiencing domestic violence.

The Homelessness Strategy has also been published following a town wide review of the problem locally. The strategy has an action plan with SMART targets and focuses on:

- Increasing the supply of affordable homes
- Increasing availability of support to vulnerable people
- Improving temporary accommodation
- Better homelessness prevention
- Free and accessible housing advice
- Minimising homelessness locally

We also provide a comprehensive housing advice services to anyone with a housing problem.

We completed a review of Stevenage Borough Council's Strategic Housing Unit in December 2006. A joint Member and Officer Affordable Housing Reference Group was established in October 2006 to lead on the development and monitoring of an Affordable Housing Strategy (includes Planning, Regeneration, Estates and Housing). The objectives of the group are:

We have secured an annual £1 million capital commitment over the next five years to facilitate the delivery of new affordable housing in Stevenage to address local housing need.

We have also introduced the Empty Property Strategy, which has reduced the number of properties vacant for more than two years by 82 percent. There has been a 53 percent reduction in the number of homelessness applications accepted by the Council due to Housing Advice Intervention.

The Decent Homes Programme in place to bring all homes up to decent homes standard by 2010 across all tenures.

We have secured £100,000 for the preparation of a comprehensive Investment and Renewal programme in neighbourhood centres.

We are also developing an open space strategy to assess open space, sport and recreational facilities in Stevenage and set quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standard for facility provision.

To develop social networks, community assets and promote community cohesion

In 1997 the Stevenage Partnership supported by the Council's Community Development team, developed a neighbourhood renewal strategy to tackle social exclusion to underpin a successful Single Regeneration Round 5 (SRB5) bid. The SRB programme covered three of the oldest and most deprived neighbourhoods – Bedwell, Monkswood and Shephall. The strategy was related

around five themes that relate closely to those subsequently identified by the government's Social Exclusion Unit. The five themes were 'Community and Capacity Building', 'Education and Lifelong Learning', 'Healthy Living', 'Community Safety' and 'Physical Regeneration'. The council was awarded Beacon Status for neighbourhood renewal in 2002/03. The award of Beacon status reflects the work of all of the agencies involved in the Stevenage Partnership.

To further build upon and develop networks across the town the Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) works to address health inequalities as part of the active nation. Through community consultation raise participation levels and access to services. To provide a wider agenda that embraces cultural agenda and designs services and access to non-sport programmes. A Stevenage Arts Strategy is currently being developed. SLL are also working to seize the opportunities that the Olympics are generating.

The Community Development team provide a cross cutting service to support community infrastructure in Stevenage. The services provide both preventative and reactive interventions to promote and facilitate inclusive communities. The team provides a valuable role in linking and bringing together excluded groups with statutory service providers, developing accessible services. The team support, provide grant aid and build the capacity of a number of voluntary and community groups that advocate for Stevenage's diverse communities. These include REACT, Stevenage World Forum, and the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Women's Resource Centre. They also provide support and advice to the Women's Asian Network, the Gujarati Men's Elders Group, and the town's 13 community associations.

We work in partnership with the primary care trust (PCT) and other health professionals to deliver health initiatives town wide and offer health opportunities at a neighbourhood level. This health service offers advice and services to tackle health inequalities in the town. The use of alternative holistic therapy is also promoted to address health issues linked to stress and to encourage preventative measures.

The Stevenage COMPACT provides support to voluntary and community organisations. Through the COMPACT voluntary sectors are able to play strong roles in regeneration and community cohesion and in policy development.

Our Race Equality Scheme action plan is designed to eliminate unlawful racist discrimination, promote equal opportunities, and promote good relations between people from different backgrounds. A disability equality scheme is also in place. We are developing an enhanced corporate training scheme specifically for equalities and diversity.

The Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2005-2008 is in place and addresses the need to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and to reduce fear of crime in Stevenage, which can contribute to social exclusion.