

Interim Evaluation of the Coalfields Regeneration Programmes in England

Coalfield regeneration monitoring and evaluation framework

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March 2015

ISBN: 978-1-4098-2844-0

1: Recommendations

- 1.1 In late 2005 the Department for Communities and Local Government commissioned a consortium led by SQW¹ to carry out an interim evaluation of the coalfields regeneration programmes in England, namely: the National Coalfields Programme, the Coalfields Enterprise Fund and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust.
- 1.2 There were four broad strands to the evaluation: a review of the literature; an analysis of secondary data sources since 1998; an assessment of regeneration programme documentation and monitoring data; and six case studies² reviewing the changing conditions and the influence of the programmes in the local areas. The final report from this study, *Regenerating the English Coalfields – interim evaluation of the coalfields regeneration programmes* was published in March 2007.
- 1.3 This monitoring and evaluation framework was designed to provide advice on how to monitor progress in the coalfield areas in the future. It makes five suggestions:
 - A monitoring and evaluation framework should be set up to capture the outputs and outcomes of a range of different interventions in coalfield areas.
 - The design and implementation of the framework should be coordinated by the Department for Communities and Local Government with its components delegated to other departments and agencies.
 - The monitoring and evaluation of all coalfield specific programmes should produce evidence on regeneration outputs and outcomes that can be linked to the conditions in the coalfield areas that justified the programmes in the first place.
 - The monitoring and evaluation of non-coalfield regeneration programmes and mainstream service providers should involve tagging of their expenditure, activity, output and outcome measures so that the distribution across coalfield areas can be observed.

¹ SQW Ltd, Colin Warnock Associates, BBP Regeneration and GfK NOP

² The six case study areas were defined using ward-level geographies agreed with local partners and labelled as follows (note that the labels do not denote the local authority districts): Dearne Valley (Y&H), Wigan (NW) Newcastle West (WM), Blyth Valley and Wansbeck (NE), East Kent (SE) and Clay Cross and Holmewood (EM).

- The conditions in the coalfield areas should be monitored on a consistent and systematic basis.

2: The purpose and structure of the framework

Purpose of the framework

- 2.1 The previous Interim Evaluation of coalfield regeneration activities³ made three recommendations regarding the monitoring and evaluation of the coalfield regeneration programmes and progress in the former coalfield areas. They are paraphrased as follows:
- Steps should be taken to ensure that there is regular monitoring of the coalfield programmes in terms of the level and nature of funding and activities as well as more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of outputs and outcomes.
 - More emphasis should be placed by lead partners in the appraisal and specification of programmes and projects on setting realistic but testing targets – and for outcomes rather than just activities and outputs.
 - Monitoring and evaluation of regeneration activities should be conducted more systematically and frequently in a way that engages local partners and people in the assessment of progress and in any revisions that appear to be required in the mix and form of regeneration activity.
- 2.2 During the course of the current Interim Evaluation it became apparent that these recommendations had in large part not been followed. Whilst systems for monitoring spend and activities have been put in place by the coalfield specific programmes, they do not provide for systematic monitoring of outputs at the level of the coalfield ward or Super Output Area geographies. The National Coalfields Programme outputs are monitored at the colliery site level; the Coalfields Regeneration Trust monitoring of outputs is carried out at the level of its individual programmes and projects; and monitoring of regeneration outputs was not required of the Coalfields Enterprise Fund. The evaluation found no evidence of coalfield related monitoring by non-coalfield regeneration programmes or by mainstream service providers.
- 2.3 It must be emphasised that these monitoring arrangements reflect what central government required of the coalfield programmes, non-coalfield programmes and service providers. They were not obliged to carry out

³ ODP, *Regeneration of former coalfield areas: interim evaluation*, 2001 – a summary is available at www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1128624

monitoring of outputs or outcomes at the level of individual coalfield wards and Super Output Areas. Nor was any responsibility allocated to any organisation individually or collectively to monitor how conditions in the coalfield areas were changing and the extent of regeneration that was taking place.

- 2.4 This made it difficult to deliver the objectives of the current evaluation, namely to review the changing conditions in the coalfields since 1998 and assess the contribution of the coalfield programmes to these changing conditions. This was not only because monitoring data was not available at the appropriate spatial levels but also because what data there was could not generally be linked to the relevant data on contextual conditions in the coalfield areas. There were some exceptions. For example, National Coalfields Programme data on hectares of cleared brownfield land could be related to secondary data on the extent of derelict land in coalfield wards. But, generally, this was not the case.
- 2.5 If the objectives of this evaluation are going to be retained for any future evaluation, then it is our view that an agreed monitoring and evaluation framework should be put in place and monitoring arrangements established that will enable more continuous and consistent assessment of the programmes' outputs in the context of changing conditions in the coalfields to provide the feedstock for later evaluations. This is the purpose which the framework and procedures proposed in this report are designed to serve.

Structure of the framework

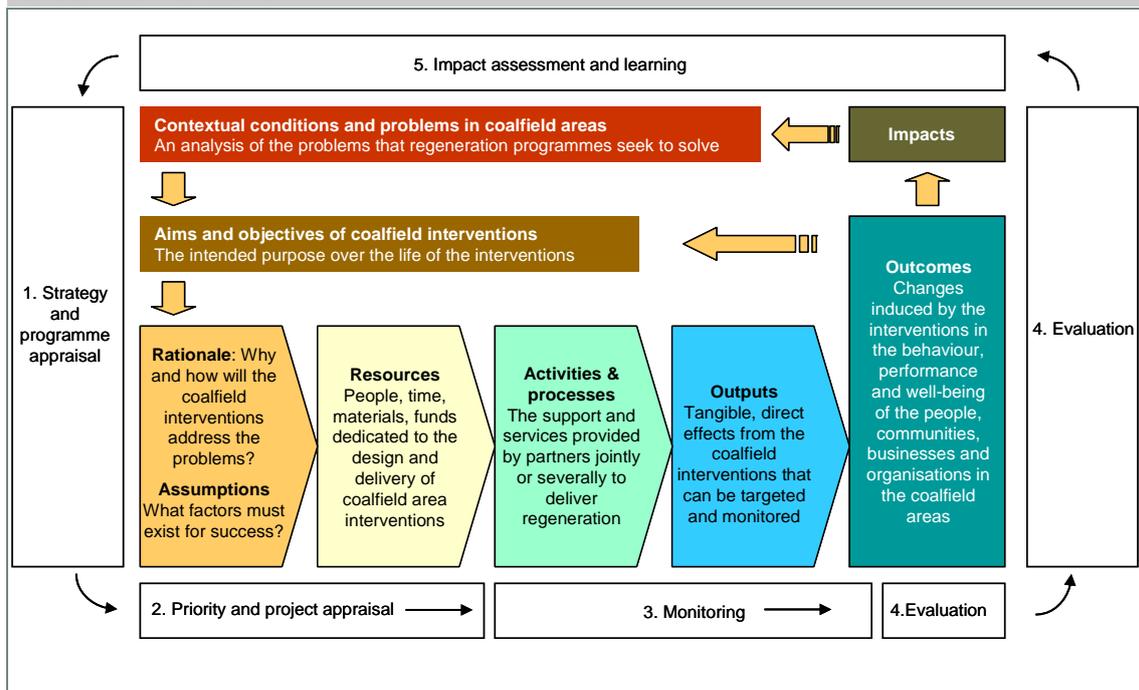
- 2.6 The structure of any monitoring and evaluation framework relating to public sector interventions must be based on the 'logic model' that provides the rationale for the intervention in the first place. A programme logic model describes the theory, assumptions and evidence underlying the rationale for the programme . . . *"it links outcomes (both short and long term) with programme activities/processes and the theoretical assumptions/principles of the programme."*⁴
- 2.7 Various formulations are available for such logic models. Figure 2-1 has been designed by SQW to combine the logic model structure used by the Innovation Network⁵ with a basic performance management framework that runs from strategic appraisal to impact assessment and learning. It is described in the figure in ways that make the framework generic to coalfield

⁴ WK Kellogg Foundation; *Logic Model Development Guide*; January 2004

⁵ Innovation Network, *Logic Model Workbook*, 2005 - www.innonet.org/client_docs/File/logic_model_workbook.pdf

interventions because the specific nature of these interventions may change. Thus, it refers to coalfield area interventions rather than programmes because, in the future, non coalfield regeneration programmes and mainstream service provision are likely to play a more important role in coalfield area regeneration.

Figure 2-1: Structure of a performance management framework for coalfield area interventions



Source: SQW

- 2.8 The **rationale and objectives** for interventions in coalfield areas should follow from analysis of their **contextual conditions and problems**. Whether or not these interventions take the form of specific programmes or targets for mainstream service providers, the rationale and objectives will give rise to the commitment of **resources** to address the regeneration needs of the coalfield areas.
- 2.9 These resources will be dedicated to the delivery of packages of support **activities** (e.g. clearance of derelict land, education and training provision). Where there has to be some degree of 'joining-up' between delivery partners (as the current evaluation argued there should be in the coalfield areas), resources will also have to be devoted to **processes** by which interventions are coordinated or integrated.
- 2.10 The processes and activities enable a series of **outputs** to be delivered (e.g. houses, community facilities, hectares of cleared land, commercial floorspace, people into education, training and work). These will hopefully have positive

outcomes for the people and communities, businesses and other organisations directly and indirectly affected by the interventions (e.g. in the form of better environment, qualifications, health and job prospects).

- 2.11 Finally, these outcomes should have beneficial **impacts** on the conditions in the coalfield areas that gave rise to the interventions in the first place (e.g. in the form of higher employment rates, lower benefit claimant rates, lower derelict land rates per capita).

The performance management cycle

- 2.12 As Figure 2-1 demonstrates, the various building blocks in the framework can be associated with different stages in the policy assessment and performance management cycle.

- **Strategy and programme appraisal** involves analysis of conditions in the coalfield areas and specification of the aims, objectives and rationale for public sector interventions to improve the conditions – usually in the light of evidence on market and other failures and the cost-effectiveness with which they can be addressed.
- **Priority and project appraisal** is the process by which it is decided how resources should be allocated within the interventions between competing priorities and projects depending on assessment of their relative value for money.
- **Monitoring** is the regular capture and examination of data on expenditure, activities and outputs to ensure they are on track to achieve the objectives. It is critical where there is some form of contractual requirement to deliver specified levels of funding, activities or outputs. Note that in Figure 2-1 the possibility of extending monitoring to outcomes is allowed for – as is becoming common practice in some areas of business development support at least with regard to what have been called intermediate outcomes.⁶
- **Evaluation** is a periodic analysis of interventions to assess how successful they have been in meeting their objectives, whether they represented good value for money, and what lessons can be learnt for the future delivery of similar interventions.
- **Impact assessment and learning** represent the final stage in the cycle by which the impacts of the interventions on coalfield area

⁶ For example, UK Trade and Investment's Performance and Impact Monitoring Survey. See the UKTI Autumn Performance Report, December 2006 - www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk/ukti/ShowDoc/BEA+Repository/345/397726

conditions are assessed, remaining problems identified and lessons learned about future priorities.

Future development and application of the framework

- 2.13 Until the future shape of coalfield regeneration policy and interventions has been determined it is not appropriate to design a fully fashioned framework. However, it is still possible to specify some of its elements and to identify the issues to be addressed in its more general development.

Monitoring conditions in the coalfield areas

- 2.14 One element in the framework will remain constant as long as regeneration of coalfield areas remains a policy priority – regardless of what form that policy takes. This is the assessment of conditions in the areas and their remaining regeneration needs.
- 2.15 The current evaluation had to rebuild the contextual baseline for the late 1990s using the most appropriate and available spatial definitions to do so. It makes no sense for future evaluations to have to go through the same process except where new and relevant data sources become available. We therefore refer the reader to *Annex C: Secondary data indicators, sources and issues* of the final evaluation report⁷.

Issues for development of the framework

- 2.16 A primary issue to be addressed in the more general development and application of the framework is where leadership of coalfield area regeneration policy is located and which departments/agencies are given responsibility for the design and delivery of the policy and its various components.
- 2.17 Our view is that the multi-faceted nature of the regeneration problems in the coalfield areas means that the development and implementation of the monitoring and evaluation framework should be the responsibility of the Department for Communities and Local Government rather than any one intervention delivery partner (e.g. English Partnerships). The department may wish to out-source the management of the framework and delegate the design and delivery of its components to other departments/agencies (including the Office for National Statistics, Regional Development Agencies, Local Strategic

⁷ Regenerating the English Coalfields – interim evaluation of the coalfield regeneration programmes, DCLG, 2007

Partnerships, local authorities and/or delivery agents). But, in our view the overall direction and coordination of framework development should be vested in the Department for Communities and Local Government.

2.18 If this is accepted, the issues the department will need to address in the development of the framework will include the following:

- Statement of the remaining problems in the coalfield areas that should be the focus for interventions and their articulation in the form of key condition indicators against which the impact of the interventions should be assessed.
- Specification of the objectives of the coalfield interventions and programmes and their translation into key output and outcome measures that can be linked logically and, if possible, quantitatively to the agreed impact measures.
- Consideration of how the intervention funding streams are intended to work in practice and the volume and nature of the activities they will fund – and the monitoring indicators that will be most reliable in assessing progress against targets.
- Assessment of how the framework can be designed and implemented in ways that harness existing systems (e.g. English Partnerships and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust) and incorporate those of other organisations to provide an historic account of performance as well as being fit for purpose in the future.
- Agreement with delivery partners on the framework elements to be subjected to monitoring and those to be picked up through evaluation and the frequency and form of monitoring and evaluation reports.
- Allocation of responsibility for the gathering and reporting of monitoring data and evaluation evidence and the methods to be used – e.g. case study selection.
- Agreement on the information systems to be used to store and access contextual data, monitoring reports and evaluation evidence and how the information flows should be handled between the department, English Partnerships, the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and other organisations.