



‘What Works’ in Community Cohesion

Research Study conducted for Communities and Local Government and
the Commission on Integration and Cohesion



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Ipsos-MORI conducted this research and prepared the report on behalf of Communities and Local Government and the Commission on Integration and Cohesion. Views expressed in this report are those of consultant authors and do not necessarily reflect policies of Communities and Local Government.

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June 2007

Product Code: 07 ELMAT 04656/n

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Executive Summary

The main body of the report provides a very wide range of detailed and specific learning points about the types of project and approach that have been seen to ‘work’ in the six case-study areas we visited. This summary seeks to draw out some of the common strands from across the research.

What are the important dimensions of community cohesion?

Understanding stakeholders’ conception of community cohesion provides a background to the approaches taken to maintain or increase community cohesion within the study areas and the criteria by which stakeholders judge ‘what works’.

- Stakeholders recognise that community cohesion is a **multi-faceted concept**, requiring cross-cutting, multi-pronged approaches.
- There is consensus that cohesion relates to **encouraging positive relationships** between different groups (all groups – not just on ethnic lines, for example). This is usually regarded as more positive than simply avoiding problems and tensions, and respect for diversity and *meaningful interaction* (rather than mixing per se) is seen as key within this. This finding supports the increased recognition of the importance of the quality of interaction in the recent literature, such as by the Commission for Racial Equality.¹
- Previous literature stresses the importance of reducing residential segregation as key to encouraging interaction and cohesion.² This was not a common view among stakeholders interviewed, partly because there is recognition that mixed housing does not necessarily result in the development of friendships or meaningful social interactions between groups. **Policies to promote meaningful interaction are often a key part of local cohesion strategies. This is an aim in itself and not linked to the extent of residential segregation.** Among stakeholders there was, however, recognition that educational segregation presents a significant, though difficult to address, barrier to cohesion.
- In some areas there is a particular focus on **socio-economic well-being and empowerment**, which reflects an emphasis seen in previous research regarding underlying socio-economic factors such as immigration, the economy and labour market and housing policy.³ This highlights the importance of recognising the structural factors that affect individual choice as well as the need for liberal type policies relating to equality policies in relation to employment and service access, for example.

1 ‘Promoting Interaction between People from Different Ethnic Backgrounds’ For further information see http://www.cre.gov.uk/downloads/shm_interaction_research.pdf

2 Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities* www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/publications.asp?did=1815

3 Ibid.

- There is a clear emphasis on **the role of participation and engagement** as an indicator but also lever of cohesion. This is as universally recognised among stakeholders, as it is emphasised in current policy literature.⁴
- Promotion of common civic values has been very much emphasised in past literature, including in the interim report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion.⁵ However, in these areas, promotion of civic values and a common sense of rights and responsibilities in an abstract sense is not normally emphasised. Instead, **building a sense of commonality around real life issues** – such as life ambitions and local problems – is regarded as having most value.
- **Definitions and priorities vary according to local area and service context** and stakeholders emphasise the importance of issues being defined at local level.
- Local communities can engage usefully and effectively with concepts of cohesion, but some challenges and misunderstandings can arise due to the abstract nature of some policy language. There seems to be **clear value in developing user-friendly definitions that reflect the full range of tangible outcomes and mechanisms** relevant to such debates.

What types of initiative and approach 'work' in improving community cohesion in the six case-study areas?

Stakeholders identified a broad range of approaches to developing community cohesion that have a plausible evidence base. In many cases, these reflect existing literature, but the research provides useful specific examples of how key issues can be tackled. Key approaches and considerations are highlighted below.

Supporting socio-economic well-being of individuals and communities

- Addressing the socio-economic well-being of individuals and communities is regarded as a pre-requisite for cohesion, and the most important part of cohesion policy in some areas. Social inclusion and empowerment is seen as key to ensuring individuals have the resources to contribute meaningfully in communities and feel they have a stake. It is also important in avoiding antisocial behaviour and tensions relating to concern over inequitable resource distribution.
- Key target groups should be the most disadvantaged and those groups where are most likely to tensions arise. This will vary by area and could be a particular demographic or ethnic group.
- **Projects among young people are seen to be key** – they represent the future of communities, and include groups especially vulnerable to disengagement and antisocial behaviour. Targeted initiatives can be helpful, but there are also clear benefits to schools playing a key role.
- **A focus on supporting new arrivals is important** – their lack of knowledge of the country and local area means they are among the groups most at risk from social exclusion, and they are often a group that is very visible in a community, and around which tensions can arise within established communities.

⁴ See for example The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) *Our Interim Statement* <http://www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/upload/assets/www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/cicinterim.pdf>

⁵ Ibid.

- It is, however, **important not to neglect those whose needs are less visible** (e.g. not the focus of visible tensions on the streets), such as women. Empowering all groups is important for social justice and community well-being, and projects that empower these groups build community capacity to contribute to the health of communities in a tangible way.
- **Tailored and innovative approaches – targeted at specific groups and individual neighbourhoods** – are central to approaches to support target need groups, as well as ensuring mainstream services have the understanding and capacity to meet the needs of all sections of the community.
- **Recognising the tension between the need for *targeting*, and the need for *universalism***. Building the capacity of and/or a sense of commonality within a specific group in the community (e.g. a specific ethnic group, or young people) can function to emphasise differences to those outside the targeted group, and become a source of tension over the allocation of resources. **Policy makers must be constantly vigilant to the complexity of how different dimensions of community structure interact and compete.**
- **Promoting perception of fairness in delivery of services to different groups.** Effective communications can play an integral role (discussed further below). As part of this, it is important that the concerns and needs of White working class communities are addressed.

English language

- **Developing English has to be central to facilitating social inclusion of non-English speakers, and positive relationships between them and other groups.** However, the level of services currently available is not sufficient for securing this and services may need extensive further development and resources before this can be achieved.
- **Engaging with communities in other languages has to be maintained as this is vital for tackling disadvantage and avoiding social exclusion and associated cohesion issues.** Services such as interpreting, translation and bilingual service staff play a key role in ensuring services can engage with, and understand and meet the needs of, non-English speaking communities.
- It is recognised by stakeholders that there needs to be a balance between meeting immediate communication needs of new arrivals and the longer term goals of language education for more settled communities.

Generating a sense of commonality and positive relationships

- **Projects that facilitate meaningful interaction between people are seen as important in this context.** They are found to be effective in promoting trust, awareness of commonality and positive relationships among participants, and to some extent this impacts positively in the wider community, although reach beyond individual *participants* is not always strong. Features found to contribute to the effectiveness of such projects in tackling cohesion, especially among young people, include:

- building the project around other activities that provide a common goal – e.g. activities that interest participants or build skills
- targeting specific individuals who have the most negative attitudes may have the most significant impact on cohesion
- extending the reach of the project beyond participants where possible, for example by including activities that might involve parents or friends of participants
- where tension exists between groups facilitating interaction gradually, and in neutral settings
- drama, acting or role play activities can help build understanding, because they provide opportunities for young people to think in other people's shoes
- school involvement in such activities may be helpful for maximising the reach of such projects across all young people in an area
- Developing a sense of commonality between different groups is key for supporting trust, respect and positive relationships. In particular, approaches that focus on tangible and real life issues seem to work best. Neighbourhood forums and local groups focusing on improving the local area and services are found to be especially effective for building a sense of shared concerns (if they are genuinely involving people from across the community). Groups set up to facilitate interaction among young people are also effective in stimulating awareness of commonality specifically in relation to day-to-day concerns and aspirations.
- A sense of shared values as abstract concepts is not seen as an especially effective approach to supporting cohesion – things that are tangible and meaningful in day-to-day life are more often cited as effective.
- Trying to avoid separation between groups from different ethnic backgrounds in terms of residential location and, to a lesser extent, schooling is not a particular focus for policy at local level. Whilst these dimensions may make meaningful interaction less likely to some extent, stakeholders largely do not consider this as intrinsically problematic, and tend to recognise the benefits in terms of internal capacity of local communities; likewise stakeholders did not consider residential mixing as any guarantee of meaningful interaction. Whilst many stakeholders consider separate schooling as damaging to community cohesion, it was recognised that this is difficult issue to address directly.

Engagement and involvement

- **Engagement and involvement projects are also helpful** in ensuring that: services meet community needs; services are *seen to meet* community needs; people trust institutions and feel they have a stake in them. However, **in order for them to really have an impact on community cohesion beyond participants, it is essential that extensive work goes into communicating the effectiveness of involvement activity.**

- **Effort to involve the disengaged must be a central aim** as it is those groups who will tend to have most concerns and least trust or sense of a stake in society and institutions. Targeted approaches tailored to reflect the interests and cultures of these groups can be key.
- Effective community involvement is often seen as a helpful indicator of healthy communities, as well as an important driver of cohesion.

Myth-busting communications

- **Communication activities to alleviate concerns about other communities must be integrated alongside service delivery work** – for example, addressing concerns arising from myths propagated by right wing or racist organisations, and concern over perceived unfairness in the distribution of resources.
- **Multi-pronged approaches are helpful.** Mass media campaigns can reach wider audiences, whilst more interactive forums can have the greatest impact on individual views, albeit among smaller numbers of people (ie participants). The latter can be achieved through existing groups such as neighbourhood forums, or ad hoc events such as residents' meetings set up for this specific purpose. They can be particularly effective as they provide an arena for people to vent concerns and feel they are listened to, as well as provide an arena where information can be provided to address concerns. Radio phone-ins provide benefits of both wider population coverage and interaction.
- **Communicating on very specific issues is most effective**, rather than generalised assertions of fairness. Localised and targeted communications and activities can be helpful in enabling this approach to be taken.

Responding to major events that present risks to cohesion

- **Disturbances within a community require a rapid response to prevent tensions escalating within an area.** The police play a central role in calming acute tensions, but mediators, ideally placed within the community, can play a vital role in avoiding future flare-ups. Great emphasis is placed on the importance of early and targeted intervention in the diffusing of potentially tense situations. Thus, the nature of some of the projects we looked at was responsive rather than proactive, in terms of identifying a short-term problem and 'nipping it in the bud'.

What works in terms of organisation and leadership?

- **A common thread underpinning some of the cohesion work considered most successful by stakeholders is a 'bottom-up' approach** where policy and initiatives are community led as much as possible, or where at the very least there has been community involvement. Key elements to this include:
 - **ensuring services are managed and delivered by local people** – e.g. an emphasis on councillors coming from within the local community, and on recruiting staff from local communities and ensuring the demographic profile of staff reflects the local profile. Diversity training, ideally with the input of specific local communities, is also important in ensuring that services understand and respond to diverse needs;

- **maximising the role of the voluntary and community sector and faith groups** in leading or delivering cohesion-related initiatives. These organisations are best placed to understand key issues, and engage communities, especially where trust in mainstream institutions is lower;
- as a minimum **ensuring involvement of local communities – and all key sections of communities – in developing policy** to ensure that all needs are met and no groups disadvantaged or alienated by particular policies. There can be real challenges in engaging all sections of a community and ensuring it is not just the 'usual suspects' that take part. However, with tailored approaches that respond to the circumstances and culture of the target groups, a wide range of people can be involved. In particular, outreach work can be effective in helping to achieve this.
- **Local statutory agencies have a key role to play given its role in community leadership and support, and role in community capacity building** – for example, facilitating networking and coordination, and providing training or support with management aspects. One suggested model is for the local council to take on responsibility for management, financial and legal aspects of large-scale voluntary or community sector initiatives (aspects where skills and experience can be weaker), freeing up project staff to focus on project delivery. It is especially beneficial to focus on building capacity among sections of the community with least opportunities.
- The public sector is also key given the important ways that the day-to-day practice of services' interaction with communities affects cohesion. Stakeholders stress that **cohesion policy and approaches need to be part of services' fundamental approach to policy and service delivery**.
- Because of this, whilst strong leadership is important for putting cohesion on the agenda and seeing through any change, it is argued that cohesion policy and initiatives also need to be the responsibility of individual services and agencies from the start – rather than 'mainstreaming' being something that happens when policies have matured. This must be *real* responsibility that can give services and agencies the ability to prioritise their actions; not lip service paid by strategic players to front-line staff which can be demoralising rather than empowering.
- **Cohesion issues also need to be mainstreamed in central strategic functions**, given the range of strategic factors that can affect cohesion. This ensures that policies can be 'cohesion-proofed'. **This applies to central and local government**: stakeholders highlight that central government policy (including foreign policy) has a significant impact on cohesion.

However, this raises real challenges around how all individual services can have the understanding and expertise to deliver cohesion-friendly policy and services. In this context, stakeholders see a vital role for cohesion leads and cohesion teams, within the council or Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for example, providing advisory and monitoring functions to services (but not necessarily having ultimate responsibility for delivering improved cohesion). There may also be value in central government developing guidance on best practice for achieving this, such as staff training and approaches for building cohesion into performance management of individual services, for example.

- **Long-term funding for long-term projects is essential.** This is because changes in attitudes and relationships between communities take time to develop, as do putting in place effective multi-agency partnerships to deliver them.
- **Inevitably policy makers and service providers have to do their best within budgetary restraints.** In this context, some stakeholders highlight the benefits of developing existing structures, and avoiding fundamentally restructuring management or community engagement structures where possible. The use of 'seed funding' to test new and innovative approaches is also highlighted as beneficial.
- Given the multi-faceted nature of cohesion issues, some of the most effective approaches seen are based on **effective partnership working**. Stakeholders stress the importance of sufficient time and budget being available to build and maintain relationships between agencies. The LSP is seen as playing the central function in this regard, but stakeholders also stress the importance of this happening at grass roots level, and highlight that approaches such as staff exchanges at management meetings can play a useful role.

What are the challenges to policy development and cohesion monitoring?

The research provides a picture of the current status of cohesion policy at this time point and provides rich feedback from stakeholders about the challenges of policy development and cohesion monitoring. Key issues are summarised below, along with examples of specific support needs that might be usefully met by central government agencies.

- **Given the complexity, and relative “newness” of cohesion as a distinct policy area, it is still early days in many areas.** Concepts and understandings of key issues are still being developed locally, and stakeholders' have diverse views of what cohesion is and how it can be addressed. Approaches usually depend on local circumstances rather than central guidance. Whilst some projects emerge as part of systematic policy approaches, many initiatives are reactive and arise spontaneously through needs and ideas identified by innovative local agencies at grass roots level. Development and use of indicators and monitoring is also still in its infancy.
- **Stakeholders usually recognise benefits in local authority level strategic cohesion policy development and monitoring. But the complexity and very locally-specific nature of cohesion issues poses real challenges for achieving this.** Stakeholders often feel current official indicators are not adequate, being too narrow or simplistic to meaningfully represent the pertinent issues on the ground. Additionally, as in other policy areas, development of cohesion performance management systems, and evaluation of projects has not necessarily been a priority for resource allocation, given other pressing service delivery needs. There would be clear benefit in providing further **support from the centre, in identifying cohesion indicators and performance management models that are appropriately flexible and sophisticated.**

- But the nature of current developments has also very much highlighted the importance of flexibility at local level. Stakeholders stress that **policy and initiatives should not be restricted by (i) too much emphasis placed on indicators that are blunt or narrow or (ii) or the need to evidence effectiveness of approaches**, given the scarcity of best-practice models on which to draw, and commonly a lack of budget to evaluate small scale projects. In this context it is also worth highlighting that some initiatives valuable in supporting cohesion, such as those addressing socio-economic wellbeing, do not always have direct observable impacts on cohesions. **Local areas also need the freedom to take some risks in developing new, innovative and creative approaches.**
- **Stakeholders also see significant value in having the flexibility to enable spontaneous projects to spring up and serve local purposes** – these can be valuable whether or not they have been empirically justified, tested and evaluated. Local practitioners may successfully argue that local knowledge, good judgement and needs identified through the involvement of local communities are in many ways a valid substitute for more formal needs assessment. Given the complexity and locally-specific nature of cohesion issues, it is vital that this type of flexibility remains within any centralised guidance that is produced.
- There is a **clear demand for wider dissemination of best practice, particularly through formal and informal networking.** The advantage of networking is that as well as finding out about what other areas are doing stakeholders also have the time and opportunity to discuss how this could apply in their particular situation, and to ask the questions they need to ensure they can fully apply what they have learned. Central government can play a key role in making this happen, becoming key partners of local agencies by encouraging ongoing innovation and providing opportunities for networking.
- Finally, local stakeholders stress how central government **policies can have a significant impact upon community cohesion;** an obvious example is foreign policy, although there are other, seemingly unrelated, policy areas that can have a ripple effect upon community cohesion. Government policies set the framework within which local action operates. Maximising community cohesion in the future can only be achieved if policies are “cohesion-proofed” at central government as well as local level.

Looking forwards

Overall the research reaffirms the importance to cohesion of many policy strands well documented in previous literature, but also provides specific creative and effective examples of successful approaches in practice. We hope that the individual projects and policy approaches reported on in this document will provide a lasting resource of ideas and inspiration to policy makers and practitioners across the country.

The research also highlights challenges arising from the true complexity of cohesion issues, and how they operate in all spheres of public life. Whilst innovative targeted projects must play a key role, cohesion-friendly approaches also need to be embedded in all policies and services at local level; there are no quick fixes, and local leadership must be focused on ensuring that all agencies engaged with communities recognise their potential impact on and responsibility for supporting community cohesion. In addition, though, the role played by central government policy must also be borne in mind.

The complexity and locally-specific nature of cohesion also raises real questions about how policy should be developed and monitored; in particular the appropriate balance between top-down approaches emphasising overall strategic direction, and the need for tailoring flexibility and responsiveness at a very local neighbourhood level. With few best practice approaches, or evidence grounded project models to draw on, in what is still a very new area of policy at local level, local agencies could certainly benefit from further support and guidance from the centre on strategic approaches, but crucially this must be non-prescriptive and sophisticated enough to recognise local complexities. It is also clear that in this context, effective approaches truly depend on the genuine involvement and participation of local communities, a central role for the community and faith sectors, and frameworks for action which support local agencies in responding spontaneously and intelligently to needs arising on the ground, and taking risks with innovative project approaches. Central government can also play a role in facilitating the sharing of best practice between local areas.

1. Introduction

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC) was established in August 2006 as a fixed-term body (reporting in June 2007), charged with deepening an understanding of community cohesion issues and relevant policy approaches, and developing practical approaches to support community cohesion in local areas.

This research study was commissioned to contribute to the ongoing work of Communities and Local Government and the Commission. It seeks to help understand 'what works' in terms of cohesion policy and initiatives by investigating policy and practice in six case-study areas.

In particular, the study focuses on identifying some best practice approaches in relation to:

- how cohesion-related work might be *organised* in a local authority area
- *what types of initiatives* are effective in supporting community cohesion

Research approach

The research is based on a case-study approach. Community cohesion issues are complex and operate very differently in specific local areas and likewise policies work differently depending on the nature of the population and the local area context. With this in mind, a case-study approach is particularly valuable in allowing an in-depth picture to be constructed of how policies and initiatives operate together within a particular local context. They can contribute to understanding not just '*what works?*' but '*in what circumstances?*' and identify key 'success factors'.

The study is mainly a *qualitative* investigation of what works, based largely on accounts, commentaries and experiences of local stakeholders, but contextualised by local area context data and interpreted in light of existing knowledge and theories of community cohesion. To the limited extent that any quantitative data are available, these have also been used to supplement the qualitative data with the aim of providing more objective evidence for success of approaches in some cases.

It is important to bear in mind that there are limitations to the extent to which findings from a small number of mainly qualitative case studies can apply generally to the population as a whole, and some caution therefore needs to be used in applying learning to other areas with different contexts. Nevertheless, this report provides in-depth discussion of a wide range of policies and projects operating in practice, from which wider lessons can be drawn.

Selection of areas

The areas selected for the study were the local authority districts of:

- Birmingham
- Blackburn with Darwen
- Bradford
- Hull
- Peterborough, and
- Tower Hamlets

These areas were chosen for a number of reasons. We selected areas where cohesion activity is relatively well developed, for example Tower Hamlets, which has been awarded Beacon status in each of the last four years including for Getting Closer to Communities, Promoting Racial Equality, and Supporting Social Care Workers and Community Cohesion. It also focused on ensuring a mix of area types, in terms of population profile and prevalent cohesion issues, to provide rich and wide-ranging evidence of relevant approaches in different types of context. For example, Bradford and Birmingham comprise well-established Pakistani communities as well as White communities who tend to live in separate residential neighbourhoods; Tower Hamlets has a large Bengali population. In Hull and Peterborough the majority of the population are White British and there are significant minority populations of recent immigrants including asylum seekers. Further contextual information is provided in the Appendices.

Data collection

Within each area, we spoke in depth to a range of stakeholders, covering different levels, policy areas and themes, as well as investigating specific projects in detail that could be used as examples of best practice. We aimed to secure interviews with stakeholders across sectors (including voluntary, community and faith based groups, as well public sector) and undertook a programme of interviews and focus groups as below:

- 3-5 interviews with strategic level stakeholders (e.g. the cohesion lead in the council and/or Local Strategic Partnership, important community leaders, chief executives of local authorities etc)
- 3-5 policy level interviews (e.g. heads of housing, education, asylum support, police etc)
- 3-5 interviews with project managers of specific cohesion-related projects/initiatives, and
- 1-2 discussion groups with beneficiaries and participants in local projects and initiatives

We spoke to 70 stakeholders and 91 participants. The final breakdown of who we spoke to in each of the areas is as follows:

| Area | Strategic Level (Strategic) | Policy Level (Policy) | Project Level (Project) | Discussion Groups |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Birmingham | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 (17 participants) |
| Blackburn | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 (22 participants) |
| Bradford | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 (12 participants) |
| Hull | 3 | 4 | 4 | 1 (11 participants) |
| Peterborough | 4 | 3 | 5 | 2 (14 participants) |
| Tower Hamlets | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 (15 participants) |

Throughout this report, verbatim comments are used to illustrate points. We have attributed the comments by area, and used the following terms to indicate the role of that interviewee:

- Strategic level
- Policy level
- Project level
- Youth participant
- Participant

Selection of stakeholders and policy and initiatives for focus

An *iterative* and *emic*⁶ approach was taken in identifying both the stakeholders to interview, and the policy areas and initiatives on which the research focused. This approach helped us to focus on the most pertinent elements in the selected areas, which is key for policy areas like cohesion where issues can vary considerably between different stakeholders in different area contexts.

Contact was initially made with the person with senior responsibility for cohesion issues in the council and/or Local Strategic Partnership, and they helped us to identify key people to speak to with knowledge of and involvement in cohesion work locally. We also involved them in selecting policy areas and initiatives for investigation, with the aim of focusing on the most successful initiatives in policy areas regarded as most important to cohesion in that locality.

⁶ Ensuring the research derives some of its values, structures and key questions from the aspects that are important to the local stakeholders

It should be borne in mind that the study focuses on a small selection of key policies and initiatives in each area, and it was not possible to interview all key players in cohesion in any area. The study does not therefore claim full and comprehensive coverage of everything that is happening in each area, or necessarily represent all perspectives. We are confident, however, that the approach taken to selection has ensured valid and appropriate coverage in each area.

Fieldwork

The discussion guides used were developed and agreed in close consultation with *Communities and Local Government*. In developing the interviewing approach, specific attention was given to seeking to understand whether specific approaches are *actually working*, and if so *how and why*. An explicit approach taken to maximise effectiveness and validity of research evidence on these aspects was to ask stakeholders to consider the assumptions underlying policies about *why* and *how* particular approaches were *expected* to support cohesion, and provide feedback about what *outputs and outcomes had been observed in practice* (normally based on anecdotal evidence).

Interviews and discussions were conducted by executive members of the Ipsos MORI research team over a seven-week period, running from mid-January to early March 2007.

Quantitative data collection

Where available, quantitative data were also collected with the aim of trying to provide more objective evidence of the success of policy approaches and initiatives.

Stakeholders were asked to provide any data currently used to monitor cohesion or to evaluate initiatives locally. In many cases, as this report will show, we found that no quantitative evaluation was taking place, but where available, we have used this information to try and understand how far specific initiatives or policy areas are creating tangible improvements in cohesion. The report also identifies the many challenges associated with effective cohesion monitoring.

Where provided, evidence of effective cohesion work has been included in the report, though evidence was not provided consistently enough to warrant a separate section in this report.

Analysis

We used the following processes to analyse the findings:

- transcripts were made of most of the interviews conducted; for the others, detailed notes and recordings were used
- each researcher wrote a summary report of their own area immediately after fieldwork
- the project team then met with a member of Communities and Local Government research team to brainstorm findings and produce an initial structure for the report
- each researcher wrote up the projects and the cohesion structure for their area

- the area summaries were reviewed by the project team to look for common themes, links and patterns, which then fed into the project thematic sections of the report drafted by the executive team
- the thematic report sections were finally reviewed overall by the project team to draw out the key conclusions, and the final report has been read by the project team to check its validity

Existing Literature

The policy areas and issues covered by this research have been driven by issues raised by stakeholders themselves, rather than set by external policy debates, but in our reporting and interpretation of findings we have sought to highlight, where appropriate, how findings relate to some of the key existing literature. Such sources are referenced throughout the document, but we would highlight three policy and research documents identified by Communities and Local Government as particularly pertinent to the lines of inquiry of our research, and which may be useful reference sources for the reader:

- Communities and Local Government and P. Ratcliffe, University of Warwick (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*
- Home Office and ODPM (2005) *Community Cohesion: Seven Steps – A Practitioner's Toolkit*
- The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) *Our Interim Statement*

Report structure

The main focus of the report was on 'what works' at project level. Detailed evidence on this is discussed thematically in Chapter 4 with more detail on a project by project basis in Chapter 5. The report includes the following sections:

- Chapter 2: Explores what the concept of 'cohesion' means to stakeholders consulted in the research, as context for discussions about what works in supporting it. This is not a comprehensive review of what community cohesion is, but it outlines what local stakeholders in the study areas said and how this fits with some of the current literature
- Chapter 3: Focuses on the strategic management and organisational aspects of how cohesion is tackled at local level
- Chapter 4: Discusses some core types of projects and initiatives which stakeholders regard as especially effective in supporting cohesion at local level
- Chapter 5: Reviews in detail 23 specific projects and looks at key lessons from their implementation that could be applied more widely

The appendices contain copies of the fieldwork materials used in discussions with stakeholders. They also include contextual summaries of each of the areas, giving an outline of the socio-economic profile, key cohesion issues and an overview of how these are being addressed.

Acknowledgements

We would like to place on record our thanks to the policy staff, practitioners and community project participants who took part in research interviews, and those who gave considerable support in helping to facilitate the research at local level, helping to identify relevant participants, and also providing relevant policy documents and available indicator data.

2. How local area stakeholders understand 'Community Cohesion'

This chapter explores stakeholders' understandings of the concept of community cohesion and compares these understandings to the interpretation of cohesion outlined in the Interim Statement of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion. The section is structured as follows:

- Background (2.1)
- Overview of stakeholder definitions (2.2)
- How definitions are constructed including: the multidimensional nature of cohesion; the role of context in shaping understandings of cohesion and the debate between broad and narrow conceptions (2.3)
- Key themes in stakeholder understandings of cohesion: including positive relationships, equal life chances, civic engagement and participation, and common vision and values (2.4)
- Which groups in society does community cohesion encompass? (2.5)
- Language used in community cohesion policy (2.6)
- Chapter summary (2.7)

2.1. Background

An understanding of stakeholder perceptions of cohesion in the study areas provides important context for the findings about 'what works' in cohesion. In a broader sense, the language and discourse surrounding cohesion is also important in framing policy and action at a local level. There is an extensive literature discussing what community cohesion 'is' (or is not), and this report does not seek to repeat these debates.

The CIC has recently developed a revised draft 'user-friendly' definition of cohesion, as summarised in the bullet points below. Whilst we did not present this to respondents, it provides a useful reference point for understanding stakeholder perceptions.⁷

1. Equality of opportunity, access, treatment and services
2. Engagement and participation
3. Respect for diversity and social trust
4. Meaningful interaction across groups
5. Solidarity and collective community action.

⁷ Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) *Our Interim Statement*. Ibid.

The interim statement of the CIC and other literature⁸ also stresses the importance of common civic values and a shared sense of vision, rights and responsibilities.

2.2. Overview of definitions

Stakeholders gave explicit feedback about their understandings of ‘community cohesion’, but insight in stakeholder perceptions also arises through the way that they discussed cohesion issues throughout the interviews. The bullet points below paraphrase the range of concepts mentioned by stakeholders directly, or discussed in this context.

- positive relationships between faith communities, ethnic groups, the able bodied and people with disabilities, people from different geographical areas and of different age, gender and sexual orientation
- interaction between people from different backgrounds
- recognition and appreciation of difference
- civic engagement and participation
- sense of ownership and genuine stake in the community
- sense of belonging to the area
- different communities learning from each other
- responsive public services to which all groups have equal access
- economic well-being and empowerment
- living safely and feeling safe
- equal voice (everyone having the opportunity to participate, influence decisions)
- civic pride (closely linked to sense of belonging, but goes beyond this; feeling proud to be part of a community/neighbourhood)

There was a great deal of variance within the six areas about how much weight each issue was given, particularly by different service providers and policy directorates. The level of prevalence of each cannot be quantified for each area to any great extent, but we feel that they all play a part how cohesion is defined and articulated in the areas we looked at.

Some elements are emphasised more than others; for example, whilst respect for diversity and engagement are central to stakeholders’ understandings of community cohesion across all areas, emphasis on social equality aspects vary by area and service context which provides a some understanding as to why the areas have different policy and initiative approaches to community cohesion.

8 Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*. Ibid.

Overall, this list of stakeholder conceptions resonates closely with the CIC definition, though stakeholders included a sense of pride and belonging, economic well-being and empowerment and living safely and feeling safe as elements of community cohesion.

Key themes are discussed in the remainder of this section.

2.3. How definitions are constructed

Definitions are broad and vary by area and within areas. In order to establish what works in community cohesion it is important to understand what stakeholders believe community cohesion is, and therefore establish what projects are designed to achieve. The following sections outline the key features that emerged from our interviews.

2.3.1. The multi-dimensional nature of cohesion

The list of concepts outlined above clearly represents a wide range of attitudes, behaviours, emotions and structural conditions. This is not only because of the impact of context on understandings of community cohesion (see section 2.3.2.); individual stakeholders also frame community cohesion in multi-dimensional terms. For example, Peterborough's Cohesion Board Communication Strategy, formulated by key stakeholders in the area, talks about cohesion not only in terms of how people get on, but in terms of safety and opportunity.

"[Community cohesion is] present when different groups interact peacefully and constructively in every day life and people feel that the local environment provides safety, opportunity and belonging."

Peterborough, Communications Strategy

And, in this context, cohesion issues are understood to require cross-cutting and multi-pronged approaches.

"The cross-cuttingness of the issue into all the other objectives that the council, the local strategic partnership have. Because that's the thing that's happened over the last few years. We've realised that issues are big and cross-cutting and one issue impacts the other."

Blackburn, Policy Level

The cross-cutting nature of community cohesion was recognised by several strategic level participants from the councils, who emphasised that cohesion relates to both the council's role as service provider, and its role in providing community leadership.

Stakeholders also discussed how the complex and multi-faceted nature of cohesion makes it difficult to develop appropriate indicators and measures; issues of measurement are discussed in more detail in section 3.9. below.

2.3.2. Definitions are context specific

Understandings and definitions of community cohesion are influenced by both the area and the service specific context in which policy makers and practitioners operate. For example:

- in Blackburn, where there are some distinct residential neighbourhoods where White and Asian residents tend to live separately, meaningful interaction between different groups is at the centre of understandings of community cohesion, and some stakeholders describe a cohesive community primarily as a community where people from different backgrounds meet and mix in a positive way⁹
- by contrast in Peterborough, where ethnic minority communities are smaller and more dispersed, there is more emphasis on fostering a general respect for diversity (e.g. via ‘myth busting’ initiatives such as residents’ meetings in the Milfield area) and on providing socio-economic support to disadvantaged groups

Ideas of community cohesion are also shaped by policy fields. For example, some stakeholders within leisure and library services discussed cohesion as the idea of access to services, also clearly reflecting a focus upon equality and diversity rather than cohesion per se:

“My understanding is bringing together all the strands of equality and diversity. And incorporating all of that to make access to services and information more open and available to everybody in the community.”

Hull, Project Level

This highlights the value of definitions of cohesion being fluid and flexible so that they can be tailored for different situations, and by the people working at grass roots level. In order to be effective in achieving community cohesion it is important to have a good understanding of what that means in the local context.

2.3.3. Broad versus narrow conceptions of cohesion

It is clear that stakeholders’ understandings of community cohesion are closely related to other concepts and policy agendas, including equality, diversity, respect and tackling deprivation. Community cohesion is also a malleable concept, which is shaped by the local areas and policy fields within which it operates. The broad scope and flexible nature of the concept of community cohesion raises the question: how does adopting a community cohesion framework help with the challenge of building stronger, better communities? If problems of cohesion are really those of deprivation and unequal access to services, for example, why not just approach them in those terms?

One response to the significant overlap between community cohesion and these other concepts and policy discourses would be to try to isolate a narrower distinctive ‘core’ of community cohesion and focus action around this concept. The concept of community cohesion does seem to have highlighted the idea, which is not as strongly embodied in equality and diversity agendas, that meaningful interaction between different groups is a key component of healthy communities.

This research suggests, however, that to embark on a search for a ‘true’ narrow core

⁹ This is not to say that the community cohesion agenda within Blackburn is concerned solely with how people from different backgrounds get on. Stakeholders also emphasise that many of priorities set out in the Local Area Agreement impact on cohesion, including, for example, the priority to improve the education attainment of White and Pakistani boys in receipt of free school meals.

of cohesion would be to ignore the way in which the broad and flexible nature of community cohesion is enabling a diverse range of projects to be developed and coordinated under a single umbrella. Rather than trying to isolate a distinctive community cohesion goal, the distinctive contribution of community cohesion is perhaps better seen in the way in which it is serving as an organising concept and focal point for a diverse range of projects aiming at strengthening communities and improving lives. See section 3.8. for a discussion of the way in which community cohesion has been a focus for partnership working in the study areas.

2.4. Key themes in stakeholder views of community cohesion

As discussed above, cohesion is multi-faceted. Below we discuss the key elements in more detail;

- positive relationships
- equal life chances
- civic engagement and participation, and
- common vision and values

2.4.1. Positive relationships between people from different backgrounds

Community cohesion is perhaps most widely regarded as the process of different communities 'getting along', working together and understanding each other. This aspect – i.e. the quality of relationships between different groups in a place – is the area of greatest consensus regarding the definition of community cohesion:

“For me it’s about promoting a shared recognition of different communities, bringing them together; ensuring that we’ve got a platform where differences can be recognised and celebrated and voices can be equal.”

Blackburn, Project Level

At a minimum level, this is regarded as the presence of tolerance and the absence of tension and social problems.

“I suppose it’s a community that isn’t in conflict, that understands each other’s needs and is prepared to accept them...will get along, will belong, not love each other, but they will just accept it.”

Blackburn, Policy Level

Although this less ambitious conception of community cohesion is expressed by a few stakeholders across the areas, the vast majority are keen to emphasise that cohesion is also about positive relationships. Some feel strongly that it is important that the community cohesion agenda is approached through a positive framework, which includes appreciation and celebration of diversity:

“It’s about enabling all communities to work effectively together and ... and celebrate the value of different people.”

Hull, Strategic Level

Stakeholders across all areas talk about positive relationships in terms of meaningful social interaction, as well as mutual understanding and respect. Awareness of the importance of interactions that are *socially meaningful* (e.g. socialising and friendship) rather than incidental mixing such as in the workplace or at the shops – has increased at central policy level in recent years, and this is very much mirrored at local level. In this context, whereas much recent literature has highlighted the importance of reducing residential segregation¹⁰, stakeholders place less emphasis on this. They tended to see some level of community grouping as natural and inevitable, and also associated with key positives, such as preservation of different cultural traditions, and community support networks. Importantly though they also recognise that mixed neighbourhoods do not *guarantee* meaningful interaction, as groups can still be based specific sub-groups within them. Stakeholders tended to consider educational segregation to be a more significant barrier to cohesion, though many recognised the difficulties in addressing this issue directly. Policies to promote meaningful interaction are often a key part of local cohesion strategies. This is an aim in itself and not linked to the extent of residential segregation. Section 4.2 discusses further the role of policies in facilitating meaningful interaction in promoting cohesion.

2.4.2. Equal life chances

The current CIC definition of cohesion includes: *‘Equality of opportunity, access, treatment and services.’* This resonates with stakeholder views across the study areas. For example, *‘improving services and responding to diverse needs’* is regarded as central to addressing cohesion issues by a strategic level stakeholder in Hull. Some stakeholders emphasised that equal access to high quality, responsive public services must be placed right at the core of cohesion policy:

“I think the priority actually has to be around the business end, it has to be around understanding our local community and providing services that are relevant to them.”

Hull, Strategic Level

“What we’re really talking about is good customer service. HSBC, Sainsbury’s, the big retail outlets, the big businesses know more about community cohesion, know more about responding to ethnic diversity than we do. Why? Because they have to sell products to people. If they don’t tailor their products to meet community needs, they don’t sell products.”

Hull, Strategic Level

¹⁰ For example, Gradstein and Justman’s analysis of the role of education in promoting a common culture outlines how excessive polarisation can result from different cultural groups defining the social content of the school curricula (Cited in: Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*).

The importance of equality in service provision was a common theme across the study areas. However, in some areas stakeholders go further in emphasising the role of social and economic empowerment and social inclusion in a wider sense. They stress the importance of tackling the disadvantages and barriers that certain groups face in trying to participate in and benefit from society – through targeted projects for example, as well as general policies of encouraging equal opportunities and access to and treatment by services. The role of structural factors, such as historic patterns of immigration, labour market dynamics and housing policy are of course well documented in cohesion literature.¹¹

In three of the six study areas (Birmingham, Bradford and Tower Hamlets) addressing social and economic disadvantage is regarded as the *primary* lever to addressing cohesion – and at least as important as more cultural focused policies such as promoting awareness, understanding and mixing. For example:

- to address deprivation, Birmingham City Council and the LSP have set out in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) 11 'priority wards' and, within these, six 'priority neighbourhoods' where they are coordinating services to address local issues – and policy makers consistently highlight this work in describing their main cohesion policies
- similarly, 'improving education, building skills, and rising employment levels across all communities' is also regarded as essential to Bradford's success and this will require work over a 10-20 year process. In Bradford policies include a focus on ensuring education is relevant to existing job opportunities, and also addressing the needs of women, young men and other marginalised groups.

"Migrant groups become economically empowered, take a stake in the community and integrate and move out of the inner city areas that they initially moved into. So whilst promoting cohesion and activities to bring people together and to celebrate public life and events is absolutely vital, and it's really, really important, the key for me is through skills and education to economically empower people."

Bradford, Strategic Level

Though stakeholders were not probed on this issue, few mention the role of economic policy in affecting underlying structural dimensions, and this may be an area where further policy guidance might be considered. For example, *Managing for Diversity*¹² stresses the importance of cross-borough and often regional economic policy in contributing to the underlying structural factors impinging on cohesion issues.

The extent to which stakeholders emphasise working with deprived communities and disadvantaged groups in cohesion policy does vary. For a few, cohesion issues are always linked to deprivation:

"Cohesion isn't an issue if you're not disadvantaged."

Birmingham, Policy Level

11 Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*

12 Ibid.

Some stakeholders are quick to highlight the importance of avoiding associating cohesion issues with deprived areas only, to the exclusion of others (see sections 2.6.2. and 4.4. for further discussion of this). In general this feedback highlights the benefits of stakeholders consciously considering these competing issues in development and implementation of policies.

2.4.3. Civic engagement and participation

The third key aspect is civic engagement and participation. Reflecting the strong emphasis on this in current cohesion policy and research literature, most stakeholders see a strong relationship between the ideas of community cohesion and civic engagement – for example, this encompasses neighbourhood forums, decision-making bodies etc. Some actually equate cohesion and engagement as part of the same thing. For example, some stakeholders interviewed within housing departments discussed the concept of community cohesion mainly in terms of tenant participation.

This raises questions about the dividing line between dimensions of community cohesion and drivers of community cohesion:

- on one level some stakeholders regard civic participation *as part* of community cohesion – and this implies a very broad definition of ‘community cohesion’ as encompassing the broader community health
- from other perspectives, however, civic involvement is regarded as a means and driver of cohesion (if more narrowly defined as how well different groups get along, for example). This is not to say that indicators and drivers should be considered separately; rather, that they can be taken as two sides of the same coin, in that it is possible to consider elements as both drivers *and* indicators of cohesion.

Civic participation as a *means* to supporting cohesion is discussed in a number of different ways by policy makers and practitioners alike – from ensuring people feel they have a stake in the community, to facilitating mixing and engendering a common sense of purpose between different groups through the relevant activities themselves.

“If people feel part of society, people feel they have a stake in that society, then society immediately becomes more cohesive.”

Hull, Strategic Level

Whether participation is regarded as an integral part of cohesion, and/or a driver of it, there is nevertheless strong consensus among stakeholders about its importance.

The role that involvement and engagement projects can play in supporting cohesion is discussed further in section 4.6. below. Community participation in developing and delivering cohesion policy specifically is also discussed in section 3.7. below.

2.4.4. Common vision and values

Finally, existing policy recommendations such as the Home Office and ODPM Community Cohesion Practitioners Toolkit¹³ emphasise the role of common vision and values in encouraging cohesion at local level, as well as valuing diversity and difference. The potential tension between these two aspects is well rehearsed in the policy literature,¹⁴ and because of this, the CIC has attempted to identify common values that might be universal and non-threatening to any group, such as protecting the disadvantaged, listening to all views, and freedom of speech where it does not harm others. The importance of the Council as a community leader in promoting shared concepts of citizenship, rights and responsibilities, and civic vision for a town or borough as a whole, is also stressed in *Managing for Diversity*.¹⁵

Fostering a sense of commonality between local people and between different sections of communities did emerge as fundamental to many cohesion-related initiatives in the local area. But, in the main, local stakeholders – and practitioners in particular – place most emphasis on developing a sense of commonality through focus on tangible aspects, rather than abstract values or a conceptual vision for a community or area. For example, this was discussed in the context of neighbourhood forums which provided a community focus on improvements to services and area regeneration.

The things which bring about integration and cohesion are those things which bring people together with common cause. And all of those things are best addressed locally. If you can unite people with local common cause, let them see the whites of their eyes, you can let them see that their value systems are extraordinarily similar – and that works. And the evidence for that is extremely good

Birmingham, Strategic Level

The importance of the local and the tangible, rather than the general and conceptual, also emerged from initiatives that bring together young people from different backgrounds. Several participants in these projects reported discovering how many day-to-day worries, interests and ambitions they shared with young people from different communities.

Common *values* in the abstract sense were mentioned only rarely in discussion about cohesion, and usually only by high level stakeholders. Common *vision* in a more conceptual sense was also only discussed as relevant in Blackburn where a key strand of policy was the 'Belonging to Blackburn and Darwen' campaign. Encouraging common civic values documented in a charter document formed a key part of this campaign, however, discussions with stakeholders highlighted that the most effective features of the campaign lay in spin-off activities that helped to make a sense of place and the values outlined in the charter meaningful and 'real' for individuals. For more detail on this and other relevant projects see Chapter 5.

13 *Community Cohesion, Seven Steps: A Practitioners Toolkit* (2005). Cohesion and Faith Unit Home Office, and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/603/CommunityCohesionSEVENSTEPSAPractitionersToolkit_id1502603.pdf

14 For example, see: *Building a picture of community cohesion: A guide for local authorities and their partners*, Home Office, 2003.
http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/690/BuildingaPictureofCommunityCohesion_id1502690.pdf

15 Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*.

Overall, this highlights the importance of the tangible, and the personally relevant (rather than abstract concepts and values) within any policies designed to foster a sense of commonality.

2.5. Which groups in society does community cohesion encompass?

A recent analysis, looking at case study Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), found that best practice requires a broad definition of community cohesion embracing race, faith, age, gender and location.¹⁶ Reflecting this, there is a shared view in all study areas that the idea of community cohesion encompasses relationships between all communities – and between all groups within a community – for example, that it involves age, gender, sexual orientation and socio-economic class, as well as relationships between people from different ethnic and faith backgrounds.

“We’ve also got to get away from community cohesion as seen as an ethnic minority issue. The big problem now, the big issue we have as a country as well is the segregation of the ages.”

Hull, Strategic Level

“My concern has always been to make sure that the community cohesion agenda looked at all different groups. Every single one of us is in a minority of some kind because we’re old, because we’re young, because we’re trans, because we’re gay, lesbian, because we’re from a particular country, because we’ve got a particular religion, so every one of us falls into a small minority.”

Hull, participant

Relationships between people from different localities within a town or city are also recognised as a key dimension of community cohesion in many areas – with tensions especially likely to arise where there is differential funding or service provision between neighbourhoods, or where different neighbourhoods have different ethnic profiles (see section 3.6. for further discussion of this).

The amount of emphasis on different groups in practice varies, however. The biggest emphasis is on cohesion between different ethnic and faith groups, between neighbourhoods, and also between young people and others. However, there was certainly some focus on other dimensions in all areas – for example, women’s welfare groups were mentioned in a couple of areas (such as the Muatha Welfare Trust in Birmingham giving women support with education and training), whilst policies to improve the ability of services to meet needs of disabled groups, and be sensitive to issues of sexuality were also mentioned in other areas.

¹⁶ Patrick Loftman, (November 2006), *Best practice case-studies: Race Equality, Faith Groups & Community Cohesion Issues: Local Strategic Partnership Improvement Plans & Local Area Agreements*. For further information see <http://www.renewal.net/Documents/RNET/Research/Bestpracticecase.pdf>

2.6. The concepts/terminology used in community cohesion policy

2.6.1. Issues with the nature and role of community cohesion language in the community

There was evidence from discussions with participants in community initiatives that some were able to engage meaningfully and usefully with the concept of cohesion and its associated issues, as the following quotes show.

Some participants interviewed were able to articulate a definition:

"Different people who don't really mix every day just coming together."

Blackburn, Youth participant

"Community balance."

Blackburn, Youth participant

"I think I'd like cohesion because, well community cohesion as an idea, it can't be a top down thing. It's got to be people choose to come together and there's something about respecting each other's differences as well."

Hull, Participant

There are others, however, to whom the language of the community cohesion agenda presents difficulties. Reflecting recent findings of consultations by the CIC,¹⁷ whilst stakeholders stress the importance of involving residents in discussion about cohesion policy and issues (see section 3.4. below), there is some concern – among community participants and practitioners alike – that some of the current policy terminology is too abstract to be meaningful to some people:

"If I was a member of the public I think I would struggle to understand what it was all about."

Hull, Project Level

"I think it's much more of a hypothetical term for them about how other people get on. Maybe less about how they get on with other people."

Blackburn, Policy Level

"A lot of young people don't know what community cohesion is."

Blackburn, Youth participant

"It doesn't actually mean anything at the grass roots level, you're just going about your activities, meeting people and whatever."

Bradford, Participant

17 The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) *Our Interim Statement*. Ibid.

Furthermore, this research also highlighted specific concerns that lack of clarity goes hand in hand with potential for misunderstanding about what cohesion means. Some participants in one project thought the term 'cohesion' related to when tensions are present between different groups – as this is the context in which they had heard it being discussed.

In some cases, there were concerns about unintended negative connotations being attached to policy terms that are potentially divisive and run counter to the aims of cohesion policy. For example, one local participant felt that in his area 'community cohesion' was seen as something for particular communities in deprived areas:

“‘Community cohesion’ scares people, and it actually works against cohesion because it only sounds like it applies to certain communities in poorer areas, and if you're not in that community, you're not included.”

Bradford, Participant

Some participants contrasted cohesion favourably with integration as they felt that 'integration' is just about new arrivals adapting to a new culture, rather than a two-way process:

“Integration seems to me an individual adapting into an existing group...whereas cohesion seems to me, the community actually adapting in itself to include people so everyone can work together.”

Hull, Youth participant

“I think that when we talk about integration it is mainly about, there is already an existing community or an existing culture for example, and people need to come and fit in that...But when they talk about community cohesion, I think this is better, as I understand it, because it's inclusion.”

Hull, Participant

The conceptions of integration expressed by these participants contrast with the more inclusive way integration is understood in a policy context. This highlights that use of abstract concepts in defining cohesion and related policy strands such as integration may not necessarily be helpful when working with communities – and it points to the value of referencing tangible outcomes and features, which are more easily understood, and less open to interpretation.

Another danger, implicit in stakeholder interviews, of having only conceptual definitions of community cohesion, is that it raises the possibility of a dual discourse: with policy makers and practitioners talking about community cohesion, but translating the concept into other terms when engaging with the general public. A key danger inherent in this is the possibility of cohesion being reduced to a term like race relations which does not reflect and address the full range of relevant issues:

"I think that residents... understand community cohesion to be something completely different. In fact, I'm not sure they even understand the term community cohesion. We do have to translate it to maybe race relations or something like that when we're consulting... The missing element [when community cohesion is translated into race relations] is... the cross-cuttingness of the issue into all the other objectives that the council, the local strategic partnership have."

Policy Level^{20a}

These findings again highlight the value of definitions and frameworks of cohesion that refer to a range of tangible ingredients that practitioners can use as a starting point to engage with residents, and that can encompass the full range of relevant aspects.

For example, Hull Council found during a consultation day about community cohesion in Hull, that residents were able to discuss cohesion in terms of a broader range of more tangible aspects:

"Some people were talking about respect, some people were talking about diversity, some people were talking about cohesion, some people were just talking about good public services. Those things are all related and I don't think the public make a distinction."

Hull, Strategic Level

Other research has highlighted potential benefits of involving community groups and local people in relevant consultations about cohesion issues,¹⁸ and this may be worth considering as a means of helping to ensure that debates are posed in ways that are meaningful to communities.

2.6.2. The importance of getting 'official' definitions right

It is worth briefly highlighting the importance of ensuring that any official definitions given of community cohesion are appropriate in content and language, as they can be adopted very consciously and directly at local level. For example, Blackburn's community cohesion objective is *'To promote a united community where people from different backgrounds feel they can get on well together and belong to Blackburn with Darwen.'*¹⁹ This has been explicitly derived from two Home Office measures used and recommended as key indicators of cohesion²⁰:

- the percentage of local residents who agree that their area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
- the proportion who feel they belong to their neighbourhood/local area/local authority area/country

18 Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*.

19 Blackburn with Darwen Local Strategic Partnership's, *People and Communities Strategy*, 2006/7.

20 *Building a Picture of Community Cohesion* (2003), Home Office. Ibid

20a Area attribution unavailable.

2.7. Chapter summary

- Stakeholders recognise that community cohesion is a multi-faceted concept, requiring cross-cutting and multi-pronged approaches.
- Definitions and priorities vary according to local area and service context.
- Reducing residential segregation is not seen as key to encouraging interaction and cohesion by stakeholders. There is a widespread belief that mixed housing does not necessarily result in the development of meaningful social interaction between different groups.
- Cohesion relates to encouraging positive relationships between groups. Respect for diversity and meaningful interaction are seen as key within this.
- In some areas there is a particular emphasis on socio-economic wellbeing and empowerment, reflecting an emphasis seen in previous research regarding underlying socio-economic factors such as immigration, the economy and labour market driving community cohesion challenges.
- There is a clear emphasis on the role of participation and engagement as an indicator but also driver of cohesion.
- Building a commonality around real life issues is regarded as having most value to cohesion, rather than promotion of civic values as has been emphasised in previous literature.

In the next chapter we summarise the approaches to leadership and organisation that work to embed cohesion locally. Chapter four then discusses in detail the types of projects that can be successful in building community cohesion. Finally chapter five gives detailed descriptions of particular projects that have been successful.

3. What works in organising and leading Community Cohesion locally

This chapter outlines and compares the way in which cohesion activity is led and organised in the six case study areas and considers which approaches have been successful and why. This discussion of the strategic features of local approaches provides context for the examination cohesion projects and approaches in Chapters 4 and 5. Practitioners looking for case study examples or best practice may find these later chapters more useful, while those involved in the strategic development and leadership of cohesion policy may be more interested in this chapter. This section is structured as follows:

- Background (3.1)
- Leadership (3.2)
- Embedding cohesion (3.3)
- The role of cohesion leads and teams (3.4)
- Resources; including funding and effective use of resources (3.5)
- Universal vs targeted approaches (3.6)
- Community led approaches; including consultation and involvement, ensuring staff are representative of their communities and voluntary and faith sector led delivery (3.7)
- Partnership working; at a local level and between local and central government (3.8)
- Performance management; assessing the role that cohesion indicators can play, how appropriate cohesion measures can be developed, how the areas approach performance management (3.9)
- Assessing the impact of specific policies or programmes (3.10)
- Chapter summary (3.11)

3.1. Background

Previous research and policy documents have already set out some ideas and provided tool kits to assist development of organisational approaches important for delivering effective cohesion policy.²¹

Key features stressed in current literature can be summarised as follows:

- clear designated leadership and responsibility for taking cohesion forward
- clear statement of vision and values that all can sign up to, and informs work
- clear planning, and monitoring of cohesion-related initiatives and programmes
- involving the community
- effective partnership working across and between public, private, voluntary, community and faith groups, and
- encourage best practice to be mainstreamed in key service areas

In many cases stakeholders' feedback reaffirmed the importance of many of these best practice features (it would be surprising if this was not the case). However, feedback hopefully provides some new insights based on practical examples of how different structural approaches operate in practice (for example the balance between having separate cohesion teams versus mainstreaming) and also includes some elements that are less fully covered in other literature, such as on performance monitoring.

Key themes are discussed below.

3.2. Leadership

The importance of strong leadership in delivering cohesion policy is well rehearsed in previous literature (as indicated above). Stakeholders in these areas likewise stress how absolute commitment to the community cohesion agenda combined with a consultative, partnership approach to achieving goals is seen as key to success.

Stakeholders described how political leadership is required, from all agencies within the LSP and especially the council.

“One of the absolutely key drivers was leadership from the chief exec ... and that's absolutely crucial it seems to me.”

Tower Hamlets, Policy Level

²¹ Cohesion and Faith Unit Home Office, and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005): *Community Cohesion, Seven Steps: A Practitioners Toolkit*; P Ratcliffe, University of Warwick on behalf of Department for Communities and Local Government (July 2006); *Managing for Diversity, a case-study of four local authorities*.

Specifically many stakeholders stress the importance that the cohesion lead provides a *visible, vocal leadership* to initiate change within either the LA, or more broadly the LSP, for what is still a fairly new agenda in some areas, and to communicate the reasons for any required changes effectively. It was recognised that a strategy was just a worthy document until you have individual leaders to carry it through, and to challenge current practices. Some stakeholders highlighted that a clear action plan and commitment from service delivery managers can, however, lessen the need for having exceptional political leadership and personal commitment, especially where cohesion policies have become embedded in mainstream practice.

It is worth highlighting that the role of elected members – as opposed to executive leadership – was not raised much by stakeholders in our interviews. This is perhaps surprising given their central role in community leadership, and the emphasis placed on their role in other literature. For example, *Managing for Diversity*²² stresses the importance of leadership at this level in tackling racism and tackling issues head on in the public-political arena that might result in support of right wing extremist parties, and also the potentially key role of elected members in promoting a shared borough-wide or town-wide visions and sense of shared citizenship, values and responsibilities. Lack of discussion of this may partly reflect the relatively low emphasis given by stakeholders on the importance of abstract values (compared with tangible commonalities).

3.3. Embedding cohesion

Existing literature talks about the importance of ultimately mainstreaming cohesion policy,²³ and this was raised as an important approach by stakeholders in all study areas:

“What we need, if we are to succeed, is a golden thread in all public policy making which considers integration and cohesion. It’s not impossible. Who would’ve thought that we could have an equality and diversity in all policy, or health and safety? ... and just as is the case with those, there must be evidence that it’s been considered.”

Birmingham, Strategic Level

Previous literature has often discussed mainstreaming as something that occurs *after* policies have been developed and rolled out. For example, this is a key part of ‘step 7’ in the Home Office/ODPM guidance document: *Community Cohesion, Seven Steps: A Practitioners Toolkit* (2005). However, in these six areas, a mainstreamed approach tended to be fundamental to the whole approach to cohesion policy, rather than something that might happen when cohesion policy had ‘matured’ and best practice had been established. For example, Tower Hamlets – which has achieved Beacon Status for elements of its community plan relating to cohesion – explicitly does not have a formal cohesion policy, but aims to ensure that cohesion is embedded in *all* policies and practice. Community cohesion aims are built into the overall strategic action plan for the borough, and responsibility for meeting these aims is diffused

22 Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*. Ibid.

23 See: Patrick Loftman, NRA (November 2006), *Best practice case-studies: Race Equality, Faith Groups & Community Cohesion Issues: Local Strategic Partnership Improvement Plans & Local Area Agreements*. NRU delivery team, Communities and Local Government.

among service managers and heads of agencies so that 'community cohesion feels like everyone's responsibility' (Tower Hamlets, Strategic Level).

There's been one kind of view developed, that you should have a community cohesion strategy. We have always resisted that...because if you try and put something on that's an addition, and add-on, then that's what it becomes...it needs to be integrated into everyday practice

Tower Hamlets, Strategic Level

Some of our discussions in Tower Hamlets indicate that this is currently being reviewed, however, and it may be that in the future community cohesion is made into a specific strand of policy, and a team set up with this as its remit – see section 3.4 below for further discussion of this. The emphasis on embedding cohesion policy comes from a recognition that cohesion policy is about the fundamental approach that local services take to delivery and engaging with communities – i.e. that it won't work to be just an 'add-on'. In Tower Hamlets, many initiatives relating to cohesion have sprung up in response to problems at grass roots level, rather than been driven by strategic level analysis of problems. For example, the Youth Rapid Response team was set up in direct response to rising tensions between particular groups of young people in specific areas. This type of response has been regarded as extremely beneficial and stakeholders highlight that this type of effective working is only possible when front-line services are vigilant and have the flexibility to respond to cohesion issues in this way.

Stakeholders gave examples of approaches they had found to be effective in embedding cohesion. At a delivery level, this has included ensuring that all staff have received diversity training, and that community cohesion is incorporated into job descriptions, as is currently the case for Neighbourhood Investment Coordinators in Peterborough.

Stakeholders also talked about the importance of 'cohesion-proofing' strategic decision making. For example, some highlighted that the types of staff who are commonly lost in cutbacks when budgets are tight (often because they are not part of core services such as education, for example) are often key staff for promoting cohesion. This would not happen if cohesion was a priority embedded in wider decision making.

"Community development workers, community liaison officers and youth workers are always the first to go when the budget gets tight – but they're so important – youth workers are sometimes the only confidante that a young person has."

Birmingham, Policy Level

These ideas clearly build on the current concepts behind Race Equality Impact Assessments which are used to assess the extent to which proposed policies are appropriate and fair across all ethnic groups.

One stakeholder suggested that the alternative to mainstreaming – establishing structures specifically to engage with particular sections of the community – can be seen as an admission that public services are failing in their core duty to respond to and meet the needs of all members of the community.

“If the public sector’s doing its job properly, council, police, the NHS, people should feel enabled to interact with the council, the NHS, the police in a way that they feel their voice will be heard. So by setting up these groups, what the public sector’s actually saying is, we’re not interacting with ethnic minorities, people of faith, gay and lesbian and transgender people, because we have to set up a group to ensure they have that access ... So what we have to do is embed this, it becomes second nature.”

Hull, Strategic Level

Some stakeholders suggested that the move to embed cohesion practices across service delivery should accompany a move away from project-based initiatives, which make contact with a few people in a community. However, most recognise benefits in maintaining a range of approaches.

3.4. Responsibility and ownership: the role of cohesion leads and teams

Getting the right management structures in place is important to ensure the success of community cohesion projects. Currently all but one of the areas used a dedicated community cohesion lead or team. Here we discuss:

- the current approach
- limitations
- achieving a balance

3.4.1. The current approach

Emphasis on both leadership and mainstreaming raises interesting questions about who should have overall ownership and responsibility for ‘making cohesion policy happen’ in practice at local level.

Reflecting Tower Hamlets’ emphasis on mainstreaming, they currently have no single person or organisation responsible for overseeing cohesion – it is intended to be embedded in all policy and practice, and therefore the responsibility of everyone. The most common approach apparent in nearly all areas is, however, to have some kind of dedicated community cohesion team or group and/or a dedicated individual, responsible for directing community cohesion work in the area.

Blackburn, for example, has a dedicated Community Cohesion Group operating within the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Within the council there is a community cohesion lead, who oversees cohesion policy and allocates a small amount of funding for community cohesion initiatives. There are a range of other funding streams across the Council and LSP which support cohesion work, including the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and mainstream funding. Peterborough similarly has a community cohesion board on its LSP, coordinating the city’s cohesion agenda, ensuring partners communicate, and monitoring success.

The teams or individuals are based either directly within the council or in the Local Strategic Partnership, and tend to have similar responsibilities. These are:

- creating a cohesion strategy for the area
- coordinating the implementation of that strategy
- overseeing the mainstreaming of community cohesion practices in service delivery
- monitoring the success of community cohesion work
- ensuring effective partnership working

Currently, the key features of the cohesion structures across the six areas are as follows:

| Area | Key Dedicated Community Cohesion Roles | |
|----------------------|--|---|
| | On LSP | On Council |
| Peterborough | Community Cohesion Board | Cohesion Manager – reports to the Board, but employed by the council |
| Birmingham Executive | | Community Cohesion Group, chaired by the Chief |
| Hull | Community Cohesion Group | Community Cohesion Coordinator – reports to the Group, but employed by the council |
| | | Also Equalities Team has a Strategic Equalities and Cohesion Manager |
| Blackburn | Community Cohesion Group | Cohesion lead and Cohesion Policy Officer in the Policy, Performance and Partnerships service |
| Bradford | | Community Cohesion Team. Also a director for Stronger and Safer Communities |
| Tower Hamlets | No dedicated role as yet | The council is currently appointing a community cohesion lead |

3.4.2. Limitations to Community Cohesion Teams

Stakeholders across the areas all voiced debates about the appropriateness of having independent teams or individuals, compared with the idea that responsibility should be dispersed entirely among service delivery departments of the council and partner agencies – i.e. mainstreaming. Those who considered independent teams undesirable saw it as likely to shift responsibility away from service delivery managers:

“[Having a community cohesion lead] could be seen as counter-productive. Could certainly open up the silly season for councils if we had somebody just for community cohesion, because it could undermine, well what’s the role of the managers? What are the rest of the staff doing if they’ve got no role in the community cohesion?”

Policy Level^{21a}

^{21a}Area attribution unavailable.

Some stakeholders talked about the potential danger that service delivery managers might lack the commitment and resources to implement community cohesion measures in this context. They talked about a tendency in this context for community cohesion to be seen as something separate from normal service delivery; an 'add-on' – for example, which is provided when budget allows – but not a sustained aspect of service delivery. Where this model is in operation, stakeholders talked about the importance of cohesion leads having the *power of inducement* if a department or partner agency does not adhere to recommendations; otherwise, it can end up being a matter of chance that a service manager is willing to engage with and commit to the agenda.

Stakeholders were more likely to stress the benefits of the alternative approach of cohesion being very much the responsibility of all departments and individual services, rather than a 'cohesion team'. For example, they suggest that embedding cohesion principles into performance management of services should help to ensure that cohesion issues are adequately prioritised in resource allocation plans, and ensure that it is not optional 'as funding allows'. (Issues of cohesion monitoring are also discussed in section 3.9. Monitoring and performance management below).

3.4.3. Achieving a balance

There is a recognised need for some kind of visible group to encourage and maintain impetus, and provide specialist advice and guidance on cohesion issues. For example, a stakeholder in Bradford suggests that such a team should work in partnership with departments and other agencies to 'challenge, educate and to assist' (Strategic Level, Bradford) the delivery of community cohesion practices across policy and services.

Many stakeholders felt that an ideal approach to have a group which guides and encourages, but does not have direct responsibility for delivery. A number of the areas in the study were currently moving towards this type of model. Tower Hamlets (which has had no group to date) is now considering creating a dedicated Community Cohesion Coordinator to provide dedicated community cohesion guidance, especially to those on the front line of service delivery. Likewise, some of the authorities who currently have cohesion groups/individuals with responsibility for delivery are pulling back to a more advisory role.

Hull is restructuring its equalities team so that they deliver in an advisory rather than operational function on community cohesion.

"It was a very stand-alone structure. We had an equalities unit where what we want to try and encourage is the mainstreaming of equalities and diversity. It needs to be inbuilt into what the council does. And if you're doing that, to coin the jargon, what they should be doing is turning themselves into a business partner role within the council. Where they're there to give specialist help, specialist advice to the service departments."

Hull, Strategic Level

Birmingham likewise is shifting emphasis onto individual departments with less reliance on a central and separate function.

“Previously we produce all the action plans and say ‘this is what you should be doing’ to the directorates. Whereas now we’ve turned it round to say this is the requirement, you need to decide what you’re going to be doing, rather than throw an action plan at the directorate ... so like community cohesion now, it’s not about producing an action plan, it’s about asking the service areas what are you doing which brings about community cohesion ... So there’s a real ownership. As opposed to these are the kind of things we really ought to be doing by March 2008, but really there’s no resources or ownership attached, so we’re shifting away from that.”

Birmingham, Strategic Level

Bradford’s Community Cohesion Team exemplifies the above approach, being set up with an intended ‘short life-span’ to create and oversee an action plan to embed cohesion policy in mainstream policy and services, before an individual is placed to monitor cohesion activity, among other duties, with council departments and partners.

3.5. What works in relation to resourcing community cohesion activity

As well as issues around structure, a number of different issues were raised in relation to approaches to funding and resource allocation which can impact on how successful approaches to community cohesion are.

3.5.1. Level and nature of funding

Many stakeholders emphasised that **for community cohesion-related teams within the local authority or LSP to ‘work’, adequate and reliable allocation of resources is required**, including funding for initiatives and support staff. Also mainstreaming community cohesion practices in service delivery can be difficult unless resources are allocated at the start of the process, as discussed in 3.4.

Looking at projects and initiatives, many stakeholders highlighted the **benefit of long-term funding**, rather than short-term, one-off funding. Given that community cohesion work often involves many small-scale projects and initiatives, relatively short-term funding tends to be the norm. We found many examples of projects whose future was uncertain due to unconfirmed funding allocations.

“It bothers me because I do worry about initiatives and projects becoming dependent upon additional funding.”

Tower Hamlets, Strategic Level

Stakeholders describe short-term funding as problematic because opinions about ‘other’ communities change gradually, and trust and meaningful relationships take time to develop and require sustained effort. Stakeholders continually stressed that long-term commitment is a key factor in ‘what works’ and most of the projects that were presented to us in the research as successful were longer-term initiatives (although we did hear anecdotal evidence about shorter-term ones).

Short-term funding may hold the danger of leading to spend on one-off projects that cannot alter deeply engrained perceptions. For example, while events and festivals can have a positive effect on civic pride and build social capital, they do not impact upon the day-to-day lives of residents. Interaction is temporary and often limited in scope.²⁴

As well as leading to sustainability issues, short-term funding can also be associated with effective management and delivery problems *while* they are running. For example, stakeholders described how it can be difficult to recruit staff into short-term posts; instability of personal circumstances can also affect the infrastructure of an organisation very significantly because in small organisations and projects every individual staff member is key to its functioning.

3.5.2. Effective use of resources

A number of aspects were mentioned relevant to effective use of resources. The key message is that projects that successfully impact on community cohesion should take into consideration how existing resources can be used most effectively.

First, one stakeholder highlighted the benefits of making best use of existing structures to support and develop communities, rather than spending money unnecessarily developing new structures for consultation, involvement or neighbourhood management, for example.

"It's also saying, look we don't need to be heavy handed about this and have a rigid, expensive model of neighbourhood working. There are different ways of doing this and we can be more light-footed and flexible and deliver the same outcomes that For example, CLG [Communities and Local Government] gives us a rigid model of what neighbourhood management means, which as I said costs half a million pounds a year for each neighbourhood and that's just the infrastructure, that's before you've delivered any projects or anything.... But we've got our devolved constituency arrangements so we've already got considerable resources out there more locally.... And what we've said is that within those structures we want to resource something which is more sustainable because it's affordable."

Birmingham, Policy Level

Several stakeholders also highlighted a problem that whilst developing new and innovative approaches – and taking risks to try new things is key in this policy field – people can feel hampered by the regulation of funding and the need to demonstrate tangible outcomes.

In this context, use of 'seed-funding' allocated in small amounts initially to a range of different initiatives was highlighted as helpful in order that different approaches can be tried out, before fuller and longer-term funding is committed, thereby helping to ensure an effective use of resources. £20,000 was an example figure suggested to be made available for relatively high-risk initiatives and projects.

²⁴ For example an evaluation of Citizens Day 2005 (a day of citizenship related events and activities which occurred in several local authority areas) gave evidence that the event was effective in galvanising those already engaged and encouraging smaller amounts of people to start, rather than impacting more broadly on the local communities. The evaluation ultimately concluded, however, that due to the small number of participants interviewed and the lack of follow-up research, the broader impact of the day could not be assessed.

“Funding issues are to do with allocation rather than the amount of funding available. Funding is too over-regulated and there is a culture of fear of risk ...you need seed funding.”

Birmingham, Policy Level

One stakeholder also mentioned that funding which is rigidly focussed on objectives can force a department to concentrate on objectives which have become obsolete, or less of a priority, rather than allow councils and services to adjust to new challenges as they are discovered. Appropriate use of cohesion indicators is also discussed below in section 3.9.

Finally, stakeholders highlighted the importance of ensuring fair allocation of resources across groups and local areas. It was discussed how funding focused on one geographic area can cause envy in surrounding areas with similar problems and that it is better for funding to be allocated across communities that require it, so that it does not appear that one group is receiving special attention. This is discussed further in the section below.

3.6. Universal vs. targeted approaches

Stakeholders' discussions of the complex dynamics and needs in their local communities highlighted a tension within policy between the importance of equality and inclusiveness, compared with the importance of targeted approaches. In order to be successful in developing community cohesion, stakeholders recognised a need for local areas to develop a clear understanding of the trade offs and tensions between universal vs. targeted approaches and to be wary of unintended consequences which can actually undermine cohesion.

As discussed in section 4.4., approaches that are targeted and tailored for specific groups are central to addressing social need and encouraging community engagement and participation. The importance of area-based factors is also well known in social exclusion policy fields are often a key component of cohesion issues. This can apply especially where ethnic groups reside in different neighbourhoods. For example, in Tower Hamlets there has been a history of tensions between small sections of the majority White community north of Bethnal Green Road, and the majority Bengali community to the south. Tensions often also focus on perceived difference in service provision by neighbourhood, with particular issues arising from perceived inequity in regeneration spend – this is an issue that neighbourhood forums in Bradford and Birmingham are tackling, for example. However, there can also be neighbourhood dynamics at play independent of other factors. For example, stakeholders in Hull identify divisions between east and west Hull arising from neighbourhood identities independent of race or service delivery issues.

It is recognised that whilst targeted approaches are necessary to social inclusion and cohesion, they can also function to highlight difference, and can become the source of cohesion problems in themselves. In this context, stakeholders highlight the importance of very careful attention being paid to ensure that services and policies are equitable in treatment across areas and social groups (as far as appropriate), but also that communications are carefully developed alongside such policies to help avoid perceptions of unfairness or negative perceptions of 'difference'. Communication issues are discussed further in section 4.3. below.

In this context, some stakeholders mention the importance of not exclusively focusing on the most deprived communities, because communities of low-average affluence (only slightly above the 'most deprived') can still have cohesion issues, and are likely to be among those where jealousy can arise over funding being targeted at more deprived areas. Likewise, even those living in areas of average affluence relatively nearby those of lower affluence in some cases will still have an interest in that community being cohesive, as their own perceptions of safety, security and lack of tensions will depend on it:

"The words 'community cohesion' scare people, and it actually works against cohesion because it only sounds like it applies to certain communities in poorer areas, and if you're not in that community, you're not included."

Bradford, Participant

3.7. Community empowerment and community-led approaches

The importance of consulting and involving communities and community-led organisations in local policy and delivery has been stressed in pretty much all policy literature, and is also recognised by stakeholders in the study areas.

Stakeholders in all areas place a conscious emphasis on involving voluntary and community organisations in cohesion policies, with the LSP forming a key mechanism for partnership working (see section 3.8 below for further discussion of this):

- Bradford has eight community sector representatives out of the 29 partners in the LSP, four more than are suggested by Communities and Local Government guidelines.
- in Blackburn, the Archdeacon of Blackburn chaired the LSP's Belonging to Blackburn with Darwen Steering Group which produced the Charter of Belonging.
- in Hull, the council consults with HANA (Humber All Nations Alliance), which is an umbrella group for ethnic minority community organisations.
- a city chaplain in Peterborough sits on the LSP's Community Cohesion Board, which runs projects among faith groups that are closely linked to cohesion agenda.
- Tower Hamlets has eight local area partnerships which act as the channels by which to feed residents' views through to the Community Plan Action Groups, who are then responsible for delivering services in line with priorities set out by residents.
- Birmingham's LSP board includes members from the Birmingham Voluntary Services Council and the Faith Leaders Group.

All could cite examples of community and voluntary sector involvement in cohesion-related work in their areas – and indeed many of the projects reviewed in this study have involved, or been led by these sectors. However, the level of involvement of the community and voluntary sector did vary by area. In most cases stakeholders feel that this is an issue where approaches need continuous ongoing work, especially to bring on board organisations representing groups less well represented in some current partnerships, including faith organisations.

There are three dimensions to community involvement discussed by stakeholders as important to cohesion and each are discussed in more detail below:

- consultation and involvement in decision making and management
- ensuring service and policy staff are representative of their communities
- community-led delivery

3.7.1. What works in consultation and involvement at the strategic level

This section draws out what works at a strategic level, in particular the importance of involving all in the community, not just ‘community leaders’. The role played by community involvement activities in improving cohesion is discussed later (see section 4.6.).

At this point, it is worth highlighting the importance that stakeholders refer to of considering the needs of all sections of the community in developing policies, and ideally involving them in this process. Stakeholders highlight the complexity of local issues and how competing concerns can have different implications for cohesion policy. It is important to involve all key parties in developing policies to avoid neglecting or alienating any groups through specific policies, for example, and therefore to develop that work in terms of achieving community cohesion.

As has been identified in previous research,²⁵ stakeholders also stressed the importance of gathering input from different groups of people within communities – not just recognised community leaders, or very active individuals who are easiest to engage – although it was also emphasised that such individuals should not be ignored either, as they do carry influence. Stakeholders mentioned that ‘leaders’ of communities tend to be older and male (often meaning that issues relevant to younger people and women are less well represented); they suggest they are often either self-appointed or appointed through routes where not all members of the community have influence over the appointment. Involving just community leaders and not just the wider community does not work.

“It’s always easy to go to one person, isn’t it? Well we’ve ticked the box.”

Hull, Strategic Level

“You need to spread the net of consultation, not just listen to those who yell the loudest – and it’s well worth the effort to do so.”

Birmingham, Policy Level

25 Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*. Ibid.

"[There is a recognition] that at the heart of some of the issues around community cohesion more broadly is actually the issue of young people and the absence of their voice in policy making, and indeed their absence of the understanding of policy makers to work with young people on issues where there is dissent from what is being given to them."

Birmingham, Policy Level

Groups mentioned as particularly difficult to reach or engage were young people, new arrivals and in some cases women. In this context, approaches developed with an awareness of cultural norms, sensitivities and interests are regarded as especially important.

For example, stakeholders in Hull found that a traditional poster advertising aimed at the Kurdish community was not very successful. On the other hand, attendance at a screening of a Kurdish film advertised through workers visiting cafes and other social venues and speaking to people was very high.

"The one thing that we did learn is when we advertise our events we do the traditional, send out posters ... papers etc. and we tried doing that in community languages ... local cafes and things like that. We didn't have any feedback. When [we] actually went out into the cafes and actually talked to people at the cafes and said, 'why don't you come along to this?' Then people came along to them."

Hull, Project Level

Another example was a women's forum on rights and education targeting women in the Muslim community. As it was recognised that there would be issues of women from this community being permitted to attend a forum on such a topic, the forum was advertised as a 'health issues forum', which received a good attendance. It should be noted that this example does not come from one of the areas we looked at, and was mentioned by an interviewee.

Other literature has also documented other best practice approaches for engaging with communities. For example, *Managing for Diversity* highlights the value of involving local residents and community groups in conducting consultation and communication work, in order to engage communities.

Stakeholders recognise the particular importance of innovative but sensitive approaches to engaging young people and women from Muslim communities in decision-making activities in the context of traditional community structures, where older and male members of the community have tended to play the main role in decision making.

"We need to find ways to engage young people and women in the Muslim community in a way which doesn't disenfranchise the community leaders who are here now. I think there's a deficit of leadership in the Muslim community in the UK because of this Biradari system of appointing leaders by elders rather than on merit or having articulate young people representing the communities."

Bradford, Strategic Level

One concern highlighted by stakeholders was to ensure that the needs of White communities were taken into account in policy. Some had found that inadequate attention to this had led to tensions, with 'cohesion' issues becoming associated with attention being paid to ethnic minority groups at the exclusion of others.

"You've got to be careful...that it's not labelled and marketed as Asian, because there's a bit of a backlash going on at the moment...there's a kind of distrust and concern about the amount of resources, effort and attention paid to that community at what the White community see as at their expense."

Blackburn, Policy Level

"Don't forget White working class – they're the ethnic group with the least aspirations these days."

Birmingham, Policy Level

Blackburn with Darwen council has conducted a resource mapping exercise, which concluded that resources were being allocated fairly and is a potential tool for addressing some of these tensions.

3.7.2. Ensuring service and policy staff are representative of their communities

The second aspect of community involvement seen as important in fostering community cohesion are efforts to ensure that staff are representative of communities.

Some stakeholders stressed that community involvement needs to go further than consultation and involvement in decision making and be even more structurally embedded in policy making and delivery by ensuring that key staff and policy makers themselves *come from* and *are representative of* the communities they serve. The *Managing for Diversity* report highlights the importance of this in sending important messages about support of fairness and equal opportunities.²⁶ In addition, stakeholders in these areas regard this as an important and very direct and effective way of ensuring that services can understand and meet the needs of local communities (this benefit is also well rehearsed in policy and research relating to neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion programmes). One stakeholder also mentioned that the importance of council staff being representative of the local population is often picked out in consultations with the public as an important *indicator* of community cohesion.

Most areas have a focus on increasing the diversity of staff who work in local services, and this has had a particularly key aim in Tower Hamlets and Blackburn. For example, Tower Hamlets have placed an emphasis on recruiting and training local people to work as youth service workers to ensure that Tower Hamlets 'have a workforce which reflects the community' (Strategic Level). The following quote illustrates one of the benefits of this:

26 Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*. Ibid.

"We use and recruit in our team local people to deliver the work, because a normal youth worker is never going to be a 24-hour youth worker but the local people have got to be there in the community 24 hours. If you train [members of the community] up to deal with their own problem they are there 24 hours. So I can count on other people in the community in time of crisis that will come out and support because they have been trained to deal with that."

Tower Hamlets, Policy Level

In Blackburn, the Workforce Representation Sub-group on the LSP is seeking to achieve a more representative workforce within both the council and partners. Their work is closely integrated into the overall community cohesion agenda in Blackburn, with both the Workforce Representation and Community Cohesion Groups forming part of the People and Communities Forum. The LSP has established a baseline and targets for increasing employment of underrepresented groups within the council and partners. Employment has increased since 2003-2004, from seven per cent for ethnic minorities and one per cent for residents with a disability, to 12 per cent ethnic minorities and two per cent with a disability in 2005-2006.

A job application support programme, offering guidance interviews and assistance with job search, has been put in place to support progress towards employment targets. Advertisements for the guidance interviews offered by the Information and Advice Guidance Team have been placed in the council newsletter and *Asian Image* and contact cards for the Guidance Team have been inserted into application forms. This has been accompanied by a poster campaign advertising the service. The reach of this service has been clearly monitored. A total of 292 clients enquired about the campaign, of whom 188 were from under-represented groups. These inquiries resulted in 221 guidance interviews being booked and 158 job applications being completed for LSP employers. This produced 68 interviews, with 48 appointments.

Other research has highlighted the important role of local ward councillors in ensuring the council and partners understand and engage with local communities.²⁷ Having councillors who are representative of their communities is identified by Tower Hamlets as vital to community cohesion. In particular, the borough has a high number of younger representatives, and ethnic minority representatives. They feel that this has played a key role in enabling them to keep close to their communities and be in touch and responsive to local problems.

"In terms of antenna and in terms of picking up tensions which could lead to conflict, which could threaten community cohesion, they are a fantastic resource...I personally think they are the key."

Tower Hamlets, Strategic Level

27 Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*. Ibid.

3.7.3. Voluntary, community and faith group-led delivery

Finally in terms of community involvement, in all of the areas, the community and faith voluntary organisations are regarded as often playing a crucial role in fostering community cohesion and initiating and delivering effective work. Accordingly, working with these organisations is a priority for stakeholders in the areas. In some areas this is already happening successfully (for example Tower Hamlets) whereas for others it is currently an aspiration. Those with experience give evidence that it works as an approach – particularly because voluntary and faith organisations are closer to communities than the statutory sector in many instances:

“We use the voluntary sector a lot, so it means that the council’s not trying to deliver everything ourselves, because we can’t, and more local knowledge is more powerful.”

Tower Hamlets, Strategic Level

“[I don’t think the answer is] government programmes or so called engagement structures like forums ... I’m not saying there isn’t a role for the state obviously, both the local and central government is a vital role ... But it seems to me that if you’re talking about creating more positive communities and empowering communities to address their problems, that’s more likely to come from their organisations that they’ve created, that are embedded in the community, than from some top down structure. But it amazes me how these, in quite difficult circumstances, particularly we’re talking about guns and gangs, these organisations emerge, people seem to want to get together and address problems. Rather than say, ‘oh it’s all the police’s problem’.”

Birmingham, Policy Level

The importance of involving community and faith organisations is well documented in existing literature, and this research highlights how valuable stakeholders find it. They highlighted how voluntary and community organisations can be better equipped in many cases to respond to local need than other statutory bodies. Specifically, the detailed understanding of communities that community organisations have makes them:

- best placed to understand how to tackle problems

The very presence of community and faith organisations in the heart of communities makes them structurally well positioned to play a key role. The quote below provides an example of the role of a community-led supplementary school in being active in reducing tensions in a community.

“Supplementary schools play a phenomenal role in bringing about community cohesion. But there are a number of community people running those [supplementary] schools who had a major influence for keeping calm, keeping community networking, keeping dialogue going. The kind of thing they were involved in the supplementary school agenda was recruitment of governors, addressing educational issues, working with the local authority on education issues, what might the communities do, linking the supplementary school to mainstream. There wasn't a lot of funding going into them but they were playing a great role in bringing about community cohesion. Cos they're actually located in the community and this was cross-cutting communities, not just ethnic minority communities.”

Birmingham, Strategic Level

- more likely to be trusted

Community and faith organisations are also felt to be vital in circumstances where there is a lack of trust in mainstream institutions, for example in Birmingham after a disturbance has occurred between communities, 'street pastors' go out within the communities to reassure and hear concerns, working with the police, but without representing them.

Faith organisations are also regarded as ideally placed to tackle cohesion since they have usually an existing leadership structure that can be used, as well as a membership that is already engaged.

- better able to engage with key sections of the community

There were examples of faith organisations being effective in helping to re-engage those who are otherwise disengaged with the local community. This included Journey to the Soul in Birmingham, led jointly by the youth service and a faith organisation. This was felt to have been effective where more secular approaches had failed. Its more holistic and spiritual approach to the individual was seen as key in engaging young men within the community. The ICLS project in Peterborough, which aims to develop young people's media and leadership skills is also led by a faith organisation (see Chapter 5 for further details of these projects).

“If you have that real depth of contact and mutual understanding ... they can do so much to just totally calm things down outside.”

Tower Hamlets, Strategic Level

Reflecting findings common to previous research, there was a feeling across many of the six study areas that the role of community organisations, faith initiatives in particular, in tackling cohesion is not as developed as in other types of project, and that there would be benefit in achieving more towards embedding the involvement of faith organisations within mainstream cohesion policy – and ensuring policy is therefore community led. The benefits of this were highlighted as especially important in the current climate of concerns over both extremism and Islamophobia.

“Inter-faith working could have a bigger role to play in helping social cohesion.”

Peterborough, Strategic Level

“Unless the public sector work with faith institutions, the work those institutions do will be seen as separatist, and applying to only one community. To avoid that you need a constant dialogue between the public sector and the institution. Also the public sector needs to be able to provide something for the institution which doesn't take away their independence, like short-term funding can do.”

Birmingham, Policy Level

Partnership can be advantageous to both the voluntary and community sector and the government:

- current situation

Stakeholders described how visible partnership between organisations representing different sections of the community can also play a key role in supporting cohesion, especially during times of heightened community tension. For example, Tower Hamlets' Interfaith Forum helped to reduce community tensions in the area, particularly in the aftermath of the London bombings in July 2005. There was a lot of positive feedback after this event in terms of uniting the leaders from all faiths, standing together to condemn the bombers and easing tensions in the area. Following the success of this, an interfaith vigil was held to commemorate the first anniversary and continue to send a concerted message of solidarity. It is felt that events such as this are effective by the way in which visible displays of trust, commonality and cooperation between community leaders helps to promote similar trust between people at community level.

“Regular and closer relationships formed through the project have contributed to better trust and understanding between different faith groups. It has helped reduce community tensions.”

Tower Hamlets, Participant

- working together

Stakeholders also talked about the support needs of community and voluntary sector organisations. For example, some highlighted how voluntary organisations are not always equipped to be able to manage very large budgets, and the responsibility of financial and administrative management aspects can be unwanted. One stakeholder outlined an approach that can be effective in this context. This model involves the council having ultimate control of spend alongside accountability for management, legal and financial matters, allowing the project staff to focus on the delivery of the project, supported by guidance from the council and other statutory agencies where helpful.

- networking

A lack of coordination across community and voluntary sector organisations was frequently cited as a common feature of the sector. In this context, stakeholders in Hull also highlighted the benefit for supporting the community sector of facilitating a linking infrastructure, so that community groups can work with each other, discuss best practice and avoid duplication of efforts. They had established the Community Network in Hull to serve this purpose which they regarded as helpful in providing this type of support.

Overall the research confirms the importance of encouraging and supporting a greater role for community and faith based groups within cohesion policy and practice.

3.8. Partnership working

The importance of effective partnership working beyond the voluntary and community sector is a common theme within stakeholders' discussions about important strategic approaches to policy – again, a well rehearsed theme in existing literature.

Alongside working with voluntary and community sector, stakeholders also advocate working with other partners to deliver community cohesion. Again this supports findings in existing literature which suggests partners including the police, LSP and schools all have a role to play.

3.8.1. Partnership at local level

The importance of multi-agency working was highlighted in the context of needing to work with different sections of the community, but also as important to enable an effective response to the complex and multi-faceted nature of community cohesion issues.

Examples given were the importance of the **police** and **youth services** working together to respond effectively to antisocial behaviour issues driven by social exclusion. Partnership with the private sector was also highlighted as important for effective employment-related work.

For example, the Youth Rapid Response Team in Tower Hamlets can be seen as a positive example of youth services and the police working strongly and effectively together to respond to rising tensions between diverse groups of young people. Neither party would have been as successful without the involvement of the other, in terms of not only accessing groups of young people but encouraging understanding from the police of some of the contextual issues leading to conflict, and fostering a greater understanding of the needs of young people.

The **LSP** is regarded as a key mechanism in all six areas for facilitating a multi-agency and partnership approach. For example, a participant of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Forum in Hull talked about attending the first meeting of the West Area Partnership board and stressed how well the partnership worked at a local level where partners may cooperate over tangible issues.

Stakeholders highlighted that effective partnership requires effort and energy and a personalised approach to engage individuals.

"A lot of it is just ensuring that communications are kept open, that we are listening to one another and responding to potential things developing. I do think that personal relationships are really at the root of it."

Tower Hamlets, Policy Level

"Success requires investing huge amounts of time and effort."

Tower Hamlets, Strategic Level

As highlighted in previous research,²⁸ **schools** are a particularly key partner in community cohesion work, given the emphasis that stakeholders place on working with young people. Effective schools programmes, particularly twinning initiatives, are taking place in several areas. However, lack of curriculum time is seen as a key barrier to engaging schools with the community cohesion agenda. Concerns about the impact of engaging with community cohesion work, and hate crime reporting mechanisms in particular, on the image of the school is also a challenge for stakeholders seeking to work with schools. There is also some feeling that stakeholders seeking to engage independent faith schools with the cohesion agenda need to be sensitive to the particular challenges these schools can face:

"I think with the Head there it really was just the time element...at the end of the day, it's an independent school and that's the issue that we find, particularly with faith independent schools. You've got to give them more time."

Project Level^{28a}

Stakeholders highlight several ways of overcoming these barriers and building effective partnerships with schools:

- trusting relationships are essential to effective working with schools. Using examples of good practice, to illustrate what can be achieved, is important in developing these relationships:

"It's very, very difficult to persuade a school, who is facing huge amounts of pressures ... to come on board ... we've been able to put up two or three really good examples of good practice, which has meant that a) some schools have come to us and said we want to be involved but b) the schools that we had to bring on board initially have actually gone on themselves to continue the momentum ... All of this work is about relationship building, you've got to be able to get on with people, you've got to be able to sell the idea, you're a salesman at the end. So, you've got to get that, you've got to build that belief and that trust and that integrity in people."

Blackburn, Project Level

- autonomy and flexibility of project managers is essential so that they can accommodate changes in attitudes and direction by teachers and schools leadership

28 Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*.

28aArea attribution unavailable.

"If I didn't have the space and the go ahead to do it, it would have been very difficult, bureaucracy's always very difficult, and it's the last thing you need when you're working with school heads or school staff who can be turned in one way or another at the spur of a second. You've got to be very spontaneous, you're going to have to make a decision very, very quickly and you've got to be persistent."

Blackburn, Project Level

- creating immediate incentives for schools to engage with the community cohesion agenda, such as building links to the Ofsted framework, can help with initial involvement

"One of our strengths that we've worked on is the Ofsted, the framework so to say, well this will really support your Ofsted inspection...so we use carrots like that to start with."

Blackburn, Project Level

- celebration and achievement events are important in maintaining the momentum of schools' programmes. They can also be a way of facilitating interactions between parents from different backgrounds

"One of the ways that keeps us going is by having celebration achievement events...It lifts your morale, it showcases the work that you're doing...it brings parents in, in an informal manner, ... not on a false pretext ... But while they're there it might be an odd smile and an odd wink to a parent of a different background. That's where we're planting the seeds."

Blackburn, Project Level

At a more structural level, the following approaches were also highlighted as important or beneficial when working with partners generally:

- involving all key partners to create the strategy. In this way partners feel involved and integral to its success from the outset
- ensuring strategy is effectively publicised so that all are aware of its contents and the role they can play
- constant communication and emphasis on ensuring that community cohesion needs to be a central aim for all LSP partners, underpinned by the awareness that failure to achieve community cohesion can destroy the reputation of the city, its council and the local police with mechanisms for continual upwards feedback
- ongoing communication between partners
- ensuring sufficient budget and staff time is available for building partnerships, outside day-to-day work of service delivery
- open-mindedness about partners being involved across organisational and area boundaries

- mutual exchanges of staff between organisations, for example, in Birmingham's LSP a member of the police sits on the Culture Partnership. A benefit of this arrangement is that when cultural events are held, police are consulted, allowing event organisers to plan a safe event and allowing the police to 'police with awareness'

In areas where the focus is on developing skills and increasing employment, the private sector is highlighted as key to work with, and it was noted that there can be challenges reconciling a business-like approach to the more time-consuming nature of consultative and participatory working approaches. Though stakeholders did not provide any specific examples of best practice, working with the private sector was seen as a key priority for improvement.

3.8.2. Partnership between local and central government²⁹

Stakeholders we spoke to also mention their partnership with Central Government on the community cohesion agenda, and their thoughts on elements of this partnership. Stakeholders had experience of Government offices being very supportive of developing the cohesion agenda:

"We're working quite closely at a strategic level with the government office ... they play a partnership role in terms of the supportive role to the local authority, to the police. We have, we've had some disturbances ... so the government's playing a very positive role in supporting that ... they have a dedicated two or three leads to help and support the agenda."

Strategic Level

However a recurring theme from senior councillors to participants involved in projects, was the view that there needs to be still closer partnership between Central and Local Government. Some mentioned the desirability of government policy being informed by a closer awareness of what is happening on the ground.

"There should be partnership working between Central Government and Local Government, such as secondments, so that they can see what's really happening on the ground."

Policy Level

Some felt that Central Government can have too simplistic a view of cohesion issues:

"Community cohesion is about working with diverse communities of interest – people of Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Afro Caribbean, Eastern European heritage, White British, and then overlapping these you've got gender, sexuality and age issues. DCLG oversimplify the categories, and lump people together like 'Muslims' when really there's so much diversity within each group."

Strategic Level

"DCLG have got to learn that community cohesion isn't about Black versus White or Muslims versus the rest of the world."

Strategic Level

²⁹ Please note that we have not identified these comments by area as they contain some sensitive comments that participants may not wish to be attributed to them personally.

Local stakeholders also stress the importance of Central Government not imposing specific approaches, but supporting flexible approaches to tackle local, specific challenges.

"Not coming out with standard tick box edicts."

Strategic Level

"Perhaps something less prescriptive from the centre, a recognition of the ability of local authorities and their partners to come up with solutions they think might work locally."

Policy Level

Stakeholders also suggest that central agencies could support local authorities by helping to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practice, for example through facilitating networks and visits to see instances of best practice working in other areas, and workshops.

"Sharing knowledge and best practice, and talking about it, I think is really good, as long as you don't end up with a mechanical 'here's your community cohesion kit, implement'."

Strategic Level

A community cohesion issue where the views of Central Government and Local Government can diverge was on the issue of tackling Islamic extremism. There were mixed views on how much influence a local authority could have on extremist activities. The quotes below indicate that some stakeholders believed the council can only play a peripheral role:

"When it comes to tackling extremists, Central Government thinks 'hmm, well these people live in communities' and so they think the problem can be addressed at Local Government level. But they just don't realise the anger caused by the Iraq war. We can provide consultation sure, but ultimately I don't know how much we can do by making sure their bins are emptied on time."

Strategic Level

"DCLG has focused mainly on race cohesion and terrorism, but terrorism isn't a local authorities' area; we're about living and working together, providing a good environment, not surveillance."

Strategic Level

These quotations perhaps highlight the importance of central government policy in framing cohesion at local level and the desirability of ensuring policy is 'cohesion-proofed' at national level as much as possible. They perhaps also highlight potential benefits in provision of more guidance of exactly how local areas can work to tackle extremism:

“How you prevent extremism is a different issue from community cohesion, which needs a different approach ... I'm searching for interventions that would reduce the risk of people behaving in an extremist way ... I'd just like to know, what those who spend a lot of time thinking about those issues have come up with, with regard to that issue of extremism, apart from doing what the police and the security services are doing.”

Strategic Level

Some stakeholders are beginning to explore ways to address Islamic extremism but stress the importance of understanding the context. In particular they identify the challenge posed by community leadership (see chapter 3.7 for more detail) and also how the discussion is framed nationally.

“We need to find ways to engage young people and women in the Muslim community in a way which doesn't disenfranchise the community leaders who are here now ... I think there's a deficit of leadership in the Muslim community in the UK because of this Biradari system of appointing leaders by elders rather than on merit or having articulate young people representing the communities.”

Strategic Level

Some feel that radicalisation among young people is not unusual and that the inference that this is the problem is unhelpful. Instead they feel it is vital to identify why this challenge differs and consequently what needs to be done.

*“And with current international policy in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan and this deficit in leadership, it creates a climate where people can exploit the anger and that natural radicalisation – which isn't a bad thing and we've all been through. The idea that when I was at university I shouldn't have radical thoughts, and governments are constantly telling people that radicalisation at the moment is a bad thing that only happens to Muslims – well it's b***** frankly ... But the absence of community leadership and the absence of real equalities and in the absence of a proper debate about what it is to be a Muslim in western society I think it creates potential for people from Al-Qaeda and other networks to infiltrate and start to groom young people.”*

Strategic Level

Some stakeholders stressed central Government's attempts to engage the Muslim community can be inappropriate, and that a more considered approach is required. One stakeholder gave the example of a Government minister who visited their area to consult the Muslim community but his approach precluded discussion of issues salient to the community, in particular the Iraq war and faith schools, which led to resentment.

“People are mixing up the cohesion agenda with the extremist agenda, and treating them as the same thing. When [a central Government minister] came up here and decided to have a conversation with 150 Muslims who had all been hand-picked to tick a box ... his first question is 'so, what are the barriers to fighting extremism? Go.' And they just looked at him and said 'sorry? You think we know what those are?' ... And there was absolute anger that he'd dared to raise this.”

“There are some very angry people, and these aren't terrorists or extremists, these are people that feel that there is a demonisation going on of their faith, and the actually want to express that and have that dialogue ... so what I did is call another meeting, and I spent two hours talking about the war, the veil, demonisation of Islam, the media, they're right to reply, police activity, and all these things, and at the end of it we got down to talking about things at the local level, education, health. What I'm saying is that you cannot do the real community cohesion work unless you go through this painful conversation, even if the government is absolutely committed to it's position, that's not a drama, they're just sticking to their guns, but you need that dialogue before you can progress past that point.”

Strategic Level

Finally, some stakeholders feel that there is more financial support available for areas that are doing very badly in the area of cohesion. There should also be recognition from central government for areas that are meeting targets and support for average performing areas.

3.9. Monitoring and performance management

3.9.1. Developing appropriate cohesion measures

Stakeholders recognise the importance of target setting and performance monitoring for providing the accountability needed to ensure that policy aims and outcomes are achieved.

Definite indicators form a part of the community cohesion strategies for most of the areas studied, but the level of detail varies. For example, whilst Bradford and Birmingham use a number of different measures, at strategic level Peterborough currently just uses the single official attitudinal measure of how well people from different backgrounds are felt to get on together; Blackburn focuses on this plus one other attitudinal measure of belonging. Identification of indicators and monitoring is at quite an early stage in these areas, with work often in progress to develop this. For example, work to develop fuller indicators is identified as a priority task within Hull and Peterborough's cohesion strategies.

When identifying cohesion measures, those recommended by the Home Office are frequently drawn on, especially the attitudinal measures mentioned above. Birmingham and Bradford who have identified a broader range of measures look at a range of factors such as measures of race-hate crime, socio-economic indicators, measures of participation and the number of councillors belonging to extreme right-wing parties.

3.9.2. Area approaches

It is difficult to draw general conclusions about how, amongst the authorities that have several measures of community cohesion, those measures are used to inform policy decisions, though practices from individual areas can be illustrated. Firstly, we may take **Bradford** as a case-study of which measures taken are considered indicators or drivers of community cohesion. Bradford's Community Cohesion Delivery Plan targets are:

- to reduce the percentage of young people achieving no formal educational qualifications
- to raise the achievement of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African, Black Caribbean and White boys
- to overcome key basic skills barriers to employment through raising Strategic Level and 2 achievement
- to increase the number of businesses in receipt of start up support
- to place additional under 25 year olds in employment
- to increase the number of people attending Neighbourhood Forums
- to boost Bradford Keighley Youth Parliament attendance
- to encourage voter turnout in local elections
- to increase representation on public bodies
- to increase participation in community activity
- to increase the percentage of residents who think residents from different backgrounds mix well or generally mix well
- to reduce the proportion of repeat victims of hate crime

In **Blackburn**, measurement of community cohesion is centred on two attitudinal measures:

- the proportion of local residents who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together in Blackburn and Darwen
- the proportion who feel they belong to Blackburn and Darwen

In addition to the two headline measures, there are a range of service specific indicators that stakeholders feel are relevant to cohesion, but are not necessarily labelled as cohesion measures, for example educational attainment among different groups.

There is also monitoring of employment of underrepresented groups within the council and partner organisations, as adequate representation of all groups within the local workforce is felt to be an important component of a cohesive community.

Improving monitoring and measurement of cohesion is a priority in **Hull**. This is likely to include improving measurement at a small area level, to reinforce the local area approach to cohesion that is being developed through the seven local area partnerships.

The most widely recognised current source of monitoring data is hate crime reports. Hull is part of the True Vision hate crime reporting scheme, which allows victims to report hate crime on the internet or through community locations and voluntary groups. This provides another source of information on hate crime that can be used in conjunction with police statistics. However, stakeholders recognise that hate crime provides only a limited insight into the cohesiveness of a community and trends can be difficult to interpret. Residents' satisfaction surveys within the local areas are therefore likely to become another important strand in cohesion monitoring:

"We've had some discussion already about how we're going to measure this and again I think it can only be measured on customer satisfaction surveys. We've got true vision, hate crime recording as well, but again I think with the hate crime recording at the moment, I think you're going to see things, reports of hate crime going up first and that'll actually help us identify where the hot spots and the priority areas are going to happen. Then, hopefully, because there are measures that we put in they will come down, but I think we've got to have that expectation that things have got to go up before they can come down. I think it's customer satisfaction surveys which are going to be carried out within the areas."

Hull, Policy Level

The value of attitudinal survey data in monitoring cohesion is felt by some stakeholders to be limited to some extent by the nature of Hull's population. As the ethnic minority population is quite small, it is difficult to detect any significant differences in attitudes between groups using quantitative measures.

Looking now to **Birmingham** to see how measures are then used, we see that, as would be expected, general trends are tracked and used for target setting across the area. In Birmingham, however, measures are used particularly to identify priority wards and neighbourhoods where community cohesion is indicated to be particularly low, in an aim to 'close the gap' between these areas and the City average.

Information on community cohesion indicators is disseminated across members of the LSP (including the police and the Learning and Skills Council representatives) and downwards to those closer to the 'low performing' wards. As Birmingham is split by constituencies, this involves constituency councillors and other members of the District Strategic Partnerships being informed and tasked with meeting performance improvements. This focus on tracking local area community cohesion with quantified measures is complemented by multi-agency feedback from front-line staff and residents' issues forums, which further contribute to local decision making – for a more detailed description of this process see Neighbourhood Forums (5.3.3).

As was the case across the areas we spoke to, there is work being done to understand the policy consequences of indicators of community cohesion, and how to improve existing indicators.

“You look at the employment statistics for example, you’re two or three times as likely to be unemployed if you’re a young Pakistani Muslim male, irrespective of education, qualifications, than you are if you’re White in this area and that’s not different to lots of other communities in the country. I think that unpicking some of those issues and actually starting to understand the complexity in those communities is really important to inform our policy directions.”

Bradford, Strategic Level

“We know we need to think about more detailed mapping of where the most homogenous schools are, and if we want to address that at a school level.”

Birmingham, Policy Level

In **Peterborough**, formal monitoring of cohesion is at an earlier stage of development. One of the recently appointed Cohesion Manager’s key priorities is to begin to evaluate how cohesion is progressing in the area, and this is already underway. Initial indicators in Peterborough include:

- the Best Value Performance Indicator about ‘people from different backgrounds getting on with each other’
- media feedback and analysis
- discussion groups conducted with Citizens’ Panel members

There is a great opportunity offered by the Cohesion Board for performance indicators to be centrally coordinated and monitored, and this is an aspect of its work that is being developed at present.

In addition to this, service areas have their own indicators and measures which provide a policy-focused measurement of cohesion policy, notably the Primary Care Trust and the police among those we spoke to. As in Birmingham, neighbourhood measures are also being developed, such as the Greater Dogsthorpe Partnership area, where opinion surveys track changes in residents’ opinion.

Project-level measurement is also present, albeit inevitably ad hoc and project dependent. Nevertheless, where projects are being measured, the indicators are encouragingly being used to improve projects, build upon successes and address teething problems.

Stakeholders highlight a number of general challenges in measuring cohesion which are important to bear in mind. They highlight cohesion as extremely difficult to measure holistically and accurately, partly due to an apparent lack of a consensual, conceptually clear, fixed definition, but also reflecting its ‘soft’ nature, and the breadth and complexity of relevant issues:

“We’re still having a debate as a country as to how to define community cohesion. It’s not defined. How can we measure it?”

Hull, Strategic Level

“You can measure racist incidents, racist crimes. But is that measuring cohesion? ... The workforces of the major employers would reflect the ethnic mix in the local communities. But if each community is keeping within themselves, then is that cohesive? Or is that divisive?”

Hull, Strategic Level

As the above quotes show, it may be very challenging to identify appropriate indicators that reflect the complexity of cohesion and policy concerns. Some stakeholders also highlighted how issues are very locally specific and nuanced, which highlights the challenges involved in both pinning down the complexity of factors at play in determining cohesion and adequately translating these into a set of indicators:

“It might be how many of the community media have been on a language course, on how to speak without inflaming people ... It might be how close the profit margins are of the particular businesses on a particular street. If you look at Lozells, profit margins were so tight and there was so little differentiation in the market place ... So they were all chasing the same buck, basically. Now that might be the strongest indicator of community cohesion. Cos if you can't feed your kids and it looks like somebody else is taking your business and your livelihood away, you've got an immediate tension there. Day in and day out. That might be a better measure of how a community is feeling.”

Birmingham, Policy Level

3.9.3. The role of cohesion indicators

Given the difficulties identifying indicators of cohesion that adequately address the breadth and complexity of issues, some stakeholders suggest that cohesion indicators should only be used to inform strategy and budgeting, and not be used to monitor the success of organisations, as it is felt that this could lead to an over-focusing on meeting targets that do not fully reflect the outcomes intended, though many do see value in some targets to support accountability and encourage action as important.

Reflecting the emphasis on mainstreaming approaches to cohesion, some stress the desirability of ensuring relevant objectives and targets are embedded in mainstream services to ensure accountability on this aspect.

3.9.4. Centralised performance indicators

There was some discontent with the current suggested community cohesion performance indicators (PIs); they are considered by some as being too narrow to measure community cohesion, and accordingly the attention paid to them can be misguided.

“Government performance indicators count what's easy to count rather than what counts – it's all about outputs rather than outcomes.”

Birmingham, Strategic Level

Stakeholders may value further work on developing more sophisticated formal indicators, and guidance in this area. However, it is important to bear in mind that some stakeholders stress the danger of too much emphasis being placed on certain

'hard' indicators in this context. It was emphasised that available indicators should not constitute or even direct the strategic objectives in the same way that they do in more easily measurable policy areas (for example, educational achievement). There was concern that if policy becomes too focused on aspects that can be easily measured, key measures – including 'softer' issues in particular, such as feelings of engagement, or feedback from front-line staff – will be missed. There was concern in some of the areas that the amount of quantitative data used to track cohesion could become unwieldy.

"It seems like we've had a flurry of reports about how to measure community cohesion, and there's almost too much there, like we're trying to measure it in so many different ways we're kind of losing the plot really."

Birmingham, Policy Level

"We know it's not simple. But if it's going to be measured or specific, then the bigger the beast, the animal, the statistics, the data that you create, the harder it is to track it, to understand it, yeah. There's a pay-off, right. You've got all of these dimensions of community cohesion, it helps you understand how difficult it is to get hold of, understand, quantify, articulate. Which is good, yeah, no need to lie about it, it is complicated, it does need action on all fronts. But you've also created something that now has 20 variables or something, yeah. Each of which has five strands of key projects and before you know it you've got a hundred things that somebody has to keep an eye on and track. And you very quickly just completely take your eye off the ball and become project manager, rather than actually getting that sensitivity that we were talking about."

Birmingham, Strategic Level

Another issue raised was appropriateness of local authorities monitoring – or even attempting to affect – certain personal lifestyle choices, despite them being arguably measuring elements of community cohesion:

"The thing that fascinated me last year was Trevor Philips, when he said how many, what was the phrase he used? How many of your close social group are people from a different culture, a different ethnic minority... it's a fascinating way of measuring cohesion and integration. But I'd hate as a council to measure that. It's not the government's job to tell people who they can and can't be friends with."

Hull, Strategic Level

Despite concerns about the challenges of measuring cohesion, there is no wish to return to the 'bad old days' when no performance monitoring was happening. Instead, strategic stakeholders stress the need for indicators to be used with care, and to ensure policy and practice is not reduced to the issues that can be easily measured.

Attitudinal survey research was mentioned as playing a key role in this context, as a means of directly measuring the 'softer' elements of cohesion. All areas say this is central to their cohesion monitoring. Blackburn with Darwen exemplifies this approach, the strategic objective for the community cohesion subgroup being 'to promote a united community where people from different backgrounds feel they can get on well together and belong to Blackburn with Darwen'. Thus, the objective is very focused around attitudinal performance indicators: the proportion of people who feel they belong to Blackburn with Darwen and the proportion of people who feel this is an area where people from different backgrounds get along well.

3.9.5. A desire for better population data on new arrivals

A number of stakeholders discussed the availability of data they need to inform cohesion policy adequately. In particular, they highlighted that areas where there have been recent changes in the local population, clearer and more detailed data on the new communities settling there would provide greater understanding of the area and allow for more focused community cohesion work. This is a key gap that they feel inhibits them from understanding cohesion issues at local level.

"We do still have issues and difficulties about being completely clear about what the new communities are ... what we get from ONS (Office for National Statistics) and population surveys is very limited at present."

Tower Hamlets, Policy Level

3.10. Assessing the impact of specific policies or programmes

It was acknowledged that good practice would usually be to evaluate policies or programmes in order to maximise learning and establish best practice for the future. However, many programmes and initiatives are not evaluated systematically, often due to the costs involved. Some evaluate using customer feedback forms, but discussion about the success of projects during the qualitative interviews was far more likely to be based around project leaders' feelings about how their area or participants had changed rather than budget to be spent on evaluation of small-scale projects. This has had implications for the following chapter about what works as there is little empirical evidence to support impressions.

Stakeholders also highlighted the challenges of gauging the contribution that specific initiatives and policies make to achieving change in communities. Stakeholders are always aware of the difficulty of untangling the relative effectiveness of different aspects of multi-faceted policy approaches.

"You do have to have different prongs and approaches to your programme of activity, and that makes it more difficult to say what is the thing that has actually worked."

Tower Hamlets, Policy Level

Stakeholders highlighted that many projects are either short term (for example one-off events) or focused on specific outcomes only tangentially related to broad concepts of cohesion (for example, welfare services) which means it is unrealistic for there to be any direct and observable impact of overall levels of cohesion in the area:

"It's even more difficult in the arts and the cultural side to say, 'well if people engage at this in the communities there'll be less strife and upset and they'll be more relaxed and more chilled out' It's not easy quantified, is it?"

Blackburn, Policy Level

"For me the important question is: has everyone had a good time? That's really an uncommon consideration in this age where we've got to measure everything... You're not really going to assess how that one event worked, but the common goal is...will we have any race riots?...Are the racist name calling incidents going down? Those are the harsh, tangible outcomes. But you won't be able to link any of those to those events."

Hull, Strategic Level

A general point was made by many that sustainability of any initiative is a useful measure of success, given that action over the long term is key for ensuring real impact, and that interest in continuing the work of a service also indicates it is perceived to be valuable.

3.11. Chapter summary

- While strong leadership is important for putting cohesion on the agenda and seeing through change, cohesion policy and initiatives need to be the responsibility of individual services and agencies from the start.
- Mainstreaming also needs to take place in central strategic functions so that community cohesion becomes integral to all policy-making.
- There is scope for central government to play a role by providing examples of best practice and supporting the embedding of community cohesion departments.
- It is vital to be aware of the potential implications of both universal and targeted approaches which can increase tensions if incorrectly applied.
- Ensuring that policy and initiatives are as far as possible community-led is a common thread in stakeholder opinion. This includes ensuring services are managed and delivered by local people, maximising the role of the voluntary sector and faith groups and, at a minimum, ensuring local communities are involved in decision making so that no groups are alienated and all needs are met.
- The public sector has a key role to play in supporting and building the capacity of voluntary and community organisations.
- Some of the most effective approaches are based on effective partnership working, particularly the LSP but also at grass roots level.
- Developing existing structures, and avoiding fundamental restructuring management or community engagement structures, is an effective and cost efficient approach. The use of 'seed funding' to test new approaches is also highlighted as beneficial.
- The multi-faceted and complex nature of cohesion makes it difficult to develop appropriate indicators. There needs to be allowance for these to be developed at a local level, and be flexible enough to vary by area and service context.
- Long-term funding was cited by stakeholders as key to safeguarding the success of cohesion initiatives
- Policies must not be driven and judged only by what can be measured given the challenges of identifying indicators that can capture the complexities of how cohesion initiatives might operate.
- Although evaluation is recognised as best practice, there are often constraints on resources which prevent full evaluations, although less formal evaluation was common. This loosening of requirements to measure success has allowed stakeholders to take more innovative approaches to meeting community needs.

4. What projects work? Key project approaches

The research identified six themes in initiatives to promote cohesion across the case study areas. This chapter explores what works in a range of project level approaches. For each type of initiative, the theory about why they work in improving cohesion is examined, evidence about how they have been successful is explored, and key success factors that contribute to their success as cohesion initiatives are highlighted. The project level approaches are:

- Introduction (4.1)
- Encouraging interaction between young people (4.2)
- Myth busting (4.3)
- Supporting the social and economic well-being of different groups (4.4)
- Language (4.5)
- Engagement and participation (4.6)
- Avoiding tensions over specific events (4.7)
- Social inclusion projects for young people involved in gang culture (4.8)
- Chapter summary (4.9)

4.1. Introduction

The research gained feedback from stakeholders, and considered evidence on a wide range of projects and initiatives developed to address a wide range of cohesion issues. Chapter 5 provides a review of 23 specific projects and policies seen to be effective by local stakeholders in addressing specific types of issue in particular local contexts. Each project provides its own ‘lessons’ for effective policy and practice, and this set of case-studies is intended as a long-term reference which may be helpful in generating ideas for policy and practice elsewhere. Whilst it has not been possible to document all the innovative and effective projects identified in the research, this section provides a selection of the range of examples that will be a valuable resource.

This chapter (4) seeks to draw together key learning points for specific types of project and initiative. In this section we do not discuss all types of successful projects taking place in the areas, or represent all the case-studies provided, rather this section focuses on highlighting learning from those projects regarded as especially effective in developing community cohesion. It also includes references to some projects not outlined as case-studies later – thereby ensuring that learning from a very wide range of projects is represented.

For each type of project discussed in this section we have used the projects we have learned about to assess how and why certain approaches appear to work; and what it is about the principles and assumptions behind them that have contributed to their success. Many of the types of project we discuss here have been referenced in other literature as important, but this research has attempted to assess in more analytical detail what the links between project features and cohesion are might be – in theory and in practice. For each type of initiative we:

- outline ideas (held by stakeholders explicitly, or developed by the research team) about how each type of project is expected to help communities become cohesive
- give an overview of the level of evidence that exists about whether such policies work, plus a couple of examples of projects where there is evidence that this type of project can be effective (but note that this is often anecdotal)
- discuss some of the key features and factors identified by the research as playing an important role in making that 'project' type a success

Further detail relevant to specific case-studies can be found in Chapter 5 (relevant page number references are signposted at appropriate points).

4.2. Encouraging interaction between young people

4.2.1. The theory and approaches

Projects focused on bringing together young people from diverse backgrounds in an interactive way were among the most common form of cohesion initiative across the areas we researched. Initiatives that encourage interaction between different groups of people are clearly not unique to young people, and the principles can be applied across any groups. However, due to the prevalence of youth-focused projects, this section concentrates on these types of projects by and large – although some additional evidence and learning points arising from projects among other audiences are also provided at the end of this section.

The context for several of the youth interaction projects is a pattern of residential and educational separation between young people from different ethnic and faith backgrounds. That many young people are living and learning with very few of their peers from different communities was emphasised in particular by stakeholders in Blackburn.

As the CIC's interim statement highlights, there is an ongoing debate about the extent to which *residential* segregation is, in itself, a problem for community cohesion. As far as the evidence from this project shows, stakeholders tend to regard the fact that different communities live separately as the background context for community cohesion work, rather than a community cohesion 'problem', which can be directly addressed. Some stakeholders view current residential patterns as largely the result of individual and community choices; therefore, attempting to alter these patterns to produce more ethnically mixed communities is framed by some as undesirable 'social engineering'.

Some stakeholders in Bradford in particular felt that deprivation is a much more fundamental challenge to building cohesive communities than segregation:

“The deprivation is far more of a problem than the segregation. I’m not really convinced it feels like segregation to the people living in these communities – it’s just ‘here’s my home, here’s my school, here’s my mosque, my brother lives over the road...’”

Bradford, Strategic Level

Furthermore, people from different backgrounds living in close proximity can be beneficial to the development of community capacity and support networks within local areas.

Although residential separation is not necessarily framed as a community cohesion problem *in itself*, it is recognised that it can result in lack of opportunities for interaction between young people from different backgrounds.³⁰ This is particularly the case where residential patterns are reflected in patterns of schooling. All of the discrete interaction projects we encountered were relatively small scale, although many did seek to extend their effects beyond immediate participants.³¹ This suggests that ongoing programmes with the potential for more widespread effects, such as school twinning, must be central to a systematic approach to providing opportunities for interaction between young people from different backgrounds.³²

The theory underpinning encouraging interaction is that by bringing people together they will learn about each other and this will dispel myths and help people to see commonalities of interest that may have been masked by outward differences in lifestyle and background.³³ Greater awareness of such commonalities builds trust and reveals myths, ultimately fostering positive relationships and avoiding conflict. It is also hoped that positive relationships may form between those attending the projects and that positive effects might also transfer to the wider community if young people take messages with them, or the relationships established are continued beyond the project in the wider community.

Stakeholders said projects tended to focus on young people for two reasons. First, there is a clear sense among the stakeholders we interviewed that young people are ‘the future’ and that their opinions are less deeply engrained, and that for these reasons they must be a key priority when it comes to cohesion. Secondly, albeit to a lesser extent, it was mentioned that they are the group most likely to commit crime and behave antisocially, so from a more passive definition of cohesion they are also crucial. Young people are the group among whom stakeholders feel that tensions are often ‘played out’, but also the group where they have most hope for changing attitudes and behaviour for the long term.

30 Mixed residential areas are not felt to guarantee meaningful interaction, which means that projects seeking to create these opportunities for mixing are still relevant to areas where communities are more integrated.

31 See, for example, Meet Your Neighbours, section 5.2.3.

32 See section 3.8.1, for key messages relevant to successful school twinning programmes.

33 Allport’s Intergroup Contact Theory. Allport, G. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*, Reading MA: Addison-Wesley

We found a variety of youth projects, ranging from those set up through existing services (schools, youth clubs and sports teams), to projects that have been set up specifically to address a particular cohesion issue among young people in an area. Some youth initiatives are set up in direct response to an issue, such as the Unity project in Peterborough, which aimed itself at young males in certain neighbourhoods after crime among this group had risen fast. However, other youth initiatives appear to have cohesion as a secondary outcome rather than an objective; school twinning projects in Blackburn and Bradford, for example, have a multitude of aims of which cohesion is just one. Whether youth projects are 'working' in terms of cohesion may therefore be hard to evaluate, simply because they are not always addressing a particular problem but rather incorporate a range of aims.

4.2.2. Evidence

We found a great deal of evidence to suggest that initiatives that encourage interaction can have a significant impact upon cohesion.

Feedback from young people who have participated in some of the initiatives we looked at suggest that friendships are formed. In 'Meet your Neighbours' in Blackburn, project participants completed evaluation forms giving some indication about how attitudes may be changing. Several participants feel that they have developed their understanding of other religions, but many also report being surprised to discover they have so much in common with people from different backgrounds:

"I was surprised at the fact that there are so many things common between all of us including ambitions."

Blackburn, Youth participant

In Youth on Youth, also in Blackburn, many feel that the project has had a lasting impact on their attitudes and beliefs in terms of dispelling stereotypes about young people from different backgrounds:

"It made me think more about stereotyping, a better idea of stereotyping."

Blackburn, Youth participant

"I can bond more with different ... people and it taught me quite a lot about going to college and things."

Blackburn, Youth participant

As well as more general attitudinal changes, some projects are set up specifically to address a problem, and cite the elimination or reduction of this problem as evidence of their success. A good example is Unity Youth in Peterborough, which aimed to reduce conflict between young males in a particular ward in the city, and the project leader claims to have a sense that youth conflict in the city has decreased since its inception. This was echoed by our interviews with project participants, who spoke about a much safer neighbourhood.

Indeed, the creation of ambassadors who are advocates for the project and its purpose is a forceful form of evidence for its success. The interviews given by young people involved in the Unity project with local and national media provide evidence of their commitment to the initiative, and the way it has affected their views of the community. As one person put it:

You having a problem with someone can affect the whole community where you live

Peterborough, Youth participant

Another tangible impact of initiatives that encourage interaction is the development of a network of participants who have links within and between different communities within a neighbourhood. Projects such as Unity and ICLS in Peterborough considered these to be crucial parts of their work to improve cohesion which lead to outputs being sustainable. In particular, where projects form networks of young leaders it can also provide momentum and continuity to a project, and ensure that the most appropriate people are being recruited from the neighbourhoods to get involved. In the case of Unity in Peterborough:

My cousin did it the year before me and then I've got somebody who got me in contact... to be honest, when I first did it I wasn't taking it seriously... the more you get it the more you learn things which you wouldn't normally think about. You just start looking at things in a different perspective

Peterborough, Youth participant

Some projects also cited young people getting involved in other community events as evidence that they were working to improve cohesion. In Tower Hamlets, some participants from the Bridging Communities project took part in the Slavery Abolition festivals earlier this year.

4.2.3. Success factors

Gradual introduction of young people to one another, allowing trust to develop. It is found that young people can be initially reluctant or wary of engaging with other groups who are unfamiliar or with whom they may have been engaged in conflict, or whom they mistrust. One approach used in Youth on Youth in Blackburn was to introduce young people to each other gradually – first via video link which allowed participants to build trust and confidence engaging with one another, prior to a face-to-face meeting:

"[You] gain more understanding because you're getting rid of the myths and the other kind of stuff that's going around."

Blackburn, Youth participant

Facilitating interaction in a neutral setting – out of the context of existing tensions and issues. This has proved very successful in many projects we looked at, particularly those which involved a residential week away; living together day to day allowed young people to recognise that they have much in common with those from different backgrounds.

Engaging participants with activities that interest them and which will benefit their personal development – such as learning a new skill, which could be technical (e.g. producing a DVD in Youth on Youth in Blackburn), sport-related (e.g. football in Unity in Peterborough), or developing leadership competencies (e.g. Unity and ICLS in Peterborough). These activities give young people an aim to work towards that takes the focus away from 'cohesion' (and the differences between them) and shifts the focus towards a common goal. Another example of encouraging young people to unite around a common goal is to have a project with **tangible outputs** – e.g. producing a DVD such as was done in the 'Meet your Neighbours' project in Blackburn.

Young people getting involved in the project management as well as just taking part has proved successful – they take ownership and become proactive in taking the project forward (e.g. Unity in Peterborough, where young people have done media interviews and become young leaders for the initiative). This was felt helpful in engaging participants and ensuring they feel the project is responsive to their needs and interests.

Targeting individuals who have the most negative attitudes – to ensure that projects are reaching the group *most in need of attitudinal change* and therefore most likely to have an impact upon cohesion in the area. For example, Unity in Peterborough aimed to engage with young males; the group in the community they identified as most likely to cause cohesion-related crime or tensions.

Long-term initiatives seem to work best – for example, Unity (Peterborough), Youth on Youth (Blackburn) and Youth Rapid Response Team (Tower Hamlets). These projects are developing in a sustainable way; networks are developing, young people are recruiting others to take part, and youth leaders are emerging as positive role models – all of which contribute to the ongoing success of projects.

It is also important to remember that schools have a wider role in the community than just for young people which can be harnessed and expanded to benefit the wider community. For example, Bridging Communities in Tower Hamlets, which is starting with a youth focus but which aims to broaden its focus in future. Similarly, Bradford's schools linking project aims to also facilitate interaction between parents by encouraging them to get involved in linking activities.

4.2.4. Additional learning points for relevant projects among adults

Evidence about other types of initiative positively encouraging interaction is less easy to identify because in many cases the groups involved are less 'at risk' in terms of cohesion than young people. The effects are therefore often measured in a more positive way – how the project boosts social capital and engagement, for example – rather than how they reduce tensions or antisocial behaviour. This is not to say that they are not having a beneficial impact upon cohesion, but just that the direct link is harder to make.

We can, however, make some tentative links between individual (and community) interaction and cohesion. We found evidence that **interaction can foster trust and build social networks**. A women’s group in Blackburn (Audley and Queen’s Park Women’s Group), who came together to plan and undertake their own projects in the community, have developed links between them as a result of shared interests and by building skills together. While this demographic group is not an ‘alienated’ community, in the sense that they are not ‘at risk’ from extremism or antisocial behaviour, the project is important for cohesion because they are creating a network in their communities and telling their friends about their work; spreading ideas about working as a community and sharing knowledge.

Closely linked to this is the finding that interaction can also support cohesion because **interaction between individuals can extend to groups and whole communities**. The Audley and Queen’s Park Women’s Group is a good example of this, with individual women taking part and building links between communities that are beginning to generate better understanding. Their interaction is having a **positive effect on the community from the projects they are undertaking**, such as exchanges with other women’s groups in different parts of the city, and an allotment project as a result of a project about healthy eating.

We also found that **interaction projects can promote a greater understanding of the day-to-day lives of other people**. In Bridging Communities in Tower Hamlets, for example, measures were taken to **facilitate the ‘everyday’ way things can happen rather than big ‘tokenistic’ gestures**. For example, older Bangladeshi people were encouraged to come along to older people’s groups by providing transport and ensuring there is halal food. That is to say, the focus has been on the practical ways people can integrate as part of their daily routine rather than large-scale events or festivals – a ‘small steps’ approach that perhaps aids longer-term progress and changes attitudes more fully. Interaction, and enabling it to take place as part of people’s normal routines, was seen as very successful in the interaction between older people’s groups in the borough.

4.3. Myth busting

4.3.1. The theory and approaches

Many stakeholders discuss the way in which myths and stereotypes about different communities can develop and spread within neighbourhoods or regions, leading to prejudice, distrust and in some cases tensions and conflict. As discussed in Chapter 1, community cohesion is widely regarded as the process of understanding and learning about people from different backgrounds. According to this definition, dispelling myths is integral to the development of more cohesive communities. Myth busting is also regarded as particularly important to reducing tensions around the distribution of public money and services.

The rationale behind such initiatives is the idea that by tackling negative attitudes and communicating positive messages this will lead to greater acceptance of different groups and open the door to more trusting and positive relationships. This type of myth busting work tends to focus on two aspects:

- addressing prejudice and negative misconceptions about **key groups**. For example, particularly in Bradford and Birmingham there is a recognised need to proactively communicate why diversity in an area is a benefit in terms of culture, skills and the economic opportunities and to combat negative rumours and myths, through the council's own campaigning or through the media, regarding different groups. An element of this was being willing to confront extreme right-wing or anti-government viewpoints in open debate, both in forums and in council chambers, so that opinions on these topics are not suppressed, encouraging rumour-mongering
- addressing concerns about unfair treatment by **local services**. Irrespective of whether some groups are benefiting disproportionately from public funding or resources have actually been focused on certain communities, rumours that this is the case often develop in communities where there are scarce resources. These rumours can create tensions between communities. To avoid or reduce these there is a need to communicate where and why resources are allocated, and also be aware of whether overall allocations patterns are fair in the first place

“Competition between deprived areas is bad news. It shouldn't be based on good bids – if an area needs something, give it to them.”

Birmingham, Strategic Level

Myth busting activity often seems focused on addressing particular concerns about 'new arrivals' in an area.

There were a small number of specific campaigns or initiatives with a primary aim to tackle myths in the areas, and it is key to note that this includes interactive forums and local meetings as well as more traditional 'media campaigns'. In the Milfield area of Peterborough, residents' meetings and workshops have been held to reassure established communities that they were not being threatened by new arrivals. This involved listening to grievances and addressing them 'head on'; confronting the myths that had developed around the new arrivals. (For more details, see Chapter 5.)

In Hull, leaflets dispelling myths about asylum seekers were distributed by a voluntary organisation following the London bombings. In addition there was also a larger communications campaign: 'Don't Believe the Hype'. This involved a leaflet distributed via key locations in the community such as libraries and community centres, alongside slots on a local radio phone-in chat show involving a key member of service staff taking calls live on issues relating to asylum seekers and refugees. (For more details, see Chapter 5 section 5.5.1, Don't Believe the Hype.)

Other initiatives also provided myth busting functions, including neighbourhood forums, and projects designed to encourage interaction, such as the Youth on Youth project in Blackburn (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.4.).

4.3.2. Evidence

None of the projects discussed had specific mechanisms in place to measure impact or assess effectiveness. Whilst budget is likely to be a key issue here, some stakeholders also pointed out that the impact of positive communications upon cohesion is particularly hard to measure, because it can be difficult to gauge who such initiatives are reaching and because myth busting programmes will be only one of many influences on attitudinal change. Stakeholders also highlight the impact of national political events and debate, which can be more powerful than local communications campaigns, but also mean it is harder to disentangle the impact of local campaigns.

Qualitative and anecdotal feedback provided evidence of the efficacy of this type of project. For example, evidence for the effectiveness of the asylum seeker leaflet following the London bombing was provided by positive feedback received from stakeholders on the ground, and the fact that whilst it was designed to serve a very specific purpose at the time, it has been used as a lasting resource by a wide range of agencies.

“The response from that was amazing. There are still people who I’ve never met, who are still using those leaflets.”

Hull, Participant

The, ‘Don’t Believe the Hype’ booklet used in Hull that aims to contradict myths about refugees and asylum seekers is also judged to have had a positive impact. The stakeholder received a decrease in the number of hostile letters received following the campaign (although this may have also been partly attributable to a decrease in the number of asylum seekers arriving in the area).

In the Milfield area of Peterborough, residents’ meetings and workshops also seemed to be effective in tackling misconceptions ‘head on’ and confronting the myths that had developed around the new arrivals. Our interviews with participants indicate they felt reassured that the new arrivals were not receiving priority treatment and that resources were being distributed fairly.

4.3.3. Success factors

Accessible language, format and content that tackles local concerns head on:

For example Hull’s ‘Don’t Believe the Hype’ booklet is written in clear, conversational style. It uses a question and answer and ‘myth v. fact’ format to directly address some common misconceptions about the circumstances and entitlements of asylum seekers and refugees.

Creative modes of communication to reach groups who are less likely to engage with written information or formal meetings:

For example, creative and interactive methods to dispel myths were used successfully in the Blackburn Youth on Youth project. Participants engaged in their own myth busting work, through video exchanges, art, drama and debate.

Interactive media, allowing immediate and direct responses to current and specific concerns: For example, initiatives such as radio phone-ins in Hull and residents' meetings in Peterborough offer benefits over written communications in ensuring that communications can be tailored to tackle the very particular concerns of the person raising the concerns and tapping into the language they are using. Interactive forums have the added benefit of allowing residents to vent frustrations and feel they are being listened to (rather than just receiving communications).

Use of existing engagement mechanisms to engage in two-way communication: Neighbourhood forums, for example, can be useful mechanisms to provide people with accurate information about their community and local services, as well as to listen to their views. Neighbourhood forums in Birmingham have developed this function, for example, responding to concerns voiced at meetings.

Myth busting functions are also provided by other types of initiatives such as those designed to encourage interaction: For example, the Youth on Youth Project in Blackburn was very effective at addressing myths in-depth – for example, open debate about issues such as arranged marriages.

Multi-pronged approach to reach a range of audiences: Combining mass media work with communications through existing neighbourhood engagement mechanisms and myth busting booklets ensures that messages reach a wide audience. Crucially, mediums such as radio phone-ins can reach people directly in their homes even if they would not actively choose to engage with the issues through mechanisms such as neighbourhood forums. Combining these media ensures a balance between breadth and depth of information.

Using evidence about the distribution of resources to combat perceptions of unfairness: A lack of information about how public money is spent, and in particular the geographical distribution of resources can lead to tensions between communities. This is particularly important in areas where different communities are concentrated in particular geographical areas. Analysis of resource distribution which distinguishes between key groups where tension arises may not happen as part of service planning: in Birmingham a resource mapping exercise, which clearly outlined for residents where money is being spent, has proved a valuable tool to help combat the view that some communities are benefiting disproportionately from public money. A similar exercise has been conducted in Blackburn with Darwen.

Targeted communications for particular communities, which pinpoint and respond to specific concerns. This has worked very well in Birmingham where care has been taken to divide up areas into 'natural neighbourhoods' so that distinctive issues can be addressed in each – mainly specific concerns about funding in different areas.

Integrating communications very closely with service development work: For example, in Peterborough the residents' meetings to bust myths about new arrivals are being developed closely alongside service development to ensure that any concerns are addressed at an early stage. For example, the Job Application Support Campaign in Blackburn is underpinned by a guidance interview and job search support service.

Making services visible and accountable within communication campaigns:

Hull's stakeholders felt that radio phone-ins to help dispel asylum seeker myths were especially effective because a senior stakeholder in the asylum service itself was taking calls on the phone – helping local people to feel that services are directly accountable, and that they are receiving accurate information direct from source.

Rapid reaction to local and national events is essential to minimise potential negative effects on community cohesion. For example, a coalition of groups working with young people in Hull distributed a myth busting leaflet in the immediate aftermath of the London bombings:

“When the London bombings occurred, we got emails and phone calls from all over Hull. Young people were coming in the next day or whatever, incredible racism breaking out. We had a leaflet out within three days with quotes from asylum seekers and refugees and naming the lies. Like the BNP had a leaflet out I think the same day in North Hull.”

Hull, Participant

Myth busting work can be effective on a wide range of issues – not just addressing negative perceptions about certain groups and concerns about unfair resource allocation. For example, a poster campaign was run by the Workforce Representation sub-group of Blackburn with Darwen Local Strategic Partnership to increase employment of underrepresented groups with the council and partners. The posters showed residents from diverse backgrounds in a range of occupations to help counteract views that occupations or activities are open or accessible only to particular groups.

4.4. Supporting the social and economic well-being of different groups

4.4.1. Theories and approaches

As highlighted earlier (see Chapter 2), for many of the stakeholders we spoke to, ensuring the social and economic well-being of the communities is taken to be a pre-requisite of cohesion. Reasons theorised by stakeholders are that individuals *require their basic needs met before they have the personal resource and energy to become more outward-looking and willing and able to contribute positively to a community*. Socio-economic opportunity and empowerment is also described as important for *ensuring that people feel they have a stake in society*, and are not sidelined or 'forgotten', which can lead to feelings of disengagement and eventually a reduced respect for societal norms. It is argued that where socio-economic development is achieved there are less likely to be tensions and conflicts – less antisocial behaviour and crime, and fewer sources of jealousy and friction between different groups. In addition, as people become more socially and economically empowered, it is argued that there is a *reduced need for individuals to be employed within their own community, and more opportunity for genuine interaction with others* in more mixed working conditions.

“Cohesion isn't an issue if you're not disadvantaged.”

Birmingham, Policy Level

“We need to focus on individuals, to try and answer the question, ‘What is it that makes an individual want to cause disruption in his community, to go out and hit somebody?’ The answer’s going to be down to whether that person feels he has financial and economic control, that he’s got a stake and a position in his community.”

Birmingham, Strategic Level

“Migrant groups who become economically empowered, take a stake in the community and integrate and move out of the inner city areas that they initially moved into. So whilst promoting cohesion and activities to bring people together and to celebrate public life and events is absolutely vital, and it’s really, really important, the key for me is through skills and education to economically empower people.”

Bradford, Strategic Level

Relevant policies include improving mainstream services in general and ensuring they are tailored to meet needs of specific marginalised groups. For example, stakeholders also gave numerous examples of innovative and community/personalised approaches to service delivery. These included: housing departments providing large properties for large Asian families; provision of women-only facilities and services available in communities where separation of genders in public space is culturally important (e.g. separate seating areas in libraries and swimming hours; and also a women-only repairs team for social housing work in Bradford). Another example given was sensitive approaches taken for in-home services for older people, such as ensuring that furniture is not moved in a blind or very elderly person’s home without permission, or that religious objects are not disturbed without permission.

We should be designing services around the needs of the community and individuals and recognising that that’s really important. And in doing things like that we actually break down barriers with communities, because we demonstrate that we really do reflect and represent what’s going on. And in some cases it means challenging some of the things that go on

Bradford, Strategic Level

Relevant projects also include a focus on specific neighbourhoods: as mentioned elsewhere, area-based regeneration programmes are key to Birmingham and Bradford’s approaches to cohesion, for example. They also include initiatives and projects targeted at specific groups, such as young people, women, or new arrivals.

New arrivals are a key group at particular risk of social and cultural exclusion, often arriving with very little in the way of material resources or social capital, for example lacking in qualifications recognised in the UK, or English language skills and lacking in knowledge of how to access services, or of certain cultural norms. These issues make them at particular risk of social exclusion and of not having a ‘stake’ in society. Stakeholders also describe how their lack of awareness of services can cause tensions. One example mentioned was friction caused by new arrivals being unaware how to use services such as waste collection and recycling services. Stakeholders also cite tensions arising from features of new arrival communities adjusting to difficult social and economic circumstances. Examples given include perceptions of new communities as antisocial due to working long hours and shift patterns and in multi-occupancy households, and which can also be associated with high noise levels.

Language issues are also a barrier to interaction (see section 4.5. for further discussion of the role of language in community cohesion).

"I've been to places like Bradford where you can see and you can talk to people, but communities there are a lot more settled and a lot more established. Whereas when you've got a lot of new communities, it's a totally different scenario. Because you've got to build up that trust and confidence from scratch and there's nothing you can hang it on to."

Hull, Project Level

Fear and concerns felt by more established communities about new arrivals is a crucial problem and much of the recent work around new arrivals has been focusing on reassuring these groups that their neighbourhoods will remain safe and that their access to services will be unaffected. These types of communication issues are discussed further in section 4.3 above.

4.4.2. Evidence

Major regeneration programmes tend to be evaluated and stakeholders were able to give examples of targets being measured and evidence of outcomes such as levels of access to services, and people supported into employment. Evidence of success for smaller specific projects more often tended to rely either on perceptions of success from project managers or participants. Other indicators of success cited are evidence that a project has grown in popularity, and/or has become self-sustaining, or in terms of whether key objectives had been met, such as the attainment of qualifications by participants.

Stakeholders highlight that for much of such work, the explicit objectives are not to improve cohesion, but to improve the well-being of individuals and that the wider benefits for cohesion are too indirectly related to this to be measured. This applies especially for work which meets the needs of groups who are not exhibiting antisocial behaviour, or are not the source of tension and conflict between communities, for example, work with women's groups.

When describing the effectiveness of relevant projects in supporting cohesion, in addition to highlighting the benefits theorised at the start of the section, stakeholders also highlighted additional benefits, including how the process of bringing people in need together from across communities facilitates interaction which has its own benefits for cohesion (see section 4.2. for more discussion of the role of projects facilitating interaction).

Some examples of cohesion-relevant projects regarded as successful are provided below.

Projects mentioned with most direct links to cohesion issues tended to be projects with disadvantaged young people. **Journey to the Soul**, Birmingham – is an outreach project aimed at 15 young people identified as most at risk of imprisonment in Birmingham. This remarkable project shifted youngsters away from crime to engage in volunteering within the community, having a direct impact on the cohesion within the neighbourhood. Another project described as achieving similar outcomes was **Beyond Midnight University**, Birmingham – which aims to provide qualifications for 'detached' youth, not in employment, education, or training, and often involved in gang culture. (See sections 5.3.2. and 5.3.1. respectively for more details of these projects.)

Audley and Queen's Park Women's Group: This is an example of a project designed to provide social opportunities and provide skills from women from Asian and White backgrounds, but which has resulted in community cohesion benefits beyond individual well-being. This has arisen through interaction between Asian and White women, and the way in which women participants have developed confidence and taken initiative in community work to forge links with women in other neighbourhoods, spreading benefits of wider interaction. See section 5.2.1. for a fuller review of this project.

Muath Welfare Trust, Birmingham, is an example of a socio-economic capacity building project whose prime purpose is to support well-being (rather than tackle antisocial behaviour or tension). This focuses particularly on building the capacity of ethnic minority women in Birmingham. Working in partnership with different voluntary and statutory educational organisations, the Trust engages with disadvantaged communities, promoting and providing education and training (including business start-up skills), as well as welfare, social and recreational services. The Trust's contribution to community cohesion is difficult to assess but there is clear evidence of impact in terms of empowering beneficiaries through their attainment of qualifications. Evidence for its success at meeting its core objectives is also seen in its popularity and continued growth.

Greater Dogsthorpe Partnership, Peterborough (GDP) is a Neighbourhood Management initiative which aims to bring about '*significant change for the better*' throughout Greater Dogsthorpe, a ward which is in the three per cent most deprived wards nationally. It provides a neighbourhood rather than service-focused approach to service provision. For example, an officer based in the housing department will be dedicated to working in the neighbourhood, and become the regular contact the area has with the council, passing information to colleagues in other service areas where appropriate. No direct cohesion outcomes are monitored, but anecdotally, council officers speak of improved efficiency and coordination and of residents feeling reassured that their needs are being addressed. (See section 5.6.1. for more details of this project).

Peterborough's New Link project – focusing on supporting new arrivals, and their access to wider services – has been regarded as very successful. Stakeholders describe how the service has been effective in signposting services providing an introduction to the wider community and how to interact within it. Evidence of the New Link project's impact on the local area is the numbers of new arrivals who are now provided with services they were not accessing previously, contributed to by the increased number of bilingual assistants. They talk about how such services have helped to develop trust, confidence and cultural awareness of new arrivals helping to avoid insularity and boosting interaction. For example, participants in the New Link communities forum in Peterborough talked about several benefits they had drawn from it, from accessing services, to having a voice and status within the community:

“Provides a bridge between us and the council services ... It gives us more power, more encouragement ... Translation services are all about us having a voice – for the whole community.”

Peterborough, Participant

4.4.3. Success factors

Full discussion of approaches to tackle social exclusion and disadvantage is clearly beyond the scope of this report. However, a few general learning points especially relevant for cohesion-related initiatives arising from the research are highlighted below.

Understanding that those groups who are not socially and economically empowered may require flexible or unusual approaches. This does not just cover the need for outreach work, but also that engaging certain groups requires traditional, 'by the book' methods to be eschewed.

One good example is the **Beyond Midnight University** in Birmingham, which operates several classes after midnight, matching the lifestyles of those involved in gangs. Also as many of those taking part were involved in crime and gang culture, they were reluctant to provide their names and contact details – the organisers kept a flexible approach and allowed the gang members only to be identified by their gang name, retaining their anonymity.

Flexibility is similarly important for new arrivals work. Ensuring that a translator is on hand for first contacts between the communities and the council are highlighted as important, and that educational materials are suitable for people who may not speak English, such as the pictorial leaflets used in Bradford.

Ensuring disadvantaged groups receive equal attention. It was stressed that tensions can arise if one group is seen to be getting 'special attention', thus capacity building initiatives should be as inclusive as possible whilst still addressing the requirements of those most in need, accompanied by careful communications to avoid misconceptions about unfair treatment of different groups (see section 4.3.) for further discussion of communication issues.

A multi-pronged approach. Recognition that social inclusion work requires multi-faceted approaches to address the complexity of factors operating in the lives of any individual. For example, new arrivals in an area may need access to a multiplicity of services, as well as language support, and support gaining access to employment and training.

Long-term commitment. Developing skills and knowledge is a slow process which requires long-term commitment and funding, before rewards can be seen.

4.5. Language

4.5.1. Theory and approaches

Inability to speak English has been highlighted by the Commission in their interim report as 'a critical barrier to integration and communication for new arrivals. We are also conscious that lack of language skills in settled communities can create social distance. It is also seen to 'hamper people's efforts to integrate economically and to access the labour market'³⁴.

Stakeholders within this project also raise lack of common language as a key issue for new arrivals in particular and give examples of how problems manifest themselves. They describe how it is a barrier to access to appropriate services – not just because it hinders them from approaching services, but because it hinders service providers' ability to engage with residents to find out what they need. And, as well as being linked to social isolation, they highlight that lack of common language means residents lack a key tool for building trust, and also negotiating differences, meaning that tensions can build up where different communities live. For example, in Peterborough we found anecdotal evidence that new arrivals often did not understand about recycling procedures or waste collection which resulted in tension over rubbish, and possibly negative misconceptions of those new communities. Lack of a common language meant that things could not be easily explained, and issues diffused. Peterborough's Mediation Service, for example, uses bilingual mediators to ensure they are reaching the crux of the dispute or problem and can address it effectively.

Policy focusing on language responds to these issues, the premise being fairly obvious – developing common language skills helps to empower new arrivals to participate more fully in all aspects of life (e.g. economically, socially and in the community) with advantages for the individual and wider community.

Approaches to language issues in the study areas has been two-pronged – aiming to both teach English language skills, and balancing this with helping new arrivals communicate in their own languages, via translation and interpreting services. Some creative approaches have been employed for offering language support in some instances. For example, the New Link project (one-stop shop service for new arrivals in Peterborough) has begun to use both new arrivals and long-term residents who have additional language skills in a low cost translation and interpretation service to the council and health service providers. Also in Peterborough, Police Community Safety Officers have been recruited who speak languages other than English.

³⁴ Commission for Integration and Cohesion, *Our Interim Statement* (2007).

4.5.2. Evidence

Translation and interpreting

Translation services have also been regarded as a vital initial step for engaging with communities and providing the information they need to begin to interact with others and with council services. For example, they are deemed to be fundamentally important by community leaders from New Link in Peterborough. They highlight the importance of this approach as the quickest means (over and above English classes) to create a means of communication to allow services to begin to address needs, and suggest that without this, needs may go unmet meaning a potential danger of social exclusion and cohesion issues.

Stakeholders reported extensive and immediate benefits of offering translation and interpreting services, for example, facilitating access to services, although this was anecdotal.

Stakeholders also felt that the bilingual police community safety officers (PCSOs) in Peterborough are able to engage more effectively with communities since they have been recruited to speak relevant languages. They cited examples of this helping to address drink driving problems within Eastern European communities as a positive effect of having bilingual officers.

Stakeholders of New Link also articulate a link between translation services and creating a sense of empowerment among both individuals and whole communities. They spoke about being able to understand official documents and instructions for services, allowing them to respond to these and *‘have a voice’*, which *‘narrows the gap between them and us’*. This empowerment engages communities in service and builds confidence.

The use of community-based interpreters in New Link has also been seen as valuable in helping to build trust and understanding between communities and between communities and the council. Bilingual assistants at New Link and the Mediation Service in Peterborough have built links between these organisations and new communities, increasing trust and facilitating their wider cohesion work as a result.

“It’s a good way to engage people – you know and understand the communities from which you’ve come, obviously, so that helps and it helps you to be more challenging for a start, because we’re often very shy in the way we approach new communities.”

Peterborough, Policy Level

Stakeholders also cited examples of where poor quality translation and interpreting had caused problems, and in one case this had led them to reduce reliance on this:

“We used to have interpreters, and then we got in all sorts of trouble about it not being interpreted the way we thought it was being interpreted. I think if we did a specific leaflet around something specific for that community we may consider it...if somebody says good practice is to produce it again then we will pick up on that.”

Blackburn, Policy Level

Stakeholders do, however, recognise that offering language support is a short-term solution, because it is not developing the language skills of minority communities, and they regard this as important for long-term well-being of communities and individuals. Some stakeholders held that allowing settled communities to become reliant on translation services does more harm than good:

“We do need to stop translating, we do need to stop interpreting. This is the language of this country and people need to speak that. Because we're not doing the same people any favours, we're deluding them into a sense of security. I think that's institutional racism actually.”

Bradford, Strategic Level

English classes

Building English skills was regarded as of most long-term value, but much harder to achieve and implement. In particular, one stakeholder mentioned that finding appropriate times and locations to run the courses *to ensure that they reach those who need them* has been difficult. Stakeholders also reported a shortage of places on English courses. It appears that the courses that are available are not meeting the needs of communities because there are too few and even if their number were increased, they tend to be scheduled at inappropriate times.

In practice stakeholders highlighted that learning English often depends on the initiative, perseverance and motivation of the individual concerned:

“The thing is, the ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) courses are over-subscribed in Peterborough. The government comments about everybody should learn to speak English, well that's fine as long as you provide them with the ability to do it. And there are a phenomenal number of people that are trying very, very hard. I met two Russian girls who were asylum seekers who'd done a fantastic job to speak English ... they spoke with a slight 'Coronation Street' accent and they'd done that off the telly ... They were both degree students in Russia, very articulate and intelligent and were just able to pick that up. I thought that was absolutely fantastic.”

Peterborough, Strategic Level

Given that considerable personal motivation and learning skills are required to learn a language, it seems likely that if social exclusion issues are not addressed there will be some barriers to the effective development of English language skills among some groups. This further highlights the importance of retaining translation and interpreting services, the extent to which they support work to support social inclusion.

4.5.3. Success factors

Maintain interpreting and language services because they play a key role in early stages of integration, and addressing needs. Stakeholders stress that given development of English skills can take time. Interpreting and translation are critical services to maintain as a crucial first step towards promoting further interaction ensuring an initial understanding of the needs of different groups can be achieved.

Involving community representatives is a useful mechanism for interpretation and translation – because if representatives come from the community they are translating for they are more likely to understand its nature and cultural behaviour, and therefore be able to address their needs more proactively and responsibly. They can also provide a link between different communities and with authorities, such as PCSOs in Peterborough, fostering trust and reducing tensions. This approach offers the additional benefits of being relative cost-effective, and providing employment and skill development for community members recruited and used as interpreters.

English language is important in the long term – but need lots of investment to develop more effective approaches. At the present time we found little evidence of English teaching provision being seen as a positive driver towards cohesion. Indeed, our research suggests that more innovative approaches are being used to provide translation and interpretation services rather than to teach English, and it is currently somewhat overlooked as something that is more of a long-term aim than something on the cohesion agenda at grass roots level.

4.6. Engagement and participation

4.6.1. Theory and approaches

Leaving aside the debate about whether participation is a driver of cohesion or an element of a cohesive society, encouraging residents to participate in local decision making was a key strand of cohesion strategy in all six study areas. The range of potential benefits mentioned in relation to participation of cohesion included the following:

- civic participation in local policy and services is seen as important for ensuring that services reflect people’s needs and deliver the social and economic well-being important to cohesion discussed above
- visible civic participation supports cohesion in the wider community by encouraging trust in services and institutions and a sense that their needs are represented and they have a stake in what is going on
- civic participation provides arenas in which people from different backgrounds interact meaningfully and with a common purpose breaking down misconceptions, encouraging understanding, trust and a sense of common purpose among participants
- engaging in community activities can also provide a sense of civic pride, a sense of belonging and common purpose which unites them

There are numerous approaches to engaging communities in local issues and decision making. On one level all councils used structured consultative methods – for example, questionnaire-based surveys are commonly used to gauge the breadth of issues and differences between areas, whilst residents’ panels (sometimes called citizens’ panels) are also common. These tend to be a sample of residents, for example around 1,000 to 2,000 people, which is recruited and maintained over a period of years and usually approached for survey-based or qualitative consultation.

More interactive forums are felt to play a particularly crucial role in more meaningfully engaging local people. This includes residents' meetings, and ongoing locally based area or neighbourhood forums, and tenants groups, for example. Neighbourhood forums typically involve representatives from the council and from other members of the LSP hearing and responding to local residents' concerns or ideas for the local area. In most areas we saw that huge amounts of development and focus had been placed upon these consultative meetings.

Several stakeholders, particularly in Bradford and Birmingham, saw this as perhaps the single most effective type of initiative in terms of fostering meaningful interaction between adults to support cohesion:

"All activities that are carried out to 'bring about integration and cohesion' will never work! All they do is engage with the community cohesion worthies, it's just lots of people sitting around saying that they think it's a good idea and sounding erudite. The things which bring about integration and cohesion are those things which bring people together with common cause. And all of those things are best addressed locally. If you can unite people with local common cause, let them see the whites of their eyes, you can let them see that their value systems are extraordinarily similar – and that works and the evidence for that is extremely good."

Birmingham, Strategic Level

In *Managing for Diversity*,³⁵ young people are seen as especially important to engage due to a tendency for mainstream discourse to describe disadvantaged youth as a problem to society, rather than give them respect and responsibility as part of it – which then exacerbates their sense of exclusion and lack of stake in it. In this context it suggests there should be more programmes which young people lead themselves, to ensure they have responsibility and feel respected as citizens, rather than as 'problems.'

4.6.2. Evidence

Our research revealed personal testimonies from participants that aspects of community cohesion had been improved by taking part in consultation in their area. In some areas an increase in participatory activities appears to have registered with the general public, and this is seen in surveys as an increase of those who feel that they can affect local decision making. Further specific evidence of the effectiveness of engagement and involvement activities is provided below.

Impact of involvement on the quality of services

It was mentioned by several stakeholders that areas with neighbourhood forums tended to be notably better looked after, than those without, and problems tended to be resolved more quickly, as issues tend to be self-identified rather than residents having to wait for problems to be identified 'from above'. This was noted particularly in Birmingham, where the council's governance structure has been devolved to allow councillors to be more responsive to local needs identified through neighbourhood forums (see the Projects section for more information).

35 Communities and Local Government (2006) *Managing for Diversity: A Case Study of Four Local Authorities*.

An example provided of a consultation leading to improved services is Birmingham's Youth 4 Change group, consisting of a board of young people from different areas of Birmingham, who lead a scrutiny review of Birmingham's youth services. Recommendations for improvement are currently being implemented by councillors.

Impact on trust and perceptions of the ability to improve service delivery

The Youth Parliament in Hull is cited by stakeholders as an example of a project that helped to foster a sense of empowerment among participants themselves (see the Projects section). This project allowed young people to feed back their deliberations on local issues to the council. It was felt to be a very successful project in helping young people to feel they had a stake in the local community and services.

Visible civic participation from different sections of the community seems to encourage trust that services are run to meet the needs of all groups. An improvement which is considered by stakeholders to indicate the success of the forum activity in Birmingham is that residents increasingly feel they can influence local decisions (up from net -43 per cent in 2004 to +3 per cent in 2006).³⁶ For more information see the Projects section 5.3.

Activities involve mixing and interacting with a common purpose

Milfield Residents' Meetings in Peterborough provides an example of a project which brings people from different backgrounds together to participate in decision making (see the Projects section). Feedback from participants showed how the process of discussing concerns moving to identification of shared concern and often combined with working together, helped differences to be accepted and trust and sense of commonality to be developed. Participants described how they had come to have a better understanding of those from different communities, and the process had helped develop their trust that both the other communities and the council would act responsibly:

"There is no longer a fear of the unknown because we have a conduit."

Peterborough, Participant

There is evidence from participants that attending the meetings can lead to residents taking on some responsibility for improving their neighbourhood, signalling a further benefit of participation initiatives.

4.6.3. Success factors

Reaching out to communities. Stakeholders emphasised the need to reach out to communities or groups who may not usually engage, to encourage them to have a public voice. Indeed, a word of warning from stakeholders is that if councils are just involving those who are already engaged in the community, participation activities will have less impact. Indeed, this can encourage a greater alienation among those who are not currently involved.

³⁶ Birmingham City Council 2006 Comprehensive Performance Assessment: http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/ToPrinters120906.pdf?MEDIA_ID=172746&FILENAME=ToPrinters120906.pdf

In some cases stakeholders described how this can be best achieved through tailored approaches targeted at specific groups – e.g. women's forums, faith forums, LGBT forums or forums aimed at dealing with the concerns of specific ethnic groups, particularly those who are new to the area. Targeted groups allow a sense of commonality and empower within and for that particular group, and also mean that engagement approaches can be tailored using methods best suited for that group (see section 3.6. for further discussion of tailored approaches).

Making consultation effective. To ensure that forums effectively influence local decision making, several of the areas we looked at had devolved power to local councillors – Bradford and Birmingham are examples of this, whereby a serious devolution of council powers has taken place over the past few years, with resulting positive feedback from the communities.

“The local authority has to have the capacity to deliver and they need to be absolutely honest about the limits of resources. This way, the more credible the process is seen to be, the more people come to the table, and the more cohesive a community becomes.”

Birmingham, Policy Level

Making consultation visible. Perhaps the most striking comments from stakeholders about engagement were that the most crucial factor is being seen to be involving people, as well as the fact of the participation process itself. The activities themselves can have useful impact on the participants themselves, but it is only through wider communication of this that more wide-reaching impact can be achieved in terms of encouraging trust and a sense of empowerment.

4.7. Avoiding tensions escalating over specific events

4.7.1. Theory and approaches

Any perceived injustice done by one group in a community to another can lead to tensions or even violence between those groups, damaging the cohesiveness of the community. Stakeholders we spoke to stressed how crucial early intervention initiatives are to diffuse tensions and prevent the problem escalating.

Many of the initiatives we looked at in this context do not attempt to change long-held attitudes but rather respond in a form of crisis management to short-term situations. The premise is that if tensions are 'nipped in the bud' after an event, the confidence and trust that are key elements of cohesion can be restored.

Several stakeholders emphasised the need of informing communities about what has happened, myth busting at the earliest stage (see also the Myth busting section 4.3. for more on this topic).

Approaches often made use of mediation services to calm tensions, such as the Peterborough Mediation Service, which works to mediate between neighbours, particularly between those in established communities and new arrivals. In Tower Hamlets, the Youth Rapid Response Team functions to intervene early to mediate between young people, and also to support police in diffusing tensions. West Midlands Police have developed a pioneering approach to avoiding tensions escalating following a specific incident, requiring a three-pronged approach to working with a community.

In other areas, we saw examples of more ad hoc approaches to responding to events, such as holding community meetings to diffuse tensions, used in Peterborough to address concerns about new arrivals in an area. (See the 5.6.3 section.)

4.7.2. Evidence

There is much to suggest that initiatives which aim to avoid the escalation of tensions after specific events can be highly effective in reducing tensions and the likelihood of conflict.

Personal testimony from Peterborough's mediation service project manager provides evidence that a greater understanding between different communities has been formed. Objective indicators of the project's success are its continued growth.

In Tower Hamlets, the impact of the Rapid Response Teams, according to our interviewees, has been to respond effectively to potential hotspots and strife points, with the outcome of avoiding conflicts. The number of teams has increased since its inception in 1999 and it has been rolled out in other areas.

West Midlands Police have found through personal experience that their approach has been successful, and confidence in the police has risen in Birmingham, despite several high-profile disturbances in communities.

4.7.3. Success factors

Myth busting element. Those who wish to create unrest can do so by spreading unconfirmed rumours. In this context stakeholders mentioned the need to confront the publicity from extreme organisations, to prevent escalation of tensions, as well as carefully confronting difficult issues in forums.

Mediation. Before injunctions are brought in, tensions between individuals or groups are considered to be best handled by trained mediators, the professional development of which was clearly a priority for many of the areas we spoke to.

Beyond the police force. Influence from mediators from the community can be more effective at calming tensions than intervention by the police, though there is a need for this group to still work closely with the law enforcement agencies.

Rapid response. Once an incident has occurred there needs to be an immediate, proactive response (requiring minimal bureaucracy), to prevent the build up of tensions or retaliations.

Comprehensive response to incidents. As can be seen from West Midlands Police's approach, messages need to be conveyed clearly to all groups involved in conflict, and those in the wider community, and messages need to be tailored for different groups involved.

4.7.4. Policing disturbances to avoid tensions escalating (Birmingham)

In Birmingham, the city has developed a three-pronged approach to dealing with disturbances such as an incident of gang violence or arrests of terror suspects. When an incident occurs, there are three distinct groups which require separate attention to maintain community cohesion. In the past, police forces have treated all groups in the same way, but West Midlands Police have developed a pioneering and successful approach. The three groups are:

- **A) Those most closely involved in the disturbance**

This is the family or fraternity surrounding those who may have been attacked, arrested or had some other perceived wrong done to them. This group are the most likely to retaliate and require special attention. Family Liaison Officers should be sent in immediately to convey two distinct messages; firstly to ask how the family can be helped during this traumatic time and secondly to explicitly warn that, given their proximity to the situation, they will be watched very carefully to ensure that anyone involved in retaliation will be brought to justice.

- **B) Traditional community leaders**

These are the individuals whom the police and local authorities have traditionally focused on, such as community interlocutors and religious leaders. These individuals, although not directly influential in times of crisis, do have some influence over a silent, passive majority who must be kept onside in the aftermath of any disturbance, to prevent tension from building. This group should be kept informed of proceedings and 'kept feeling special' to keep their influence over the majority favourable.

- **C) Those in the community who have genuine influence**

This 'new' group who have not traditionally been engaged by the police are those who have a real influence over the young people in a community. Some of this group may be upstanding within the community, whereas others may be reformed gang members. They are vital to work with given their influence over those likely to escalate tensions. There needs to have been an ongoing process, previous to any disturbances, by which the police identify and properly interact with this group, so that when tensions escalate into violence, their influence has a calming effect. These individuals are considered by the police to be the most important to work with – as well as being carefully listened to, they should also be tasked with disseminating information to the groups they hold influence over.

A further general principle employed by the police regarding disturbances or violence between ethnic groups or gangs is that immediately after any disturbance police-facilitated meetings should be held as a 'blood-letting' session. These will involve volatile interaction, which should not be suppressed, and is essential to stop tensions building up.

Finally, before police activity based on intelligence occurs, such as arrests of terror suspects, the lead on community cohesion in a council needs to be informed with information specific enough so that a cohesion plan can be made geared to the particular situation. Generally, when a police investigation is occurring within a community, there needs to be an equal emphasis on cohesion work within a community as on the investigation, rather than 'bolting on' a Community Manager late in the process.

This offers a comprehensive approach to addressing conflict before it arises. Personal testimony of experienced police officers indicates that this approach has been found to be very successful in the instances that it has been used and is complimented when combined with overtly wide consultation and engagement by police. Consistent with these claims, in Hansworth and Lozells (predominantly ethnic minority areas) where police have been using this approach, the proportion of residents confident with the local Police has shown a large increase from 25 per cent in 2004 to 78 per cent in 2006, despite several high-profile disturbances occurring between surveys.³⁷

Police we spoke to emphasised that they see themselves as largely a crisis management agency rather than arbitrators between communities. Their function is dealing with the acute tensions, the flare-ups – the chronic tensions between communities, it was stressed, should largely be the council's domain.

4.7.5. Success factors

Long-term commitment to working with influential members of communities – including listening to their concerns (or criticisms) as spokespeople for those they have influence over.

Maintaining existing networks – which ensures they can be relied upon in a time of crisis

Working with the local authority – especially dividing responsibilities for cohesion work unambiguously.

Wide consultation – the approach is complimented by overt, wide consultation and engagement by police with the public.

37 F3 BCU West Midlands Police Customer Satisfaction Survey: from July 2004 – Jan 2007.

4.8. Social inclusion projects for young people involved in gang culture

4.8.1. Theories and approaches

Stakeholders described a number of successful projects set up to address extreme social exclusion, and involvement in gang culture in particular, in Birmingham.

Gang culture threatens community cohesion in three main distinct ways: firstly, gangs can be divided on racial grounds, and this can lead to conflicts which damage relations between ethnic groups. Secondly, the organised crime and violence due to gangs creates fear in a community, undermining the safety element of community cohesion, as emphasised by stakeholders (see Chapter 2). Thirdly, the gang culture is a visible, ever-present and divisive 'community within a community' with its own alternative and insular infrastructure, values and economy – and where members of the economy can do very well financially. Project workers described how it is not uncommon for young men to be earning £2,000 a day, and have their own cars and houses – part of the challenge of gang work is perceived to be presenting an alternative which is more attractive.

“You get young lads saying, ‘look, I’m making good money here and I think I’ll be able to do it for a few years, get some saved up, before I get put away for a bit. I don’t do very well at school, so even if I went back, the best I could hope to get out of it at the end is a £15k a year job’ – you’re having to deal with that kind of mentality.”

Birmingham, Project Level

Project workers described how established gangs can contain hundreds of members and involve close family and kinship ties; in Birmingham, involvement in gang activity usually starts at the age of eight or nine years.

A range of approaches are taken to address gang problems in Birmingham. Firstly, Birmingham has developed an approach based on action-focused projects for working with gang members. Two relevant projects in Birmingham are the **Beyond Midnight University** and **Journey to the Soul**. These projects are very different, but are both based on the same theory of change: developing the skills and capacity of young people to become fulfilled through mainstream and legitimate activities that make a positive, rather than negative, contribution to society. Both projects are innovative and unusual – one engaging directly with the night-time gang culture of young people – and the other being built directly on the values of the Muslim faith. Fuller details of each are provided in sections 5.3.1. and 5.3.2. below.

In addition, stakeholders pointed to work support effective parenting and positive family environments, such as outreach and mentoring work with families and young people needs to play a key role. They described how outreach work can be particularly effective when those who have been part of gang communities have been recruited and selected as volunteer youth workers. Older ex-gang members are sometimes felt to be the people in the community most likely to be able to have an influence over the detached youth. This helps to further develop their own skills. This practice, called 'service learning', involves reformed gang members volunteering for Youth Service projects. However, stakeholders highlighted the extensive time,

resource and commitment required in providing the extensive training and mentoring that service learners need. Project workers talk about the need to support not only personal skill development, but a change in self-image, and also the desirability of reaching professional standards and qualifications.

Below we have highlighted some evidence of effectiveness and some general learning points from across both projects.

4.8.2. Evidence

Social inclusion is a fundamental aspect of cohesion but one where there is a great deal of overlap with other policy areas, such as diversity and antisocial behaviour. For this reason stakeholders believe it is not helpful or necessary to try and put the different types of initiatives used to address it in one policy 'box' or another; they can be both cohesion and diversity, for example.

Evidence for success was based on stakeholder and participant feedback which highlighted clear examples where the two projects mentioned above had resulted in many participants shifting away from gang culture and crime and participating in mainstream and positive activities including volunteering (further details are provided in the individual project write-ups in sections 5.3.1. and 5.3.2.).

Stakeholders highlighted that one challenge of measuring success was the need to address concerns about anonymity and confidentiality by guaranteeing no formal records are kept of illegal behaviours, for example.

4.8.3. Success factors

Innovative and culturally responsive approaches that engage directly in the cultural environments of young people. In these projects, this included night-time gang culture in one case, and Muslim culture on the other (the important role of faith groups in leading community cohesion initiatives is also discussed in section 3.7.3.).

“Gang work is dicey, it's out of hours – you really need people with a passion for this agenda for any approach to work.”

Birmingham, Policy Level

Providing the support needed to ensure very tangible personal development outcomes were achieved for individual participants – thus providing a stake in society away from alternative gratifications from within gang culture.

Use of ex-gang members to help engage with young people.

Partnership working: the Beyond Midnight University was made possible by the local college and council youth workers working together; the Journey to the Soul project was made possible through the youth service working with faith organisations, with the police also playing a key role in identifying young people at risk.

Stakeholders also highlight the desirability of involving schools given the young age that children start to be involved in gang culture. However, due to the extreme nature of problems, schools need support to be involved in this specialised area, and youth workers have found that some can be reluctant to be involved for fear of their school being stigmatised, with potential impact on reputation and ability to attract parents to enrol their children, especially among the independent school sector.

Strong project leaders with the vision and commitment to try a new approach and counter opposition to project. The stress on Islamic values within the *Journey to the Soul* project caused some controversy over concerns that it might result in Islamic extremism among participants.

The long-term and in-depth nature of support provided to young people through ongoing outreach work and mentoring beyond core project activities was felt to be key in achieving sustained and long-term outcomes.

4.9. Chapter summary

- Encouraging interaction between groups from different backgrounds promotes trust, awareness of commonality and positive relationships among participants and to some extent more widely in the community. Approaches that focus on tangible and real life issues seem to work best, rather than a sense of shared values as abstract concepts.
- Myth busting must be integrated alongside service delivery work in order to be credible and effective. Multi-pronged approaches, focusing on very specific issues rather than generalised assertions of fairness, are important.
- Supporting the social and economic well-being of different groups is a prerequisite for cohesion in some areas. Target groups should be the most disadvantaged and those where tensions arise, although it is important not to neglect those whose needs are less visible. Approaches should be innovative and targeted, although there must be a balance between targeting particular groups and the need for universalism, since building the capacity of particular groups can become a source of tension with other groups.
- Language teaching is central to facilitating the inclusion of non-English speakers, and building positive relationships between them and other groups. However, engaging with communities in other language has to be maintained in order to tackle disadvantage and avoid cohesion issues.
- Engagement and participation projects are helpful in ensuring that services meet community needs, but it is in order for them to have a real impact upon cohesion beyond participants, it is essential that extensive work goes into communicating the effectiveness of involvement activity. Efforts to involve the disengaged must also be a priority.
- Avoiding tensions over specific events require a rapid response, with early and targeted intervention being useful. The police and community mediators can play a vital role.

5. Examples of initiatives and projects from the case study areas

This chapter reviews 23 case-study projects and provides specific detailed evidence and examples of good practice that may inform cohesion activity in other areas. The introduction summarises the projects and the dimensions of community cohesion to which they contribute. We then examine each project in turn and discuss:

- Aims and objectives
- Set-up and delivery
- Evidence of impact (often anecdotal)
- Success factors – both factors we have identified that explain *why the project has had a positive impact on cohesion* (either consciously or as a sub-conscious output) and ‘softer’ factors that relate to the successful *practical delivery of cohesion initiatives*.

5.1. Introduction

It should be borne in mind that cohesion issues – and therefore cohesion policy – operates differently in different local contexts which is why the examples are arranged by area. Nevertheless, the project examples discussed here should provide useful learning points for policy makers and practitioners in a wide range of different areas. Contextual information relating to the areas is provided in the Appendices.

It is important to note that many projects do not have a formal, or even informal, evaluation procedure in place, and we have found that often initiatives are not set up with the explicit aim of ‘improving cohesion’. However, in reviewing the projects we have been able to draw on extensive anecdotal evidence from the stakeholders’ running the initiatives, and in some cases, from participants themselves, as well as a small amount of more quantitative data in some cases.

For each project we have sought to draw some conclusions about what factors seem to have been important in contributing to the success of each project, and from which wider lessons can be drawn. This has been achieved by considering projects and cohesion problems alongside each other in order to establish the way the initiative is expected to impact upon cohesion, as well as from collating any evidence of impact, and direct feedback obtained about key success factors from stakeholders themselves. In some cases, there is overlap with learning points included in Chapter 4, but they are repeated here as there are benefits to learning from individual case-studies in their entirety.

This chapter examines what works in cohesion initiatives through detailed discussion of the following projects:

| | Supporting social and economic well-being | Encouraging meaningful interaction | Engagement and participation | Fostering civic pride and belonging | Myth busting | Avoiding tensions | Supporting new arrivals |
|---|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Blackburn | | | | | | | |
| Audley and Queen's Park Women's Group | x | x | x | | | | |
| Belonging Campaign | | | | x | | | |
| Meet your neighbours | | x | | | x | | |
| Youth on Youth | | x | | | x | | |
| Birmingham | | | | | | | |
| Beyond Midnight University | x | | | | | | |
| Journey to the Soul | x | | | | | x | |
| Neighbourhood Forums | | | x | | | | |
| Policing Disorder | | | x | | | x | |
| Bradford | | | | | | | |
| School Linking | | x | | | | | |
| Hull | | | | | | | |
| Don't Believe the Hype | | | | | x | | |
| Libraries Connect | x | | | | | | x |
| Welcome to Hull Education Conference | x | x | | | | | x |
| Young People's Parliament | | | x | | | | |
| Peterborough | | | | | | | |
| Greater Dogsthorpe Partnership | x | | | | | x | |
| Intercultural Communication and Leadership School | | x | x | | | x | |
| Millfield Residents' Meetings | | | x | | | x | |
| New Link | x | x | x | | | x | x |
| Peterborough Mediation Service | | | x | | | x | x |
| Unity Youth | x | x | | | | x | |
| Tower Hamlets | | | | | | | |
| Bridging Communities | | x | x | | | | |
| Interfaith Forum | | x | x | | | x | |
| Race Hate InterAgency Forum | | | | | | x | |
| Youth Rapid Response Team | x | x | | | | x | |

5.2. Blackburn

5.2.1. Audley and Queen’s Park Women’s Group

Audley and Queen’s Park Women’s Group provides opportunities for interaction between residents in racially separated areas in Blackburn and education opportunities for women in the area. The project has been running for four years and brings together women from the predominantly Asian Audley area with women from the predominantly White Queen’s Park area. Thirty women have participated in the group to date, with approximately twelve currently attending sessions on a regular basis. The project is managed by a member of the Neighbourhood Learning Team and the primary aim is to enable individual participants to develop their skills and work towards learning goals, with positive effects for community cohesion as a valuable by-product. One participant is now employed as a learning support worker and translator for other members. Participants particularly emphasise the positive effects of the group on their confidence and sense of individual well-being.

The women plan and run projects in their own areas of interest. For example, they are currently developing an allotment as a result of a project looking at healthy eating. They have established an exchange with a women’s group in Shadsworth, a predominantly White neighbourhood, to share ideas and culture. For example, they have held a session exploring wedding traditions in different cultures.

The group is based in the Neighbourhood Learning Centre, which has a history of a strong sense of community ownership:

“That [Audley and Queen’s Park Neighbourhood Learning Centre] was at the heart of the community but belonged to the community, where the community were involved right from the onset of the establishment of funds for that building. They then built it and had a very much of a clear ownership as to where and what happened within that project, within that centre.”

Blackburn, Project Level

There are several ways in which the project benefits community cohesion:

- it provides learning opportunities in an appropriate environment for women who might not otherwise access education. It therefore directly contributes to the dimension of community cohesion which is concerned with equality of opportunity and equal access to services and which was emphasised by many stakeholders
- the group brings together women from different ethnic and religious backgrounds and different age groups on a regular basis. They have developed trust and friendships through collaborating on projects around shared areas of interest
- through engaging in an exchange with a women’s group with only White participants, the project has extended the opportunity for local women to interact in a meaningful way with others from different ethnic and religious backgrounds

- the women work to consider ways to improve their local community, for example they have looked at the issue of speeding. Therefore the personal development of participants in the group can also be seen as capacity building within the local community. Insofar as participants are able to create positive change around issues which can create community tensions, the project can have a positive effect on community cohesion in the local area.

One of the key challenges for the group is to meet its long-term goal of becoming self-sustaining within the community. Participants currently emphasise the vital role a strong project manager has played in the success of their group.

Success factors:

Long-term project – the long-term nature of the project has enabled trust to develop within the group and significant relationships to be formed among participants and between participants and the project leader.

Availability of interpreter trained from within the group has reduced language barriers to participation and interaction.

Recognising common interests, but also exploring differences – participants have identified common concerns, such as healthy eating, but have used these issues to share different traditions. For example, they have shared traditional recipes from different communities. In this way the project has achieved a balance between the dimension of community cohesion which involves the valuing of difference and the aspect of community cohesion which calls for recognition of commonalities.

Developing skills and confidence has enabled the women to become advocates for their project and share their experiences and learning. For example, they have made presentations to the Local Strategic Partnership. This capacity to share their work creates potential for the success of the project to provide lessons and a stimulus for other community cohesion initiatives.

Strong links to council and partners through the project manager has also been important in creating this connection to local decision-making structures and related potential for the success of the project to have wider effects.

Sited in community facility – the project is located in an accessible building at the heart of the community, making it convenient and welcoming for participants and helping the project to be sustained on a long-term basis.

Strong social networks in the local area have resulted in more participants joining the group after hearing about it through word of mouth, also helping the project to be sustained on a long-term basis.

Direction of project determined by participants – this has enabled the women to develop strong relationships through collaborating on topics of shared interest and to identify issues in the local community of greatest concern to them.

5.2.2. Belonging Campaign

A campaign around the theme of belonging has been central to recent work to promote community cohesion in Blackburn. The main elements of the Belonging work have been a poster campaign and a charter of belonging that has been promoted and signed within schools, by public and private sector partners and within the voluntary and community sectors. The Belonging Campaign is closely related to the LSP’s overall cohesion targets: to increase the proportion of residents who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds can get on well together and who feel that they belong to Blackburn with Darwen. It is also part of an increasing focus within the LSP on recognising what residents have in common, rather than emphasising differences:

‘In the past, the emphasis was on celebrating diversity, but now this has evolved into highlighting the similarities that unite people from all walks of life and acknowledging the contributions that they all make to improving life in the borough and delivering a new approach to:

- strengthen citizenship by promoting pride of place and a sense of shared future amongst all citizens
- uniting all sectors and communities
- emphasising what we all have in common rather than our differences’³⁸

The poster campaign depicts a diverse group of local residents: disabled and able-bodied, from different age groups, occupational backgrounds and ethnic groups. The poster, with the strapline ‘many lives...many faces...all belonging’ is designed to promote an image of a community to which people from all backgrounds can belong, regardless of their differences.

The Charter of Belonging was the product of partnership working within a LSP steering group chaired by the Archdeacon of Blackburn. The charter sets out a number of commitments to which local residents are invited to sign up:

- reaffirm what we have in common and what unites us: to which to live in peace and security together; to have a decent standard of living and a fair share of resources; to have equal chances in life and enjoy good health
- celebrate all that is good about Blackburn with Darwen: its proud history; the richness of its culture and faith traditions; its distinctive neighbourhoods; the energy, character and diversity of its people
- recognise the equal rights of all those who belong to Blackburn with Darwen, and will show concern and loyalty for all those who visit, live or work here
- reject racism, religious prejudice, intolerance, blame casting and violence

³⁸ LSP People and Communities Forum, Action Plan for 2006-2007 for the key outcomes of increasing the percentage of people who feel that: Their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds can get on well together and They belong to Blackburn with Darwen.

The Charter is distinctive among the work we discussed with stakeholders in the six areas, in seeking to promote a common set of civic values. In general, stakeholders did not tend to emphasise common vision or values as a key ingredient of community cohesion, instead they tended to focus on unity over more tangible local issues and services.

The values set out in the Charter have been made more personal and concrete through some of the projects which have developed from the Belonging Campaign. In particular, the Belonging theme has provided an ideal focus for school twinning work, because it cuts across curriculum areas:

"The Belonging Campaign can touch every facet of the curriculum. It can touch history, geography, business, English, maths, whatever, so when we've looked at our twinning projects we centred on the Belonging to Blackburn campaign."

Blackburn, Project Level

One of the twinning projects which the Belonging Campaign has stimulated is **My Home Town**, led by the heads of citizenship from four schools in the borough. This project involved students debating the charter and considering what belonging to Blackburn with Darwen means to them personally:

"My Home Town project has focused on the Belonging campaign. We've looked at the charter, we've talked, we've had workshops within groups and we've asked young people what does it actually mean to them?... We've asked them to come up with their own definitions and their own explanations and their own perceptions of what Belonging to Blackburn means to them. Ultimately they'll sign up to a campaign but we've deliberately not asked them to do that yet... so it's not just a tokenistic gesture ... you'll get a real feel of what it does mean to them."

Blackburn, Project Level

Therefore, there are at least two ways in which the Belonging Campaign can have a positive impact on community cohesion within the borough. Firstly, it seeks to increase a sense of attachment to the borough by **promoting common civic values** around which residents can unite. The proportion of residents who report a sense of belonging to Blackburn with Darwen has increased over the period of the campaign,³⁹ although it is not possible to attribute this change in attitudes to the campaign. Some direct evidence about awareness and attitudes towards the Belonging Campaign has been collected through a Citizen's panel.⁴⁰ 27 per cent of respondents reported awareness of the campaign, although slightly more (35 per cent) were aware of the Belonging banners and posters. Among those who were aware of the campaign, 21 per cent thought it was a very good idea and would have a positive impact, 58 per cent thought it was good, but wouldn't change the way people feel about belonging to Blackburn with Darwen. The remaining fifth (21 per cent) thought it a waste of money that wouldn't make a difference.

39 From 66 per cent in October 2003 to 70 per cent in 2004/05. Data reported in LSP People and Communities Forum, Action Plan for 2006-2007 for the key outcomes of increasing the percentage of people who feel that: Their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds can get on well together and They belong to Blackburn with Darwen.

40 Research brief: Citizens' Panel survey – 'Are you being serviced?' and the Belonging to Blackburn with Darwen Campaign, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, August 2004.

The findings of the Citizens' Panel research suggest that the Belonging Campaign has reached a wide audience within the borough, but that residents have mixed views about its efficacy. Although a large majority were positive about the campaign, most doubted the ability of the campaign to change the way people feel about their relationship with the area.

Some of the young people who participated in the discussion group were aware of the Belonging Campaign through their involvement with youth groups. However, some felt that the posters may not engage many young people:

"There's a lot of people on that poster who live [in Blackburn] ... paragraphs of each person, saying, right, what's so special about Blackburn ... I don't think young people read that."

Blackburn, Young person

This suggests the value of developing the campaign into programmes which enable residents to engage with issues of belonging and civic values through other mediums and in more depth. By acting as a focus and springboard for other projects, especially in education and children's services, the Belonging Campaign has aimed for this depth, as well as breadth of impact. The My Home Town Project has created **opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to interact**, whilst discussing the ideas raised by the charter:

"I think the biggest achievement has got to be what the children and what the young people have achieved. You can ask them yourselves and they will tell you very clearly that they have met people that they would ever, would otherwise not have ever come across... Which I think reflects parallel lives very clearly... they would probably be neighbours with somebody with a different background but would choose not to get to know that person in a more bonding way."

Blackburn, Project Level

This project has focused on **developing skills** and **awareness of other agencies** as well as engaging with issues around cohesion. Therefore, although the My Home Town project has used the Belonging Campaign as a platform for a smaller-scale programme, by being outward looking, and focusing on skills as well as substantive issues, it seeks to have a long-term impact:

"That project was with year nine, tens, who are now year ten, elevens and what we've been able to do with that group of people, we've been able to build their awareness, create a greater understanding of both community cohesion, parallel lives and issues concerning young people today. What we've also been able to do is to allow them a platform that's been able to allow them to explore the voice that they need and how to express their views. We've introduced them to the youth forum, we've introduced them to other debates and organisations that they are continually working with outside of the My Home Town project."

Blackburn, Project Level

Although future funding has been secured, through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), stakeholders recognise the challenges involved in maintaining the impact and momentum of a high profile campaign like the Belonging programme. The major recent development of the Belonging campaign has been through a series of '100 Voices' discussion and consultation events, of which three have been held to date. This programme is now being extended to a local level, with the establishment of five Neighbourhood 100 Voices. These events are forums for open and honest debate around cohesion issues, as well as an opportunity for local residents to shape the direction of the Campaign. Stakeholders report that independent professional facilitation, by Jim Hancock, former BBC Political Editor in the North West, has been an important factor in ensuring openness of debate. There has also been support for the consultations from the local newspaper, with detailed and positive reporting on events.

Success factors:

High profile campaign is a stimulus and focus for partnership working. Faith groups were involved in the development of the charter, which has been promoted across the community and private sectors as well as public sector partners. This has ensured the campaign reaches a wide range of residents and also potentially builds a platform for future partnership working around cohesion.

Providing a springboard for community cohesion projects, particularly within schools. By stimulating smaller-scale cohesion projects, the Belonging Campaign has extended its reach and resulted in opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to interact.

Encouraging debate in schools about common values and what it means to belong to the borough. The theme of belonging has been examined in more depth within school-based projects. Through these smaller-scale projects, the ideas of belonging and civic values have been made more personal and tangible.

5.2.3. Meet Your Neighbours

Meet Your Neighbours is a project that brought together girls from Christian, Muslim and secular schools in the North West for a residential weekend. The project aimed to provide opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to interact, discuss community cohesion and ultimately to recognise what they have in common. The desired outcomes for the residential were outlined as follows:

'[for participants] to come together to build bridges of friendship and understanding by debating cohesion issues and examining some of the important issues in their lives, as well as taking part in team building activities to allow them to get to know each other and recognise the many things that they share in common.'

The project took the form of a residential course attended by six students and a teacher from three different schools, followed by a meal and question time event for parents, teachers and governors. It will culminate in the production of a booklet and DVD to be circulated to directors of children's services across the country.

The project was run by a partnership between the council, UNISON North West, Communities and Local Government and Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). It emerged from an earlier partnership between IDeA, UNISON and the council in 2005 to produce a community cohesion toolkit for working with young people.

This project is one of a number of initiatives in the borough which seek to provide young people, who may live and be educated in environments where they mix with very few people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, with opportunities to interact in a meaningful way. It fits with the borough’s strategy of bridging parallel lives in order to increase the feeling that people from different backgrounds get on well together. It also builds on Blackburn with Darwen’s existing school twinning programme and extends the level of contact and geographic boundaries, by including schools from different parts of the North West. Planning documents set out the following background to the project and its relationship to the borough’s overall approach to community cohesion:

‘Work, education and leisure provide the potential to be important meeting points for people from different cultural and economic backgrounds. To promote a society where people from different backgrounds can get on well together, it is vital to promote work which helps to bridge parallel lives through these everyday activities. In Blackburn with Darwen, an innovative and successful school twinning programme has been established to provide opportunities for different communities to come together and collaborate for their mutual advantage and learning, but other opportunities exist to further promote communication, understanding and friendship.’

As with any one-off project, the impact on cohesion is difficult to measure. However, project participants completed evaluation forms giving some indication about how attitudes may be changing. Several participants feel that they have developed their understanding of other religions, but many also report being surprised to discover they have so much in common with girls from different backgrounds. Therefore, the project achieved one of its central aims, of enabling young people from different faith (or no faith) communities to recognise the attitudes, experiences and goals that they share:

“I was surprised at the fact that there are so many things common between all of us including ambitions.”

Blackburn, Participant

“How quickly once we became open with each other we found common ground and it was the similarities that stood out rather than the differences.”

Blackburn, Participant

Evaluation forms also provide valuable feedback on which elements of the programme were most successful and suggestions for improvements. Several participants highlight the importance of having sufficient information before the residential course, to engage them and allow them to prepare adequately. For example, there was some expectation that the programme might focus more narrowly on religious awareness, whereas in fact it had a broader agenda, covering social interaction and cultural awareness as well as religious differences. It was initially hoped that students from a Jewish school would attend, and participants are keen for girls from a wide range of religions to be involved in any future projects.

Although the initial event was small scale, the participating schools have decided to develop the links that were formed, by organising exchange visits that enable a greater number of students to benefit. The two faith schools are also working together to suggest reading materials to promote greater religious understanding. It is also reported that participating students have remained in contact, suggesting that the project has had long-term effects on direct participants, together with a strong focus on extending its benefits beyond those directly involved.

Success factors:

Committed partners – the project builds on and expands a successful existing partnership and potentially provides a strong basis for future collaboration on community cohesion initiatives.

Intensive and meaningful interaction in a residential setting – providing young people with an opportunity to interact in a sustained way in a 'neutral' setting is important to developing relationships. Several participants report that they were surprised how quickly they formed positive relationships in this new environment.

New activities and challenges – outdoor, team-building activities are mentioned by several participants as a particularly successful part of the programme.

Outreach potential – the project was designed to ensure that, although it was small scale, it would have a positive impact beyond the benefits for direct participants. Parents, headteachers and governors are involved through a post-project event, giving parents the opportunity to interact and allowing experiences and learning from the project to be shared more broadly within the schools. The final outputs from the project are a DVD and booklet, to be circulated to all directors of children's services, which will be a lasting resource for teachers and youth workers.

5.2.4. Youth on Youth

Youth on Youth is a collaborative project between two youth groups based in White and Asian communities. Youth workers identified a need for such a collaborative project in a context in which many of the young people live, and are educated, alongside very few young people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. There was a fit between the youth workers' views and the identification of a need for this project at a strategic level. There is a feeling that it is easy for myths about people from different backgrounds to arise under these conditions, and participants were keen to be involved in a project that would allow them to learn more about different communities.

Youth on Youth was designed to give White and Asian young people opportunities to interact and to challenge any myths or misconceptions about the different communities. Creative approaches to introducing the two groups to each other and examining issues of racism and prejudice were central to the project. The use of video and drama provided a focus for the project and enabled the young people to engage with serious issues around cohesion in an interesting way:

"We used different techniques in dealing with it. We used videos and we used drama pieces. So I think our group we looked at it from that point of view that there's an issue that we can look at in different ways rather than just going on a residential, sitting and talking about it."

Blackburn, Youth participant

The two groups exchanged views and information about themselves through art and via DVD recordings before meeting face to face. The aim was to allow the young people to get to know each other gradually to make them more comfortable debating issues around cohesion later in the project:

"We stuck words from magazines that resembled our personality and resembled what we were like and it was just about trying to get to know what people were like before we actually met so that we were comfortable talking to people about terrorism or about whatever else."

Blackburn, Youth participant

The project culminated in a residential weekend where the young people produced a DVD, which used drama to examine issues around racism and prejudice. The DVD enabled the young people to cooperate to produce a tangible and lasting output from the project:

"We were just going away for a whole weekend with a group of people that I didn't really know just to have a laugh, just ... do drama pieces. I think that was the main point because we wanted, we knew this video was going to go across to a lot of people."

Blackburn, Youth participant

The residential weekend also provided opportunities for the participants to ask questions of young people from different backgrounds in an open environment:

"We did like a quirky kind of thing where two of our group members sat down and talked to their group members and we just asked loads of different questions from arranged marriages, terrorism, White areas, Asian areas, everything just came in and it was a good ... session where everyone just mixed and everyone just joined in and everyone just got everything out in the clear."

Blackburn, Youth participant

Some positive effect on cohesion is evident from participants reporting friendships being formed and myths about people from different backgrounds being challenged, despite the short time-scale of the project. Our discussion group with participants was conducted almost a year after the project took place and many of the young people are still in touch.

"After two days we're still going to be in the same position and we're going to have to come back. But after two days we was all very well, you know, we still chat to each other MSN or by text or whatever, so we still see a lot of each other. So it was like, that friendship we started really last year and it's still going now."

Blackburn, Youth participant

"[We] gain more understanding because you're getting rid of the myths and the other kind of stuff that's going around."

Blackburn, Youth participant

Many feel that the project has had a lasting impact on their attitudes and beliefs about young people from different backgrounds. Positive effects include preparing them for college, where they are more likely to interact with people from different backgrounds:

"It made me think more about stereotyping, a better idea of stereotyping."

Blackburn, Youth participant

"I can bond more with different ... people and it taught me quite a lot about going to college and things."

Blackburn, Youth participant

The overall impact of Youth on Youth has not been formally measured and its small-scale nature means its impact will by necessity be limited. However, feedback from direct participants is generally very positive.

Participants had the opportunity to record their suggestions for improvements on the final DVD and their main feeling was that the project could have been extended, to involve more young people and continue over a longer period. The desire for some immediate follow-up to Youth on Youth to keep the momentum going and develop the project was also expressed in the discussion group:

"So even if it wasn't a weekend, if they said can you come down for one week, an hour, or whatever and continue with it then we would have been more than happy to continue because, like we said, by the end of the weekend we were all happy to see each other anyway. But after that it slowly, slowly died down and I never heard anything from them again to be honest with you. ... I've never heard of them again."

Blackburn, Youth participant

The project involved young people who already participate in youth groups and there may be greater challenges in involving those who are not already engaged through these structures.

"I know when I told my friends ... they think it's some kind of swotty kind of people, kind of place so I thought, there's no point. Because if they're already thinking like that and they're trying to turn it to something else they're just not interested. Some young people are just like, yeah, OK, you did that, very nice. We did this on the weekend. We went out drinking or we went out clubbing or whatever ... But we tried, we did try."

Blackburn, Youth participant

Some participants mention detached youth workers, who operate without a base, as a means of engaging with young people who do not attend youth groups in community centres. Detached youth workers are employed by the Council but they are not directly involved with this cohesion project.

Success factors:

Gradual introduction to each other and **working with each group separately** at the beginning of the project – participants feel that the initial exchanges through DVD recordings and artwork reduced the possibility of tensions between the two groups and enabled them to form stronger relationships when they subsequently met in person. A gradual approach also made them feel comfortable engaging in open debates about cohesion issues later in the project.

Forums for open and honest debate – participants highlight a question and answer session where they were able to ask young people from different backgrounds about their experiences and communities as one of the most successful aspects of the project.

Breaking up discussion of serious issues with activities – icebreaker exercises and games were dispersed through the weekend to provide a break from concentrated focus on cohesion issues. This made the weekend fun for participants and enabled them to sustain their enthusiasm over the course of the residential.

Opportunity to learn new skills – opportunities for personal development, especially learning about DVD production, were important in generating enthusiasm for the project. Participants suggest that recognising personal achievements, by awarding certificates or integrating projects into existing awards, such as Duke of Edinburgh, may be one way of developing successful cohesion initiatives in future.

Using creative and dramatic techniques – participants feel that using creative methods made the project more appealing and enabled them to explore cohesion issues in a more engaging and sustained way than just 'sitting down and talking'.

Tangible outputs – the young people were aware they had to work together to produce a DVD that would be seen by others. This gave them an aim to work towards, took the focus away from being there for 'cohesion' and towards sharing a common goal.

Sustained contact in a neutral environment – some of the young people are unlikely to visit areas where residents are predominantly from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. For example, many of the White young people had not previously visited the youth centre where the Asian young people hold their youth group. A residential weekend enabled the groups to interact in an intensive way and in an environment where they all felt equally comfortable.

5.3. Birmingham

5.3.1. Beyond Midnight University

Beyond Midnight University is a youth development scheme targeted at young people not in employment, education or training. The aim of the programme is to broaden the horizons, skills and opportunities of those involved in gang-related behaviour, and to encourage their move away from gang-culture and into more positive types of social participation. As gang related behaviour is considered to undermine cohesion, as described in section 4.8, Beyond Midnight University is considered a key community cohesion project in Birmingham, especially as it also serves to develop the employability of participants, which stakeholders highlight as important for community cohesion, see Chapter 2 for more information.

The project has been set up through partnership between Birmingham Youth Service and South Birmingham College. Crucially, the programme runs between 9pm and 1am nightly. This is driven by perceived benefits in engaging with young people in terms of their own cultural norms: gang-culture is a very much a night-time culture.

Specifically, the scheme provides an opportunity for young people to take part in Basketball, Dance, Film Making, Music Business and DJ workshops (including making a demo in a professional studio) leading to qualifications.

The project involves adults who have been involved in gang communities as volunteers within the project. This serves a dual purpose: first to provide personal development opportunities for these people, new positive roles of responsibility and a shift in self-identity; secondly as a means to encourage trust and engagement of participants themselves. In particular, a well known local hip-hop producer, and members of local gangs were approached to work with the youngsters. The producer was trained to be an NVQ (National Vocational Qualifications) assessor and the gang members partook in service learning, culminating in five of them becoming qualified to work in the Youth Service.

The project is still in relatively early days, but evidence of initial success lies in how the project has achieved the on-going participation of young people in the programme who previously were not involved in education or training. The project hope that participants will continue to stay with the programme, achieve qualifications and sustained engagement in positive socio-economic activities. (For more information see <http://www.myspace.com/beyondmidnightuniversity>).

Further evidence of success lies in its popularity. The project is a pilot with 'seed funding' of £25,000 to work with 15 young people. Following overwhelming positive feedback it has recently been dramatically expanded and the course is oversubscribed, with 150 young people on the course.

Project workers highlighted a particular challenge that can arise in terms of measuring success quantitatively, arising from the fact that young people engaged in gang-related activities are very resistant to registering their name and contact details, or for their to be written records about them. It has been essential to gaining the trust of young people that these concerns are respected, and minimal records kept as far as appropriate.

"That's always the dynamic, is this ability to manage the unknown and the un-measurable, in a way that becomes more known and more measurable and how long you give it, because at the end of the day it's public money and you have, you can't just give public money on the basis of, these are gang members and therefore we can't account for them because you'd be funding nothing."

Birmingham, Policy Level

Success factors:

Understanding the requirements and the interests of those not in employment, education and training and willing to be flexible in approach

Providing the training course late at night, and the approach of allowing participants retain to their anonymity throughout the programme of learning were examples of this.

Involving people involved in gang communities in volunteering in the project

was felt to play a key role in helping the project staff to understand and engage with young people's culture and outlook, as well as providing meaningful outcomes for the volunteers.

Partnership working between the council youth services and education was key to the development and delivery of the project.

Commitment and passion from project leaders was felt to be key in developing and delivering such an innovative project, and taking on the risks of engaging with gang culture.

5.3.2. Journey to the Soul

The Journey to the Soul project took three years to set up and was as controversial as it was successful in its aims. The fifteen young people in Birmingham most at risk of imprisonment were referred to the youth service by the local police. Over the course of a year youth workers, and members of local faith organisations, worked closely with the all-male group, providing guidance and support to fundraise, with the ultimate aim of a trip to the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia to pray to the House of God, which was achieved in October 2006.

The project's community cohesion-related aims were to guide the young people away from crime and increase their stake in their community, while addressing the racist attitudes held by some of the young people, through myth-busting.

The reasoning behind the project was that although the young men were not particularly religious before the experience, they came from Muslim families, and particularly as secular approaches had not worked, it was decided by a stakeholder working with the young men, that a 'more holistic approach was required' which drew on the young people's cultural and spiritual background.

"You can't treat a Muslim as if he is not a Muslim, if you ignore his religious identity, you miss the wholeness."

Birmingham, Policy Level

The project involved personal goal-setting and the achievement of those goals, combined with regular religious and moral teaching from the youth workers involved in the project. The fundraising element required the individuals to re-engage with the community, civil society and even their own families; one participant gave a speech in the local town hall to raise funds, when just a few months before he had been involved in serious violent crime in the area.

The project was funded partly by the council and partly by the young people themselves, though most of the organisation was done by two local Muslim voluntary organisations City Circle (which aims for Muslim professionals to share skills and knowledge in the community) and Cure (a Muslim mentoring group). To arrange the trip stakeholders explained how it was necessary to overcome 'policy-makers fear of religion' and fears that the young-people would become 'radicalised'.

Interviews with young people who took part in the project provided an insight into the remarkable change that had taken place in the lives of the participants interviewed. From being involved in burglary, car-crime, and muggings and stabbings, the young men were now either in employment, back in education, or engaged in voluntary work – a move from behaviour that undermines community cohesion to behaviour which supports it. For several their daily routine involved praying five times a day, and reading the Koran, and they had taken a lead in changing the behaviour of their peer group. A further benefit to community cohesion was that, having seen people from all races praying together, the individuals said that they now no longer had racist attitudes. Subsequent to the trip there is a great deal of ongoing post-project mentoring and commitment, to support positive outcomes in the long term.

Success factors:

Taking the participants out of their normal environment – the trip to Saudi Arabia introduced participants to new experiences and cultures, and removed them from their familiar lifestyle patterns, helping new influences to take hold.

The teaching of right and wrong – seen as essential to the success of the project, as much or more than the religious element –

If you relativise it, morality becomes 'a take it or leave it' affair, unless clear values are taught to children.

Birmingham, Policy Level

Personal goal setting and discipline – participants were guided in to a more structured way of life, including fasting for example, which was seen to aid their development.

Ongoing support – the fact that the youth workers made themselves available to participants out of office hours was a key factor.

The personal relationships formed over time between the young people and the youth workers – the youth workers ended up occupying a unique position in the young people's lives, acting more family than council employees, and having a powerful positive influence.

They're not like teachers, teachers always put themselves above you, they're more like older brothers.

Participant, Birmingham

5.3.3. Neighbourhood forums

Birmingham's diverse population has led Birmingham City Council to take a new approach to consultation and local service delivery, aimed at helping 'the community define what the council does', rather than retaining a 'one size fits all' approach. The council has established an infrastructure of localised consultation, consisting largely of residents' forums, combined with significantly devolved power, allowing local decisions to be made more quickly and with less bureaucracy. Although the restructure was undertaken to meet a variety of service delivery needs, it been found by stakeholders to be particularly effective in meeting community cohesion aims.

Birmingham's governance structure

Birmingham's governance structure, reorganised in 2004, has been broken down into 10 constituencies covering the 10 districts (each district consists of around four wards). Each constituency has a Constituency Committee who are in charge of spending allocation and a District Strategic Partnership (DSP) containing around 40 partners from public, private, voluntary and community sectors, which acts to influence the allocation of that spending. Ten per cent of the overall net revenue to be used by Birmingham City Council is allocated to Constituency Committee spending, totalling £125 million across constituencies.

Community cohesion-related functions of the DSPs include:

- developing a community development programme addressing the needs of each district
- ensuring services are accessible to all groups
- encouraging joint working between communities, especially within the voluntary sector, including pairing organisations across neighbourhoods to avoid duplication of efforts and information sharing. DSPs are also creating networks of local volunteers who are able to share knowledge and visit schools in constituencies to encourage students to volunteer. The DSPs also host local volunteer awards which bring the community together to recognise local volunteers and to encourage others to give time
- ensuring there are opportunities for employment in the district and that there is aspirational housing within the area, so that residents who achieve financial success are more likely to remain in the same community

To pick up the nuances in the requirements of different areas, Birmingham's governance structure has been further broken down in to 'natural neighbourhoods' – the boundaries of which were identified by a 4000-resident postal survey asking residents to indicate the area they relate to. Neighbourhoods tended to be the size of a super-output area.⁴¹

The survey also asked residents to identify problems in their neighbourhood, whilst simultaneously members of local voluntary organisations were interviewed, by local graduates, as to what the current underlying issues were in each neighbourhood. A database was built up compiling priorities from residents and voluntary organisations, and priority neighbourhoods were identified (those identified strongly correlated with the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) scores in the areas). After meetings between local voluntary groups and the council and the residents' representatives, problems and issues in areas were then allocated to the bodies most suitable for dealing with them and targets agreed.

Neighbourhood forums

Providing ongoing feedback to the DSPs are the neighbourhood forums, attended by members of the DSP. These provide the opportunity for residents to raise issues with the committee, including taking to the podium for four-minute talks on local matters, allowing for greater interaction between committee members and the public than was the case previously.

⁴¹ Around 600 households – fortunately, the neighbourhoods identified tended to be larger than any segregated communities living in them, increasing the likelihood of different communities meeting together to discuss issues common to them.

There is awareness in Birmingham City Council that 'leaders of the community' often tend to be male and middle-aged and may not represent views beyond their own, hence the effort to outreach to women and young people on community issues. Supporting this outreach work, there are also several forums aimed at consulting different sections of the community, including faith groups, women and young people – a similar effort of inclusivity has been made by Birmingham's Housing Department, where the members of the 10 constituency Tenants Groups in Birmingham were recruited by hiring a recruitment agency to telephone 30,000 residents, to ask them if they would like to join the groups.

Larger forums are also held in Birmingham themed by issues common to all neighbourhoods: youth provision or health for example. Separate themed partnerships have also been set up within the DSP to deal with these specific issues.

Perceived results of this change in governance is that that residents increasingly feel they can influence local decisions (up from net -43 per cent in 2004 to +3 per cent in 2006)⁴² indicating the contribution forums make to community cohesion aims. Other advantages of the forums, cited by stakeholders, include:

- they encourage people to have a group voice, rather than individuals writing to their MP or perhaps relying on there being exceptionally driven individuals to take responsibility for improving an area
- they act as a tool to disseminate information downwards so that rumours and myths may be rebutted in person
- due to the combination of devolved power and consultation, the DSP structure is considered by stakeholders to be very responsive to residents' self-identified issues – rather than residents having to wait for problems to be identified 'from above'. Grievances can now be responded to quickly rather than being left to escalate, and nuances can be better captured than in surveys
- according to stakeholders, neighbourhoods with area forums tend to be better kept

⁴² Birmingham City Council 2006 Comprehensive Performance Assessment:
http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/ToPrinters120906.pdf?MEDIA_ID=172746&FILENAME=ToPrinters120906.pdf

Success factors:

Pacing the change – ensuring the quality of service provision is maintained throughout the reorganisation is essential for the new processes to be received enthusiastically.

Managing expectations – the public need to be made aware about the limits of funding available for regeneration.

The local authority has to have the capacity to deliver and they need to be absolutely honest about the limits of resources. This way, the more credible the process is seen to be, the more people come to the table, and the more cohesive a community becomes.

Birmingham, Strategic Level

Also, councillors need to have emphasised that they are still accountable after the devolution, if not more so, due to the increased power they have.

Devolved power – allowing problems to be addressed sooner, and greater empowerment of the community.

Outreach work – ensuring individuals or groups who would not normally partake in such events are encouraged to attend, avoiding regeneration being directed by the 'usual suspects'.

Tackling difficult issues – committee members should not shy away from tackling difficult issues in forums, as it is often these issues which can undermine cohesion within communities.

5.3.4. Policing disorder

In Birmingham, the city has developed a three-pronged approach to dealing with disturbances such as an incident of gang violence or arrests of terror suspects. When an incident occurs, there are three distinct groups which require separate attention to maintain community cohesion. In the past, police forces have treated all groups in the same way, but West Midlands Police have developed a pioneering and successful approach. The three groups are:

- **Those most closely involved in the disturbance**

This is the family or fraternity surrounding those who may have been attacked, arrested or had some other perceived wrong done to them. This group are the most likely to retaliate and require special attention. Family Liaison Officers should be sent in immediately to convey two distinct messages; firstly, to ask how the family can be helped during this traumatic time and secondly, to explicitly warn that, given their proximity to the situation, they will be watched very carefully to ensure that anyone involved in retaliation will be brought to justice.

- **Traditional community 'leaders'**

These are the individuals whom the police and local authorities have traditionally focused on, such as community interlocutors and religious leaders. These individuals, although not directly influential in times of crisis, do have some influence over a silent, passive majority who must be kept inside in the aftermath of any disturbance to prevent tension from building. This group should be kept informed of proceedings and 'kept feeling special' to keep their influence over the majority favourable.

- **Those in the community who have genuine influence**

This 'new' group have not traditionally been engaged by the police are those who have a real influence over the young people in a community. Some of this group may be upstanding within the community, whereas others may be reformed gang members. They are vital to work with given their influence over those likely to escalate tensions. There needs to have been an ongoing process, previous to any disturbances, by which the police identify and properly interact with this group, so that when tensions escalate into violence, their influence has a calming effect. These individuals are considered by the police to be the most important to work with – as well as being carefully listened to they should also be tasked with disseminating information to the groups they hold influence over.

A further general principle employed by the police regarding disturbances or violence between ethnic groups or gangs is that immediately after any disturbance police-facilitated meetings should be held as a 'blood-letting' session. These will involve volatile interaction, which should not be suppressed, and are essential to have to stop tensions building up.

Finally, before police activity based on intelligence occurs, such as arrests of terror suspects, the lead on community cohesion in a council needs to be informed with information specific enough so that a cohesion plan can be made geared to the particular situation. Generally, when a police investigation is occurring within a community, there needs to be an equal emphasis on cohesion work within a community as on the investigation, rather than 'bolting on' a Community Manager late in the process.

This offers a comprehensive approach to addressing conflict before it arises. Personal testimony of experienced police officers indicates that this approach has been found to be very successful in the instances that it has been used and is complimented when combined with overtly wide consultation and engagement by police. Consistent with these claims, in Hansworth and Lozells (predominantly ethnic minority areas) where police have been using this approach, the proportion of residents confident with the local Police has shown a large increase from 25 per cent in 2004 to 78 per cent in 2006, despite several high-profile disturbances occurring between surveys.⁴³

Police we spoke to emphasised that they see themselves as largely a crisis management agency rather than arbitrators between communities. Their function is dealing with the acute tensions, the flare-ups – the chronic tensions between communities, it was stressed, should largely be the council's domain.

43 F3 BCU West Midlands Police Customer Satisfaction Survey: from July 2004 – Jan 2007.

Success factors:

Long-term commitment to working with influential members of communities – including listening to their concerns (or criticisms) as spokespeople for those they have influence over.

Maintaining existing networks – which ensures they can be relied upon in a time of crisis.

Working with the local authority – especially dividing responsibilities for cohesion work unambiguously, aiding quick, effective responses to disturbances.

Wide consultation – the approach is complimented by overt, wide consultation and engagement by police with the public.

5.4. Bradford

5.4.1. School linking

Bradford's Schools Linking project has been running for over four years in the district, and currently involves 61 primary and 12 secondary schools. The project facilitates contact between school children from different geographic neighbourhoods across the district through shared cultural activities.

The project structure recreates all conditions considered necessary or helpful, according to Intergroup Contact Theory,⁴⁴ for achieving positive attitudinal change amongst participants. In this case the change sought is a reduction in mutual prejudice and wariness between groups of children based on cultural, religious or ethnic differences.

Teachers participating in the project are provided with training and ongoing support from a central team: one full-time coordinator, one part-time teacher/adviser, and one full-time administrator/web designer. The format for the links between schools supported through the project has a common basic structure for all primary schools, involving an initial day together at a neutral venue, followed by a minimum of two contacts per term, preferably supplemented by further shared activities. The range of activities promoted by the team as suitable catalysts for the linking process are all creative or sports-based activities, which enable facilitated contact and team work, although schools also often choose to share more ordinary lessons, such as literacy and numeracy, as part of a linking day.

⁴⁴ Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory. Allport, G. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*, Reading MA: Addison-Wesley – conditions contributing to achieving change: Equal status between groups, Participants sharing common goals, Cooperation not competition between groups, Institutional support and sanction for the interaction. Subsequently broader Contact Hypothesis. Names additional conditions considered as facilitating attitude change: Serial contacts rather than a single contact, Opportunities for individual relationships to develop, Learning objectives aiming to encourage behaviour that disconfirms stereotypes.

To assess whether this kind of work can actually have deep, meaningful and lasting positive effects a formal external evaluation of the project was executed from 2004 to 2005, the results of which are detailed below. The following key evaluation questions form the basis of the research leading to this report: can bringing children together to take part in an inclusive, creative and meaningful way, in normal activities that have been systematically co-planned by both teachers:

- achieve increased understanding and trust between children separated by cultural or community differences?
- improve the potential for longstanding relationships between groups who would not normally meet?

A primary aim of the project is to facilitate the development of cross-cultural friendships – a key process for reducing prejudice according to academic literature on the subject. Evaluation data indicate that the Bradford Schools Linking Project has had a marked impact on the numbers of participating children's cross-cultural friendships, particularly in the case of children attending primary schools that serve a community predominantly of a single cultural or ethnic identity i.e. 90 per cent or more (either mainly White British or mainly minority ethnic). The following quotes are taken from the project evaluation:

"I've never had friends who were their religion. Thought that might be a problem ... But I've learnt that it doesn't matter what religion you are ... My buddy and I have the same thoughts!"

Bradford, Participant

There is also evidence of dramatic increases in confidence and trust resulting from the project. Though there were several variables affecting this:

- there is a strong indication that there were generally greater impacts from the project amongst ethnic minority children than White children
- there is a strong indication that the impact of this project on mixed schools was much less encouraging than the impact amongst schools without a significantly mixed pupil profile
- there is some indication that children's age or year group affected the degree of impact resulting from the project; primary school children achieved the greatest impacts
- there is some indication that the length of time children spend involved in linking affected the impacts of the project on their attitudes; longer linking leads to greater impacts in some areas

The aims of this project were and are extremely ambitious, and the project itself faced numerous challenges. The evaluation observed a number of factors to be aware of which tended to inhibit positive change:

- the adverse influence of political groups, or a local climate of intolerance towards people from different ethnic or religious communities: Where a neighbourhood had been targeted by intolerant or extremist political parties or groupings children found it difficult to open up to the project, and some carried a heavily prejudiced outlook with them throughout
- the adverse influence of family members and friends who do not agree with the project aims, and the limited period for which children are involved: To achieve positive attitudinal change amongst all participating children within ten months, irrespective of the attitudes of their parents, siblings and other family members or close friends, would certainly be an unrealistic objective. Some children were receiving contradictory messages from teachers and parents. Most would need longer to come to their own independent view of cross-cultural interaction
- some children who appeared to enjoy their linking experience and make some friends, were still comfortable at the end of the year in continuing to make racially prejudiced generalisations and disrespectful comments about different religions or ethnic groups. These are the groups which demonstrate that their ingrained prejudice, in all likelihood the norm for these children at home, was not affected by the project during the evaluation year. Some of these children appeared to be beginning a journey of acceptance of difference. However, it will take more than a year of linking, and more proactive time exploring the issues, to really affect their attitudes

Taking into account the above challenges, the evaluation suggests that the project can, even within the short timescale of a single academic year, and comprising a minimum of seven (mostly whole day) contacts between linking classes, achieve considerable increases in understanding and trust amongst a majority of participating children separated by cultural, ethnic or religious differences.

Some typical 'before and after' quotes from the children participating in the project illustrate the change in attitudes. The following are quotes before the project:

*"I've never met someone who's brown before."
"We don't get to meet different people very much."
"You don't get to know any Asian children here."*

Bradford, Participants

And quotes after the project:

*"I think it's really good, it's good to get on with people who are different."
"It's wicked! Cos you get to meet a new kind of different people."
"These are my first ever non-Muslim friends. That's cool."
"I will keep in contact with him somehow, and try and meet up with him. I've learnt that you don't need Asian people around you to feel ok."*

Bradford, Participants

Full details of the Full Evaluation Report (Anni Raw, 2005) can be found at www.bradfordschools.net/slp in the 'reports' section.

Success factors:

Supporting pupils – exposure to an unfamiliar environment can be unsettling for young children, to minimise negative feelings or experiences and encourage positives, there needs to be ongoing support for the children throughout the three stages of the process:

- 1) Preparation – addressing children's concerns.
- 2) Activities – ensuring that activities are cooperative rather than competitive, and are organised to encourage positive interaction between children from the linked schools.
- 3) Reflection – reflecting upon experiences, including changes in general attitudes to 'different' children should be explored, and further questions children have should be addressed. Also for children who are willing to continue friendships with those from their link school, teachers should encourage this to happen.

Supporting teachers – it is important that teachers are aware of how schools linking has a serious agenda, and that teachers are provided with supportive training and guidance and then trusted to provide individual commitment to the project.

Working with parents – involving parents in the linking process, and other events, is seen as an important contributor to the project's aims, by helping parents to be supportive of the project's approach.

Focussing on the right schools – the impact of the project is more significant on schools with less mixed pupil profiles.

Long term commitment – being aware of the factors that can inhibit positive change of those who are particularly resistant, whilst simultaneously building a culture in which racist views are challenged by the majority of children rather than accepted, requires long-term commitment.

5.5. Hull

5.5.1. Don't Believe the Hype

Stakeholders in Hull identify a need to challenge myths about the circumstances of some new arrivals in Hull and, in particular, misinformation about the benefit entitlements of refugees and asylum seekers. Tensions over the distribution of resources between different communities are identified as a key challenge to community cohesion by stakeholders across many of the areas, including Hull. Myth busting work is one of several approaches to reducing this sense of competition over resources.

The 'Don't Believe the Hype' campaign involved a leaflet published by the city council, in partnership with other agencies, including the police, the primary care trust (PCT) and Hull College. The leaflet uses a question and answer format to counter some common misconceptions about the number of asylum seekers in the area and the support that is offered to them. As well as responding to these myths, it sets out the positive contribution of immigrants to the UK economy and public services. The leaflet was distributed via key community locations, for example the library.

The 'Don't Believe the Hype' leaflet has been complemented by other communications work, including appearances on radio phone-ins and local television by a member of the Refugee and Asylum Support Service. There has also been some positive partnership working with the local press, particularly around coverage of the UN Gateway Protection Programme, which has seen a small number of Congolese families settling in Hull. Stakeholders identify some potential dangers in centring communications work around a small programme, such as the Gateway scheme, specifically the risk of identifying some communities as particularly 'deserving'. However, in general the Gateway Programme has been a valuable opportunity for positive communications about new communities in Hull.

The 'Don't Believe the Hype' campaign is widely regarded by stakeholders as a successful programme and is now being rolled out to challenge myths around mental health. The impact of the campaign on perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers is very difficult to measure and there has been no direct evaluation of its effects. A stakeholder within the Refugee and Asylum Support team reported a decrease in the number of hostile letters received following the campaign, but this could be due to a number of different factors including a change in the number of asylum seekers arriving in the city.

Success factors:

Question and answer and 'myth versus fact' format clearly and directly addresses misconceptions.

Clear and accessible language

Use of factual information to challenge common myths, for example, about the level of financial support to which asylum seekers are entitled.

Information tailored to combat local myths – the leaflet provides locally specific information, including the government imposed limit on the number of asylum seekers in the city and the most common countries of origin of asylum seekers in Hull.

Combined with other communications work including appearances by a senior member of the Refugee and Asylum Support Service on local radio and television and local newspaper coverage of the Gateway Programme. Employing a range of media ensures that myth busting messages are accessible to a wider audience. In particular, use of radio phone-ins introduces an interactive element to communications, enabling residents to challenge stakeholders and receive direct responses to their particular concerns.

Service providers visible within communications campaign involvement of senior stakeholders in communications work should make messages more credible and help residents to feel that services are accountable.

5.5.2. Libraries Connect

Libraries Connect is a programme to develop resources and information for young people aged 13-30 from asylum seeker and refugee communities. Initially this was focused upon the Kurdish community, but has been extended to encompass all refugee communities from March 2006. A Welcome pack is being developed, including a library membership form and card, so that a support worker can help with applications to join the library. There is also a planned 'meet and greet' session to introduce people to the library and overcome language barriers.

Other projects within the library service include a homework club and community collections (book collections in community languages sited in locations within the community).

The programme was founded in response to a survey conducted to identify the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. The main issues that emerged were demand for more information and frustration with inability to access sufficient support when coming into the library – mainly due to language barriers. It is also constantly revising its approach based on new information.

The project is consistent with stakeholders' emphasis on high quality services, which are responsive to the needs of all communities, as a key component of cohesion. By addressing the information requirements of new communities the borough hopes to make its services more accessible and equitable.

The project is currently funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.⁴⁵ This funding ends in March 2008 and the aim is to mainstream services after this date. The project has been set up and run in partnership with a couple of local voluntary sector organisations working alongside the Refugee and Asylum Services team. A project worker has been employed to coordinate the project – a key part of their role is to go out into new communities to speak with them and ensure that the programme is always adapting to the changing needs of the communities it serves.

"I think just having that opportunity to actually interact with the community...I think that's key, getting people to actually to talk to us, to say what they want. So that we can start to change things."

Hull, Project Level

The impact of the programme on cohesion has not really been measured directly, although stakeholders feel it is a success. In particular they note that sessions held in the local library are well attended.

"We only got one or two people turned up when we were down there [the BBC open centre]. Came back here [the local library] and had lots of people instantly!"

Hull, Project Level

The programme has developed valuable insight into how best to make services inclusive. For example, on a very practical level, using posters to advertise events did not work, while visiting cafes and speaking to people in person meant that attendance at the screening of a Kurdish film was very high. Engaging with participants initially in an area where they already feel comfortable has proved to be very important, in order for them to feel able to come in and use services:

"We can actually take books out into the community. So for example we went to the mosque and met the women's group there and some of them did come into the library, but they felt a little bit reticent. So suddenly they discovered that, well we can take books to you. And that they found was more convenient and they felt more comfortable with that and what we're hoping to do is build up that link and then bring them in."

Hull, Project level

It has also been learnt that the success of a partnership approach depends very much upon individual relationships and enthusiasm, and that it can be difficult to sustain projects when there are changes in personnel. The initial success of the community collections has been affected by changes in personnel in the community locations where they are sited:

"One thing that didn't really work so well, the community collections haven't worked well. That's something to do with management. That's been a bit bit and miss... because we use volunteers to manage the community collections."

Hull, Project level

⁴⁵ The Paul Hamlyn Foundation is an independent grant making body that aims to fund organisations whose charitable activities help people to realise their potential and have a better quality of life.

Success factors:

Listening and responding to the needs of rapidly changing communities – being flexible and proactive about accommodating different types of needs which means that the programme can improve equality of access to services.

Outreach element – project workers going out and speaking with communities about their needs has been vital to ensure the programme meets these needs and can adapt to new challenges as they arise. In particular it is important to adapt communications channels to meet the requirements of your audience (e.g. in this case word of mouth could be more successful than posters, even if translated into the relevant languages).

Initial contact in a venue where participants feel comfortable – it is not necessarily the best facilities that attract people. For example, engaging with participants in an environment where they already feel comfortable is important groundwork ahead of them coming in and using services.

5.5.3. Welcome to Hull Education Conference

Community Based Learning organised a conference aimed at new arrivals to Hull, providing information about schools and broader learning opportunities within the city. The event was organised in the context of an identified need for better information about public services among the many new communities now settling in Hull. It was set up specifically in response to a request from the Polish community in Hull, which was communicated to community based learning through the community language schools. There are seventeen community language schools in Hull, which are open to all, but exist primarily to educate children from specific communities in their language and culture.

The conference had a marketplace approach to displaying information, with stalls from partners including Connexions, Libraries, Early Years and Adult Community Learning. There were also showcases from six community language schools, workshops on topics including schools admissions, schools governors and student support and speakers from local nursery, primary and secondary schools. Interpreters were provided for those who required them.

The project was evaluated through monitoring attendance levels and written feedback from participants. Over 60 delegates attended the conference, with a large majority of those completing feedback forms rating the presentations as excellent or very good. Many participants suggested that the conference should be repeated, and it is intended that an education information event will now be held on a regular basis, with planning underway for September.

There are several ways in which the conference contributes to community cohesion. Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 1, equal access to services is regarded by many stakeholders as an integral component of a cohesive community. By responding to an identified need for information about education services in new communities, the Welcome to Hull conference has a direct impact on this service-focused dimension of community cohesion. Secondly, the event was an opportunity for people from different backgrounds to interact and form relationships. The opportunity to meet people and make contacts was highlighted as a positive outcome in feedback from several delegates:

"Excellent opportunity to make contacts."

Hull, Participant

"A great opportunity to meet a wide range of residents of the city."

Hull, Participant

The evaluation report from the event also highlights that the conference is intended to provide delegates not only with information to take away, but also with resources and contacts to seek out further information when they require it:

'The day produced many positive two-way relationships (including the possibility of employment for one delegate) and a vast amount of information was shared. It is anticipated that through this and future events in the city, new arrivals will be informed about the culture of learning in Hull and the practicalities that go along with that, but will also be enabled to ask questions and search out information for themselves through the links that are forged with the City Council and partner agencies.⁴⁶

Although feedback on the event was generally very positive, participants highlighted consultation and publicity as key priorities for future improvements. This will ensure that more members of the community have the opportunity to access the information available and that the information is tailored to meet their needs:

"Publicity about the event seemed a bit patchy. Let's build on the success of today and make it even better next time."

Hull, Participant

"Better consultation needed as to the needs and expectations of minority ethnic communities... Good that something has been done to develop minority ethnic relations in Hull."

Hull, Participant

Some delegates registered late and were therefore unable to access interpretation or translation services and some delegates who had registered did not attend on the day. Although the event was well publicised through community groups, especially the community language schools, organisers plan to use a wider range of publicity for future events. Feedback also suggests it may be beneficial to shift the balance towards more drop-in clinics and fewer formal presentations to allow delegates greater opportunity to ask specific questions.

⁴⁶ Welcome to Hull Education Conference: Evaluation Report, Children and Young People's Services, February 2007.

Success factors:

Need for information communicated and acted upon due to existing relationship between council and community organisations – The community language schools have a partnership board, with which the council has an important relationship, developed partly through providing the board with training and support in making funding applications. The board has proved a valuable consultation mechanism, especially for identifying the kinds of information which newly arrived communities lack.

Opportunities to interact and make contacts as well as gather information – The Conference was an interactive experience, which enabled two-way exchange of information. It allowed individuals from new communities to meet delegates from other communities, as well as service representatives, and to develop future contacts.

Interpretation services provided for the minority of delegates who required them – Reduced language barriers to interaction and access to information about services.

Wide range of departments present, including Early Years, Libraries and Adult Based Learning – Ensured conference was relevant to a wide range of individuals from new communities, not only those with school aged children.

Marketplace approach to displaying information – Enabled delegates to focus on those services which are most important to them.

5.5.4. Young People’s Parliament

The Young People’s Parliament is a new initiative, which is supported by the Warren Youth Centre. It aims to provide a forum for debate among young people and an opportunity for them to influence decision making in their community. It takes the form of Parliament ‘sessions’ debating key issues affecting young people, such as housing and crime. There is a meeting between members of the Youth Parliament and the council after each session, which provides a systematic way of feeding back issues and questions directly to the council. There are also opportunities for ad hoc meetings with key decision makers about particular areas of concern; for example, some young people met with the Housing Director of the council after they had raised the issues of homelessness in the Parliament.

How the impact of the Young People’s Parliament on cohesion is judged depends on whether empowerment is viewed as an integral part of community cohesion, an indicator of cohesion or whether it is viewed as a means to an end as discussed earlier in this report. The impact of the project has been to empower young people and get them involved in local decision making, which means it is successful in achieving cohesion defined in the first two senses. There are plans to strengthen the connection between the Parliament and council decision making by establishing a young people’s scrutiny committee with the ability to call down and examine council papers on issues relevant to young people in Hull:

"[The scrutiny committee] will be elected by the parliament, and they will be able to call down any papers or policies that impact on the lives of young people, and then feed back to the Parliament, and say this isn't good enough or whatever."

Hull, Participant

The project is already achieving high levels of participation; however organisers are currently looking to increase the representation of young people from ethnic minority communities, especially among older age groups:

"The last one we had 173 young people there, aged between 10 and 25. And we did have some young people from ethnic minority groups but we've got to have more. We've got to have more and we've got to have some older ones."

Hull, Participant

It is important that this is achieved if the project is to move beyond furthering cohesion as empowerment, to also impact on cohesion as meaningful interaction and shared goals between people from different backgrounds.

One view expressed during the research is that young people from ethnic minorities may (initially at least) require their own forums for expression and debate. This view suggests that engagement and/or empowerment is a pre-condition for interaction, and that both are needed for cohesion to be successful. The difference between the two approaches – interaction and engagement simultaneously, or engagement then interaction – may be something to consider when planning projects, especially those involving young people.

Success factors:

Engages and empowers young people through meaningful interaction with the council – although important to ensure that more people from different ethnic minorities are included in the future in order to use this as a mechanism to bring communities together as well as to empower them.

Civic participation in local decision making – a structured way for young people to have a say, which is important in giving them a sense of ownership of the area in which they live in.

Develops skills and confidence – participating in the Parliament can enable young people to develop their confidence in debating and other transferable skills. This potentially has a wide range of positive effects on other areas of their life, including education and employment. Therefore a project such as the Young People's Parliament, which develops young people's potential as active citizens, is also relevant to the dimension of community cohesion which is concerned with social and economic well-being.

5.6. Peterborough

5.6.1. Greater Dogsthorpe Partnership

The Greater Dogsthorpe Partnership (GDP) is an initiative which aims to bring about *‘significant change for the better’* throughout Greater Dogsthorpe. It was set up to address issues in the ward that have been brought about due to its high levels of deprivation; it is in the three per cent most deprived wards nationally.

The partnership’s key aim is to improve cohesion by improving the social and economic well-being of residents in the ward. It aims to improve quality of life and ensure that service providers are responsive to neighbourhood needs and service delivery. It is a wide-ranging initiative which takes a multi-pronged approach to its work, addressing the needs of different groups and building social capital as a result.

The theory behind the project is that ‘Neighbourhood Management’ is the best way to achieve these aims, a system which aims to develop a neighbourhood rather than service-focused approach to service provision. For example, an officer based in the housing department will be dedicated to working in the neighbourhood, and become the regular contact the area has with the council, passing information to colleagues in other service areas where appropriate. It is hoped that this will be a more efficient response to residents’ needs, and that problems will be picked up earlier.

An increase in the social and economic well-being of the neighbourhood is hard to measure, as it is an impact that is brought about by many different factors of which this partnership is just one. However, the impact of the partnership has been evaluated in a survey in early 2006, in which residents were questioned about a range of services in the area. Anecdotally, council officers speak of improved efficiency and coordination in service delivery. They also have the impression of residents feeling reassured that their needs are being addressed, with reduced tensions as a result.

Success factors:

Perceived fairness of service delivery has increased, which reassures residents that their needs are being addressed – the neighbourhood approach is transparent and communicated to residents, so that they have channels of communication with service providers and feel that they are being listened to.

Preventive measures – neighbourhood managers identify issues early and can respond to them rapidly so that tensions do not develop.

Engagement, participation and civic pride – a neighbourhood partnership has been formed from local residents, ward councillors and service providers, which means that local residents are involved in how their area is being run and can contribute to decision making.

Information sharing within the council has improved as a result – the neighbourhood manager within each neighbourhood shares knowledge with officers within other services, and the dedicated team of staff ensures that all issues are picked up on early. This has improved effectiveness in service delivery and in responsiveness to changes in the neighbourhood.

5.6.2. Intercultural Communication and Leadership School (ICLS)

ICLS is an international project model which identifies communities with problems and runs seminars in media and leadership skills and conflict resolution for individuals within those communities. It takes the form of seminars and workshops, engaging people mainly of the 20-30 year old age group from different communities.

It was set up as a result of the project leader, the city chaplain, who undertakes other community work and identified a lack of understanding and tensions between different communities. There was perceived to be a need for a project for young adults that would encourage interaction and promote long-term cohesion. There was an element of the project leader and colleagues 'lobbying' other organisations in the city to persuade them there was a need for such a project, but good practice in other parts of the country where ICLS had run helped to convince the LSP and the City council to support it.

The aim is to develop young leaders who can then go away and run similar courses in their communities. They will also develop a 'Trust' network which will forge links between groups, and offer skills and incentives to other people in their community. It is a project with both clear outputs (skilled and networked young leaders) and 'softer' aims, that is to say, encouraging inter-community interaction and tolerance.

Applicants are selected by an interview process and have so far been a mixture of 'organic' community leaders, and young professionals who are well rooted in the city already (for example a PCS Officer did the pilot course).

Although it has been run in other parts of the country, in Peterborough ICLS has so far just been piloted, and it has not really been measured to any great extent. The impact of the dual aims of developing skills and encouraging greater interaction are yet to be seen, but anecdotal evidence from the project manager suggests that the first wave of participants are putting their skills to good use in the community and have stayed in touch since the project finished:

"It's about developing a layer of people who are networked, who are skilled, and who have the incentive to use these skills."

Peterborough, Project Level

"It will help because these are young professionals who are already rooted in the community, are 'organic' leaders."

Peterborough, Project Level

The project manager is clear that there needs to be adjustments to the project, and there has been a suggestion that it could be linked to the 'Unity' Youth project, as an extension of its work and sharing the branding. One problem identified with the pilot was not having enough time to recruit candidates – they just did what they could in the time available.

The project hopes to become self-sustaining by using the course graduates for public relations purposes – showing the private sector that the idea can work and encouraging them to invest or buy the idea for themselves.

Funding is currently split between the council, the East of England Agency (EEDA), Communities and Local Government and the Environment Agency (volunteer time).

Success factors:

Encourages meaningful interaction – skills based training to give participants a personal incentive for taking part, leading to deeper and more committed involvement.

Creating role models/community leaders – sustained impact of the project on community cohesion.

Faith initiative – drawing in faith organisations to become involved in cohesion activities which has been highlighted as an area that is otherwise lacking in the city.

Committed partnership working – several organisations are involved, offering proactive and open handed support.

Strong leadership – with flexible hours, good contacts in the city (the project manager sits on the Cohesion Board) and enthusiasm.

5.6.3. Milfield residents' meetings

Milfield is an area particularly affected by new arrival communities and tensions with its existing residents. It was described by one respondent as a 'melting pot' neighbourhood (Peterborough, Strategy level). In response to an increase in tensions which started off with considerable problems, residents' meetings were held, with complaints about different communities and criticisms of the council being voiced. It was decided to break the meetings down into sub-groups, each focusing on particular issues such as housing, environment, policing, cohesion and planning.

The primary aim of the meetings was to diffuse tensions about each of these aspects and address issues before problems emerged. A key objective was also to reassure residents from established communities that they would retain equal access to services and that priority would not be given to new arrivals; myth busting as well as reassuring was an important aim.

A further objective was to encourage residents to become engaged in their community and participate in community decision making. While this was viewed as a secondary aim, in that the initial objective was to diffuse rising tensions, it has grown in importance since the meetings have been held as the benefits of engagement upon cohesion are beginning to be seen.

The impact of the meetings appears to have had a considerable effect upon community cohesion in the area. Meetings have become much calmer and more constructive, and respondents anecdotally said that the attitudes of attendees are much more placated and satisfied than they were initially. Participants also spoke about having a better understanding of those from different communities, and of beginning to trust both the different communities and the council to act responsibly:

"There is no longer a fear of the unknown because we have a conduit."

Peterborough, Participant

There is also some evidence to suggest that residents are more engaged and are becoming more involved in their neighbourhood. The smaller groups provide a chance for people to have a say with council representatives, creating a sense of being listened to, and according to council officers, smaller sub-groups are more effective in reaching decisions than the bigger meeting arena.

Engagement has been wider than just in the meetings, however. One participant spoke of personally developing good relations with New Link (a project which helps new arrivals in the city) as a result of the meetings and his greater understanding of people from different backgrounds.

In terms of service delivery, staff at the council mentioned having a better awareness of how to meet the needs of residents, and what areas they should prioritise.

Success factors:

Allows debate about issues in a controlled environment.

Addressing issues of equalities of service provision – meaningful interaction around a common interest.

Civic engagement/participation, and sense of empowerment – everyone gets their say in the smaller groups.

5.6.4. New Link

New Link is a 'one-stop' service for asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrant workers. It was set up in response to a rapid increase in the number and variety of new arrivals in the city, which was identified by the council as creating the threat of misunderstanding between different communities (and potentially antagonism) as well as the need to support these new arrivals as they settled in the city. This was due to inaccurate urban myths and increased pressure on public services. The objectives of the project were therefore to help new arrivals access services and, running in parallel with this, to reassure established communities about their own access to services.

It has been a partnership effort between the various organisations who come into contact with new arrivals as part of their work. Stakeholders mentioned that it was set up amid considerable obstacles, including a hostile media, and a 'Not In My Back Yard' mentality of local residents. There was a fast 'learning curve', and the project manager attributes much of its success to the flexibility to iteratively learn from challenges and experiences along the way.

It carries out a very wide range of functions supporting and facilitating support of asylum seekers and their role in wider communities. It is an information referral service covering issues such as employment, training, benefits, crime, health, immigration and legal services. As well as offering referral information, it offers core services, such as a youth group, a women's group, bilingual assistance and debt and welfare advice. It also acts as a base for other community projects, such as the Refugee Council's Citizenship Project (delivering training on life in the UK) and TimeBank – Time Together (pairing mentors from the host community with refugee mentees). It encourages new arrivals to form community groups, and offers support to do so, such as training and funding, as well as facilities and a base to hold meetings. It is also a facility which other organisations in the city can use to hold surgeries and 'drop in' sessions, such as the police, health visitors and the Prince's Trust. It also offers training to partner agencies about refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers.

The project keeps a detailed database of all who register at the centre, and as such has built up a picture of the people they are working with and what their needs are. The project manager cites this as a key tool that is used to ensure help is allocated where needed and that no gaps are missed. The database fields are filled gradually, over a number of visits, so that participants become engaged gradually and a comprehensive picture of their needs is built up.

New Link has had considerable impact upon cohesion. One key indicator of this is that it has become very much the **focal point of cohesion initiatives for these groups in the city, with other organisations citing it as one of the key factors in their own success.**

Anecdotal evidence from community leaders who have set up their own community groups through New Link mentioned that the project has given them **confidence to engage in the wider community and have a voice in local decision making:**

"Gives us more power, more encouragement."

"It's doing a tremendous job."

"Is a safe haven."

Peterborough, Participants

Participants also cite the translation services provided by New Link as particularly important and useful to them, since they allow them to **know what is going on in their area and get involved:**

"Translation services are all about us having a voice – for the whole community."

Peterborough, Participant

Its objective of **facilitating access to services for new arrivals** also appears to be working, with participants stating that it is a vital link between themselves and the local authority:

"Provides a bridge between us and the council services."

Peterborough, Participant

It also appears to be **having an impact upon the views of established communities**, although this is harder to measure directly since other initiatives such as the Milfield Residents' meetings are also contributing to this (see section on 'Milfield Residents' meetings' for more information).

The project receives feedback forms from participants and uses these to evaluate its success. The database also provides a measure of the types of people who are registering and what they need from the city's services. Average figures indicate that the reach of New Link is considerable:

- average number of clients seen each month by bilingual assistants: 400
- average number of clients seen each month by service providers: 150
- average number of languages each month: 25
- average number of nationalities each month: 40

New Link has also been recognised nationally for its work, winning several awards in the UK Housing Awards 2005.

Specific New Link projects:

- **Interpretation and Translation** – identifies new arrivals (and long-term residents) who have additional language skills and provides them with training and qualifications in interpreting and translation. The project then delivers a low-cost service to the council and health service providers. As well as obvious benefits to participants and the end users of the interpreting services, this approach has also provided a very cost-effective way of providing translation and interpreting, potentially freeing up budget to be used elsewhere (although this aspect has not been formally measured).
- **Living in Peterborough** – delivers training to individuals on being a good citizen, outlining rights and responsibilities for new arrivals, such as dealing with waste management, houses in multiple occupation and driving legislation. This aims to help new arrival communities understand how to live in the city, signposting them to services and informing them how to use them correctly, reducing distrust and antagonism with other residents. Important elements have been: a training resource pack that is also delivered as part of the English class curriculum within the city's colleges; informative literature about safety in the city in partnership with Cambridgeshire Constabulary; training volunteers from among new arrivals to deliver training to members of the community – leadership of training by community members has helped to ensure it engages with the needs of new arrivals, as well as providing skills and employment outcomes for the trainers locally.
- **Training and Awareness** – myth busting information for services and agencies about new arrivals, explaining difference between migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers and illegal immigrants.

- **Community Safety** – in partnership with the police. The project provides safety information to meet the needs of new arrivals and ensure messages are understood by these groups. The impact has been to reduce tensions between new and existing communities through a reduction in illegal behaviour, such as drug dealing and prostitution. Important work elements reported by stakeholders as especially included:
- **Language Training** for almost 50 front-line staff in the three most frequently encountered languages spoken by new arrivals. This is believed to have helped improve services' ability to engage with communities and the needs of communities.
- **Recruitment of Police Community Safety Officers** from within new arrival communities – who understand their needs and culture and how best to help and advise them.
- **Work with drug advice agency** to work with off-street Eastern European sex workers.
- **Community Capacity** – a dedicated Community Development Worker supports new arrivals to gain contact with people from their own community or to develop community organisations. This provides an initial link for individuals to interact with others from their own background. They provide training in fundraising and other management aspects. They are currently: working with 15 communities; have established a Community Group Forum which represents community groups within the city collectively and acts as a support structure for them – building a network, and giving them a louder voice.

Success factors:

Multi-faceted approach and multi-agency working. Recognised that new arrivals have wide-ranging needs and that avoiding social exclusion and maximising social inclusion often necessitates tackling issues on multiple fronts and through more holistic approaches.

Combining delivery of support with community capacity building, helping to support the well-being of communities in a sustainable way.

Combining delivery of support with training/and other support to other service providers, to help embed capacity to support new arrivals in mainstream services.

Community consultation and involvement in delivering services – helps to ensure services meet needs and can engage people. Council officers in various departments spoke of New Link as their means of reaching and understanding the different communities.

Empowering and enabling role – giving new communities an identity/voice. The project encourages new arrivals to form their own community groups, and many of these have already been set up. Community leaders are emerging and forums are being established to allow issues to be raised and involvement in decision making to be increased. This also encourages interaction between communities and boosts understanding and trust.

Combines support of new arrivals with a coordinate communications campaign to help dissipate concerns from established communities. Information provision was cited as crucial by community leaders/representatives.

Addressing language needs as a key barrier to building relationships between new arrivals and services, and new arrivals and wider communities. New Link provides translation and interpretation services which have given communities and individuals a voice and better understanding of how to access services. See section 4.5. for a discussion about language and community cohesion.

A facilitator for other cohesion initiatives – New Link has become a centre point for other projects. This is both **physically** in terms of the meeting space and facilities such as IT services it offers – and in a **supporting and advisory capacity**, such as the training and advice it offers organisations in the city about new arrivals and their needs.

5.6.5. Peterborough Mediation Service – 'Building Communities'

The aims of this project are to address feelings of isolation, frustration and anger felt by a growing number of 'long-term residents' within parts of the city, in particular Central, Dogsthorpe, North and Park wards, caused by new arrivals in their area. It aims to *'nip an issue in the bud then build on it'*. It was set up originally with a neighbourhood mediation focus, but this has evolved to include social cohesion work more generally. The service sees itself as an independent and impartial *'middle man'* which is a crucial status to have to be effective in mediating between different groups.

The stated aims are primarily to:

- deliver a conflict resolution based project;
- ensure long-term residents can voice their concerns and fears
- increase the confidence and well-being of long-term residents
- increase the level of involvement of new arrivals within resident and community groups
- promote, encourage and support enhanced community cohesion and integration
- play a role in wider conflict issues which impact upon communities
- work in partnership with communities, organisations and groups

The project is run by Peterborough Mediation Service, a voluntary sector organisation, and is funded primarily by Communities and Local Government. It works closely with other organisations, in both voluntary and statutory sectors.

It focuses on a relatively small area of the city, since this is felt to be more effective than trying to cover a large area but in less depth. They have three staff, 14 trained voluntary mediators and are currently in the process of recruiting 20 bilingual facilitators.

The impact of the project upon cohesion in its area of focus is hard to evaluate, but the Mediation Service does measure the outputs and outcomes to gain an understanding of how far it is reaching into the community and where its impact may be, which are stated as:

- work with five residents groups
- work with five 'new community' groups
- the project has 20 people trained in mediation, communication and facilitation skills
- holds regular surgeries (12 sessions)
- members of 'new communities' involved within 'residents' groups'
- network of community/resident/agency contacts
- feeling of increased confidence and well-being of 'long-term residents'
- The project's impact is also measured by feedback from people who have taken part. The project manager cites evidence of behavioural change that has led to greater understanding about people from different communities, and more harmonious neighbourhoods as a result:

“The feedback afterwards, that effectively the problem has not been repeated. They understand the day the bin should go out, they understand the recycling issues, they're aware that if you do something at 4pm it's not a problem but if you decide to start listening to MTV at 4am... it's getting people to understand the impact they're having on their neighbours and what they can actually do to improve the situation.”

Peterborough, Project level

Success factors:

'Preventive' actions – ensuring neighbourhoods remain peaceful and free from conflict or tensions – which improves community safety. Mediators and volunteers are able to address issues before they become problematic in terms of community cohesion.

Independent, impartial 'middle man' – not part of the council so seen as removed from service delivery and therefore perhaps more likely to be impartial. This is important for reassuring residents.

Smoothing tensions about allocation of resources – mediators are able to explain how resources are being allocated and reassure residents that their views are being listened to.

Addresses language barrier – the employment of bilingual facilitators mean that the organisation can interact with and understand people from a wide range of backgrounds. Feedback suggests that this creates confidence in the communities they are working with as they can voice their concerns in their own language rather than struggling to communicate in English.

Encourages civic engagement through residents and new community groups. By holding surgeries and working with new arrivals groups, staff and volunteers have been able to encourage these groups to get involved in the local neighbourhood and civic life.

Interaction between new and established communities is facilitated. By engaging with new arrivals in the neighbourhood, these communities have begun to interact with other communities and become involved in cross community organisations and forums. Community networks are emerging which will contribute towards sustained cohesion.

Focus on small areas – this approach is seen as a key factor in the success of this project. There is an awareness that although mediation work can have an impact upon cohesion in a whole neighbourhood, this cannot be effective unless each case is taken individually so that sensitivities are met and taken into account.

5.6.6. Unity Youth

Unity is a project aimed at young males in the Central, Bretton, Dogsthorpe, Ravensthorpe and East wards, all of which show multiple indicators of deprivation. It was set up in the wake of increased racial tensions amongst young people in the city following a series of triggers including the murder of Ross Parker (a local youth who was the victim of a racist killing in 2001), 9/11, disturbances in northern cities in 2001 and an increase in youth gang conflict. It aims to encourage them to recognise what they have in common rather than the differences between them. It does this through a variety of initiatives: a football team, a residential course and conflict resolution courses to name a few of these. A longer-term aim is to develop a network of young leaders across the city to ‘create a positive unity message across the city’, according to the project objectives. As a young person put it:

“You having a problem with someone can affect the whole community where you live.”

Peterborough, Participant

The personal and social development of young people is a key objective, and they are able to become accredited with various qualifications or awards such as the Millennium Volunteers Award. Reasons for joining include gaining such qualifications or experience, fun, and reducing racial tension. Young people see the project as a ‘shield’ against problems in the local community.

The project is run and primarily funded by the council, although a range of statutory and voluntary organisations are involved, including schools, the Peterborough Racial Equality Council, the Youth Inclusion Project and Connexions.

The impact of the project is measured in part by feedback forms from participants, but also by the project leader’s sense that youth conflict in the city has decreased since its inception. It has certainly gained ‘ambassadors’ for the project, with participants speaking to the local and national media about their positive experiences with Unity. The development of the envisaged Unity youth ‘network’ is becoming evident, with young people identifying and recruiting known ‘trouble makers’ in their local areas who have then also joined the project. As one young person put it:

“My cousin did it the year before me and then I’ve got somebody who got me in contact... to be honest, when I first did it I wasn’t taking it seriously... the more you get it the more you learn things which you wouldn’t normally think about. You just start looking at things in a different perspective.”

Peterborough, Participant

Suggested improvements included increasing the scope of the project to include girls and a wider range of schools, and also securing longer-term funding to ensure its sustained existence.

Success factors:

Embraces what young people have in common rather than the differences between them. This is a positive philosophy that overarches everything the project does; a good example is the week-long residential courses at which participants can engage with one another on neutral territory and experience the commonalities of daily life with one another.

Interaction is meaningful – the focus is on things that young people of all backgrounds can enjoy and be inspired by. For example, football tournaments with other organisations where competitive spirit can develop among the Unity team.

Widening horizons – Unity gives young people a chance to leave their neighbourhoods and experience other ways of living; improving understanding of people from different backgrounds.

Long-term project – allows interaction to be gradual but sustained; friendships are developed and genuine cross-gang networks established. The Unity Youth Network of young community leaders has created positive role models in the community and facilitates recruitment and targeted activity.

Well researched and evidence based approach – the project manager used evidence about racial incidents in the city – who was involved and where they were happening – in order to develop his programme of activities. This has ensured there is a direct and tangible impact upon reducing such incidents.

5.7. Tower Hamlets

5.7.1. Bridging Communities

This project was set up to encourage schools to play a bigger role in developing a more cohesive community, particularly by developing constructive ways for young people to interact and embedding relationships between groups of people who would not otherwise have met. Tower Hamlets has an extremely high proportion of young people, and many schools across the borough have cohesion policies relating to integration already within their framework. They are therefore often seen as a natural starting point.

I've been working...predominantly with schools because the profile of Tower Hamlets is very young. So looking at how schools can actually focus their work on developing a more cohesive community, because there you do have students coming together.

The project was not devised with a specific 'agenda' or set of objectives, as there was concern by those setting up the project that it responds to needs on an ongoing and flexible basis rather than set out with targets to meet. The thinking behind this project also flowed from the general belief in Tower Hamlets that it is equally important to think about and work with factors that different groups of young people can find in common; there is some concern that whilst supporting individual communities and encouraging pride in and respect for different cultures, more effort could be put into working with values that are shared rather than those that make communities different.

"I would say Tower Hamlets has a really good reputation for identifying diversity and supporting their diverse communities...but they maybe need to look at supporting projects that are actually bringing [people] together."

Schools are therefore seen as a vital starting point, in that young people are often already mixing with those from different backgrounds. It is also seen as important that the processes of integration recognise that cohesion does not just relate to faith and/or race; the project leader is equally keen that the young people learn about disability, sexuality, and other equality issues.

This work has primarily been aimed at young people and education, but it also looks at the role that schools can play in improving other aspects of community cohesion and taking on more of a role as a community 'hub' more generally. Indeed, the overarching aim of the project is to work with a wide range of services; the current focus on education is due to circumstantial factors such as the project leader's background and the potentially broad reach offered by schools into the community.

"When schools are bidding for millions of pounds to develop, they've got to show they've consulted the local community and are actually providing facilities which will support the community...when school finishes and during the holidays there are all these resources that could be well used."

The project is managed by a project leader who is seconded from a local secondary school, a role paid by, devised by and advertised for by the council. Funding is shared between the council, the LSP and from the Communities and Local Government cohesion funding. While the project leader is paid a salary, there is no actual budget, and decisions are made on an ad hoc basis and funding applied for accordingly.

Bridging Communities is very much a partnership initiative (as is typical in Tower Hamlets), with the police and youth services all being involved, but the council is particularly important in this project due to its service-based focus.

"The local authority [is integral] because it's about services ... it's about equality, people's needs and where they live, and how they live. And that's the local authority, and if you get that right, people are more likely to mix."

The impact of the project is hard to evaluate as it is a recently established initiative. The project leader suggests that an important measure is the number of schools who have been willing to facilitate the project's work by allowing the team to visit the school, evaluate their integration activities and help them to develop an action plan. Eventually it is hoped that all schools will have been involved in this process. There are also plans

to train a number of pupils from across the borough to become Cohesion Champions, and the numbers of young people who get involved in this will also be used as an indicator of success. There are some indicators which suggest that the attitudes of young people are already changing, although whether they can be directly attributed to Bridging Communities is difficult to say. The willingness of some children to engage in the slavery abolition festivals this year – going round local schools giving presentations, for example – is a possible outcome of the project. In addition, an exchange with children from Africa is planned for the future which may be cited as an example of greater engagement and civic participation among young people.

Success factors:

Sensible planning has been key to the success of Bridging Communities to date. Tower Hamlets consulted with other boroughs to ensure that they learnt from what was going on elsewhere, both in terms of preventing mistakes and to avoid 'reinventing the wheel'.

Information sharing – meeting regularly with representatives with cohesion in their remit from across the borough, setting up a steering group to share experiences of what has been successful.

Facilitating the 'everyday' way things can happen rather than big 'tokenistic' gestures. For example, encouraging older Bangladeshi people to come along to older people's groups by providing transport and ensuring there is halal food. That is to say, the focus has been on the practical ways people can integrate as part of their daily routine rather than large-scale events or festivals – a 'small steps' approach that perhaps aids longer-term progress and changes attitudes more fully, a key reason for the involvement of schools in the programme.

Communication – being open and honest with all partners has been crucial. A project such as Bridging Communities, which aims to 'embed' interaction between many groups over many different issues, relies upon partnership working to ensure sustained results.

Involvement, commitment and support from the local authority is seen as vital to the success of the project, enabling a strong voice in local representation, and enhancing the credibility of the initiative. There is also a view that to tackle cohesion within services across the board (not just education), the council must play a significant role as they have a wide public and provider reach.

Engaging faith groups is also seen as a significant bedrock of success for this kind of initiative, in terms of enabling and facilitating communications not just with young people in schools, but to help them communicate what they learn throughout their family circles, older members of whom are often living monocultural lives.

Understanding the natural wariness of young people and not attempting to force them together, rather allowing relationships to grow and develop slowly and organically.

5.7.2. Interfaith Forum

The Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum (THIFF) arose primarily from a tour of the borough taken by the Lambeth Bishops Conference in the late 1990s. The bishops wished to see what the Church could do about some of the social issues prevalent in the area. This was coupled with an invitation from the council and local police to over 100 local faith representatives to meet and discuss current concerns. Initially the meetings were chaired by either the police or a representative from the council, but the chair is now a faith representative. Also playing a significant role in the set up of the forum were council officers from the chief executive’s directorate. The Head of Research and Scrutiny also attends the bi-monthly meetings, demonstrating the importance of having strong local authority representation within the organisation.

Funding for the initiative comes from Home Office Faith Community Capacity Building Fund and the Tower Hamlets Partnership. The council provided admin support for set-up and continues to provide rooms for meetings and the police and all faith groups are integral to the success of the forum.

There is no formal structure to the organisation apart from the chair, although representatives from all faiths are regularly involved. The aim is to keep it as informal as possible, and anyone is welcome to work with them provided they demonstrate respect for others despite their background.

“We’ve never sought to create an organisation...so it’s remained as a very practical and open body... so we’ve avoided the struggles that those organisations have with money and power, and it’s meant that we can be entirely open.”

The primary aim of the forum is to bring together people of different faiths who live or work in the borough closer in understanding and respecting each other’s viewpoints. There are no overarching long-term objectives, rather the forum wanted to mark out a number of low-key small steps projects which it was felt would go some way to bringing people together more effectively:

“To bring us closer together, to find areas where we could work together...and also in challenging the perception of faith as a means of dividing people. So we looked at small-scale projects that we could work on which would be achievable and that would begin in some way to challenge those perceptions.”

For example, one of the small initiatives developed by the forum was to produce an interfaith calendar, which represented and explained a little about all the different faith festivals throughout the year, which was felt to be a small step towards addressing the issue of faiths being fragmented by showing the similarities between why and how people celebrate. These were then distributed to schools, offices and other public places throughout the borough.

In terms of the impact of the project, there were no predetermined desired outcomes measures to look at any effect it may have, but according to its own material, ‘regular and closer relationships formed through the project have contributed to better trust and understanding between different faith groups. It has helped reduce community tensions, particularly in the aftermath of the London bombings in July 2005’

There was a great deal of positive feedback after this event on the work they did in terms of uniting the leaders from all the faiths, standing together to condemn the bombers and easing tensions in the area. They also held an interfaith vigil to commemorate the first anniversary of the attacks.

Success factors:

Not taking 'cohesion' as a hard and fast 'fact' – appreciating that communities such as Tower Hamlets are fluid, and cohesion is as much about accepting and being prepared to deal with the issues as about trying to achieve harmony between diverse groups. Also appreciating that 'it is a constant renewing process, not something that you build up and you have achieved 'cohesion''.

Good personal relationships – the strong links between the council and the faith representatives have been instrumental in the successful set-up of the forum, and has helped to reduce community tensions in the aftermath of the 2005 bombings.

Ensuring involvement of smaller 'on the ground' groups as well as the key players – so not just police and the council etc, but including those groups that are already engaged with the community in some way.

Responsive and subtle approach from the local police who have worked hard to increase understanding of young people of different faiths, which has contributed to a greater feeling of security in the area.

5.7.3. Race Hate InterAgency Forum (RHIAF)

RHIAF was set up as a borough-wide strategy to deal with hate crime and racial harassment, key things with impact on levels of cohesion within the community. RHIAF commissions individual projects mostly involving voluntary sector groups and encourage them to come up with projects to address hate crime and community cohesion. More specifically in its own words, RHIAF aims to:

'Increase reporting of hate crimes and incidents, Prevent and deter hate crimes and incidents, To respond effectively to hate crimes and incidents, To bring perpetrators to justice, To address gaps in delivery of hate crime in Tower Hamlets, Work in partnership with council, and voluntary/third sector to tackle hate crime, To promote community cohesion.'

It was also borne partly out of a perceived need to reflect the government's emphasis on community cohesion issues more explicitly. The Equalities team within the council are currently looking at whether their needs to be a team with Community Cohesion as its specific remit, and RHIAF could be seen as the first step towards looking at how community cohesion activity across the borough can be more coordinated.

The forum is led by the head of the hate crime and policy and partnership team, with a number of development officers, and chaired by the head of overview and scrutiny. It has a budget of approximately £95k a year through Safer Stronger Communities funding, which is mainly used to facilitate representatives from the voluntary sector being involved in the forum. The project leader mentions that prior to receiving funding it was difficult to engage voluntary organisations as they often don't have time and resources to devote to such work.

There is a high level of strong partnership working within the forum. Key players include senior officers from all service areas of the council including education, social services and community safety, along with representatives of Victim Support, Age Concern, and the police, who are once again a particularly significant and successful partner.

"I think we're really good in TH [Tower Hamlets] the way that we do work in partnership and the way we bring people to the table ... I'm really encouraged by how people put their ideas forward and are willing to be involved and tackle things."

In terms of activities, RHIAF undertakes a number of ad hoc local projects identified by annual away-day planning workshops. Mainly these take the form of Tackling Hate Crime Days, where they find a good venue in the borough, publicise the day widely and encourage people to come along for a variety of interactive sessions which may involve music and drama and other creative sessions with groups of different backgrounds, not only to encourage people to explore diversity in the borough but to be fun and enjoyable, and these are open to the whole community. It also recognises that it needs to tackle issues of difference not just in the field of race and ethnicity, and also encourages work amongst other groups such as LGBT and those with disabilities.

In terms of measurable impact, there has been a circa 140 per cent increase in reported race hate crime across the borough. Current objectives have measurable targets set by the RHIAF action plan, and include an increase in the number of hate crimes reported, to ensure that 100 per cent of race hate crimes are investigated, and to conduct end-of-case client satisfaction checks and increase rates of satisfaction.

Success factors:

Being able to be reactive as well as forward-thinking so that when circumstances such as those after the London bombings arise, the appropriate response can be made quickly, such as a combined media release from all the faith groups.

Empowering, skilling and supporting people so that people want to do it and understand that what they do makes a difference. So, for example, educating youth groups on the realities of hate crime and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to be able to deal with it in their own communities.

Working with organisations who can demonstrate their commitment and can show they have an effective, accountable management structure behind them, so ensuring that they are visited regularly and monitoring what they are doing.

Involving senior people so that decisions can be made and action taken. This is important, as if there is no one who can action decisions then ideas will not get off the ground.

Strong leadership again is vital, as this is seen to deliver results. 'You need to have really strong leadership in order to make things a success, the people are the most important thing', and the commitment of senior people from the council and other organisations is crucial.

5.7.4. Youth Rapid Response Team (RRT)

Established in May 1999, this project was set up in response to an increasing number of youth group conflicts and gang fighting in the borough. It is a borough-wide initiative working with disaffected young people and those that are at risk of exclusion. Its main function is to respond to emergency situations such as youth disorder, disturbances and gang fights, with the aim of early intervention, mediation and supporting the police to restore calm. However the RRT provides a range of other activities for young people aged 13-19, including one-to-one advice, informal counselling, and educational visits, and has an overall objective of responding to at least 80 call-outs a year. Given the young demographic profile of Tower Hamlets, behind the development of the RRT is the shared thinking that engaging young people is key to the development of successful cohesion initiatives.

The team takes a number of referrals regarding incidents from local councillors, the police, schools, residents and community groups. All help feed in so that the RRT can best identify where it can be most useful and alleviating potential conflict or calming already inflamed tensions. The team has four mobile units which have been adapted to visit housing estates and other areas where groups of young people tend to congregate, and are able to identify 'hotspots' and areas where there are no youth facilities. The mobile units are equipped with music players, games stations, DVD players and televisions to help encourage the young people in. One has also been equipped with cooking facilities to encourage young people to think about healthy eating and explore the cuisines of other cultures. In part the team acts as a 'middle man' between the police and the local communities, in terms of advising the police on cultural sensitivities and particular local issues, whilst encouraging young people not to automatically retaliate in an aggressive or defensive way.

"If there was tension building then we would negotiate on both sides. We'd tell the police...not to interject the way they would normally do, and then with the community as well not to retaliate the way they would want to."

The Youth Rapid Response Team is led by a 'Crisis Intervention Manager' who is supported by 26 staff funded from the council's mainstream funding. It is a partnership initiative, involving the police, the council, the youth offending team as well as faith groups and the voluntary sector.

In particular the police are a vital partner in the success of the RRT, and a number of training sessions have been run to facilitate better community understanding amongst police officers who may not be local to the area. Additionally, the police work with the RRT in organising occasional joint football sessions with local young people, and the team leader feels that this has gone a long way to promoting shared understanding and objectives:

"It's not them and us anymore. We've started to speak in the language 'we' rather than police as 'them' and 'we' as the community."

The impact of the project has been measured fairly extensively compared to many other projects being discussed as part of this research, and according to its own report, outcomes have included:

- steady growth since 1999
- budget increased from £50k to £320k
- staff increased from 6 parttime to 4 fulltime and 26 part time
- national award in May 2004
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets award for best team of education directorate 2005
- best practice recognition on Home Office crime website 2004/5
- highly commended by Ofsted inspectors 2006

Success factors:

According to the RRT's own report, these are:

Strong leadership and management

Cross council support

Youth workers who reflect the community

Public profile and community involvement

We have also identified other factors that we feel are key to its success in improving cohesion:

Improving safety of local area – actions to tackle youth crime benefit not only the youth population but also the wider community as a whole.

Encourages meaningful interaction across groups – mediation and facilitation initiatives allow groups to mix with a purpose and common aim.

Long-term project – sustained and increasing resources, committed partners and national recognition mean that it has been a presence in the borough for eight years, working to reduce tensions over a sustained period.

Appendices

Contextual area summaries

This section outlines key socio-demographic and economic data from the case study areas. For each area the main cohesion issues are discussed and the area's approach to addressing community cohesion is outlined, based on information collected from our interviews with stakeholders.

These summaries are designed to show the range of community cohesion challenges being faced by the case study areas. They also provide useful background information which can be read in conjunction with the project details to enable a more detailed understanding of the context in which the projects were developed.

Birmingham

Socio-demographic and economic profile

Table 1 Key socio-economic characteristics of the area

| | Birmingham local authority area | England and Wales |
|--|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| | % | % |
| Ethnicity <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| Asian Pakistani | 9 | 1 |
| Asian Bangladeshi/Indian/other | 8 | 3 |
| White British | 69 | 88 |
| White Irish/other | 6 | 4 |
| Black/Chinese/other | 7 | 3 |
| Religion <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| Muslim | 13 | 3 |
| Christian | 68 | 79 |
| Other religion | 6 | 3 |
| Age <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| Under 16 | 23 | 20 |
| 16-34 | 29 | 25 |
| 35-54 | 25 | 28 |
| 55+ | 23 | 28 |
| Household composition <i>Base: Adults in households</i> | | |
| Couple with dependent children | 33 | 35 |
| Single parent household | 11 | 8 |
| Single adult/couple only | 35 | 39 |
| Large adult/other | 21 | 18 |
| Economic status <i>Base: 16-74 year olds</i> | | |
| In paid work/economically active student | 49 | 55 |
| Unemployed | 5 | 3 |
| Economically inactive | 46 | 41 |
| Social-economic features <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| IMD – overall score | 37.30 | 19.14 |
| IMD – housing deprivation score | 27.20 | 21.60 |
| Limiting long-term illness | 24 | 21 |
| Not good health (self-rated) | 13 | 11 |
| No qualifications/level 1 only | 52 | 46 |
| Housing Tenure <i>Base: All Households</i> | | |
| Owned outright/with mortgage | 60 | 68 |
| Social rented | 28 | 19 |
| Private rented | 9 | 10 |
| Other | 4 | 3 |

Source: Local Authority data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (732,082), residents aged 16-74 (764,074), adults in households (960,664).

National data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (42,668,974), residents aged 16-74 (37,607,322), adults in households (51,108,022).

IMD data: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004. Please note, units are not percentages and the higher the score, the higher the level of deprivation indicated.

Local community cohesion issues

A potential barrier for cohesion in Birmingham is the extent to which residents are segregated in terms of their living accommodation; this minimises day-to-day interaction across the different communities. Participants in discussions report inequalities in health, housing, unemployment and education between ethnic groups, and stakeholders refer to analysis of survey data by faith group which reinforces this and shows that Muslims fair particularly badly. Political tensions also exist with the BNP having a presence on the local Council.

Participants in discussions reported that unlike public disorder in the past, more recent problems in the area such as the disturbances in the Lozells area in 2005 were not uprisings against the police but were uprisings *between* different ethnic groups. Participants report the established presence of gang violence and culture, particularly among Afro-Caribbean men, and gangs of new migrants from Somalia and Eastern Europe are becoming more prevalent. Participants believe that these issues are all exacerbated by a lack in civic involvement from key communities and a growing trend for residents who achieve prosperity to move out of the immediate area and into neighbouring locations. Stakeholders added that there is a lack of 'aspirational housing' in the area and so residents move on.

Stakeholders commented that in 20 years, Birmingham is expected to be the first 'majority ethnic minority' city (just two fifths of the city's population will be White). As a result, stakeholders predict that unemployment, crime and poor health could potentially increase, having a serious impact upon service provision in Birmingham and consequences for community cohesion.

Addressing community cohesion

In direct response to the Lozells disturbances, the Council's Chief Executive established and chaired a Lozells Partnership. This Partnership aimed to unpack the issues that led to the events and assess the Authority's response. The Partnership has now evolved into the Community Cohesion Group and their remit will be to take a strategic approach to enhancing community cohesion in Birmingham. The strategy produced by the Group is being developed into an action plan. The principle of the strategy is centred on 'building capacity rather than understanding one another' and the rationale behind this principle is that by working with those who have the least opportunities, you can give them control over their life and empower them. One participant referred to the belief that cohesion is not an issue if you are not disadvantaged.

The strategy's primary aims are to remove structural disadvantage (it will do this by addressing the deprivation surrounding access to education, employment, housing, environmental and social care and health services), and to engage the local community and encourage active citizenship. Policies will also aim to align services in ways that strengthen communities and link people from different backgrounds, resolve and prevent conflict in an effective manner, and encourage effective communication within the community. The Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence Partnership has also been established to tackle the challenge of reducing gang crime and culture. This multi-faceted project-led Partnership will strive to present an alternative way of life to those involved and those at risk of becoming involved with gangs. A new community-based approach to policing disorder is also in place.

Reflecting on the key lessons from Birmingham's approach to addressing community cohesion, participants referred to the importance of developing an all-inclusive clear strategy and structure. Lessons also include working effectively in partnerships – community cohesion is said to work best when it is partnership-intensive, acknowledging the importance of the voluntary sector, structuring funding in a way that best suits the budgetary expertise of the relevant organisations and embedding cohesion in service delivery. Stakeholders also stress that targets should not put too much emphasis on hard measures at the expense of intangible outcomes and discussions about how best to measure cohesion are ongoing.

Blackburn

Socio-demographic and economic profile

Table 2 Key socio-economic characteristics of the area

| | Blackburn with Darwen local authority area | England and Wales |
|---|---|----------------------|
| | % | % |
| Ethnicity <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| Asian Pakistani | 7 | 1 |
| Asian Indian | 9 | 2 |
| Asian Bangladeshi/other | 1 | 1 |
| White British | 79 | 88 |
| White Irish/other | 2 | 4 |
| Black/Chinese/other | 1 | 4 |
| Religion <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| Muslim | 18 | 3 |
| Christian | 73 | 79 |
| Other religion | 1 | 3 |
| Housing tenure <i>Base: All households</i> | | |
| Owned | 70 | 68 |
| Social rented | 19 | 19 |
| Private rented | 8 | 10 |
| Work and financial status <i>Base: 16-74 year olds</i> | | |
| In paid work/eco active student | 51 | 56 |
| Unemployed | 4 | 3 |
| Economically inactive | 45 | 41 |
| Average household income before tax ^a | £20,900 | £25,000 |
| Other socio-economic features <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| IMD – overall score ^a | 32.23 | 19.14 |
| IMD – housing deprivation score ^a | 9.41 | 21.60 |
| Limiting long-term illness | 25 | 21 |
| No qualifications | 37 | 29 |

Source:

Local Authority data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (105,614), residents aged 16-74 (97,084), adults in households (135,853).

National data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (42,668,974), residents aged 16-74 (38,584,630), adults in households (51,108,022).

IMD data: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004. Please note, that units are not percentages and the higher the score, the higher the level of deprivation indicated.

Local community cohesion issues

Community stakeholders are generally very positive about the cohesiveness of the borough and report that residents of different backgrounds mostly get on well. However, they also highlight patterns of residential separation between White and Asian communities in some parts of the borough. Indeed, some participants in discussions refer to the presence of 'no-go' areas for different ethnic groups. Some stakeholders feel that these residential patterns are largely a result of choice and that community cohesion initiatives, which aim to enable communities to interact, should be sensitive to these choices. Residential separation impacts upon access to education which means stakeholders report that many young people will also go to schools attended mostly by people of similar backgrounds.

Although tensions are felt to be low, stakeholders report that issues around ethnicity and faith (the two are interlinked due to the presence of a largely Muslim Asian community) are the most significant challenges to community cohesion. There is also some awareness that perceptions of unfairness in the distribution of public money and services between different groups are a potential challenge to community cohesion.

Addressing community cohesion

Blackburn's approach to community cohesion is coordinated by the Community Cohesion Sub-group of the LSP People and Communities Forum. The LSP works closely with the council Community Cohesion/Diversity Policy and Performance Team. Children's Services has also been central to community cohesion work in the borough. A dedicated Community Cohesion Development Manager within the department works with schools on a twinning programme and other community cohesion projects.

The strategic objective of the Community Cohesion Group is 'to promote a united community where people from different backgrounds feel they can get on well together and belong to Blackburn and Darwen'. Success against this objective has been measured since 2003 using attitudinal indicators and through a citizen's panel. Performance targets for these indicators were met in 2004/2005, with the proportion of people feeling that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together increasing from 66% to 70% and the proportion feeling that they belong to Blackburn with Darwen increasing from 70% to 72%.

Blackburn's community cohesion strategy forms part of the People and Communities Strategy document. In discussions with stakeholders, leadership was emphasized more strongly than strategic direction as a key success factor in Blackburn's approach to community cohesion. The strategy is supported by a detailed action plan outlining the projects designed to contribute to meeting the overall strategic targets as well as many projects with more specific targets. Each project or action is allocated to a named individual to ensure clear lines of accountability.

A campaign around the theme of belonging, which has included posters and a charter of values, promoted in schools, businesses and the voluntary sector, has been central to community cohesion work in the borough. Stakeholders generally feel the campaign has been successful and it has also provided a stimulus and focus for some more specific cohesion projects, particularly within schools. The Belonging Campaign is currently being renewed, involving a Citizen 100 discussion day, designed to provide a platform for the public to express their views and contribute to future priorities.

In terms of lessons to be learnt from Blackburn's approach, stakeholders believe that strong leadership and ensuring a high level of commitment to community cohesion goals are the keys to success. There are mixed views about the importance of establishing dedicated community cohesion posts, however this approach has been successful within Children's Services. There has been a strong focus on working towards clearly defined overall cohesion targets within the borough. However, some stakeholders still express concern about how the less tangible outcomes of some community cohesion activities, such as cultural events and leisure programmes, can be measured.

Bradford

Socio-demographic and economic profile

Table 3 Key socio-economic characteristics of the area

| | Bradford local authority area | England and Wales |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| | % | % |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Asian Pakistani | 12 | 1 |
| Asian Bangladeshi/Indian/other | 4 | 3 |
| White British | 79 | 88 |
| White Irish/other | 3 | 4 |
| Black/Chinese/other | 2 | 3 |
| Religion | | |
| Muslim | 14 | 3 |
| Christian | 69 | 79 |
| Other religion | 3 | 3 |
| Household size and composition | | |
| Mean number of persons per household | NA | NA |
| Household with dependent children | 45 | 43 |
| Single adult/couple only | 35 | 39 |
| Large adult/other | 20 | 18 |
| Economic status (16-75 year olds) | | |
| In paid work/economically active student | 52 | 56 |
| Unemployed | 4 | 3 |
| Economically inactive | 44 | 41 |
| Social-economic features | | |
| IMD – overall score | 32.39 | 19.14 |
| IMD – housing deprivation score | 14.01 | 21.60 |
| Limiting long-term illness | 22 | 21 |
| No qualifications/level 1 only | 52 | 46 |

Source: Local Authority data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (372,439), residents aged 16-74 (339,498), adults in households (459,924).

National data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (42,668,974), residents aged 16-74 (38,584,630), adults in households (51,108,022).

IMD data: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004. Please note, that units are not percentages and the higher the score, the higher the level of deprivation indicated.

Local community cohesion issues

In its recent history, Bradford has witnessed high profile riots between local youths and the police. In 2001, riots across Bradford and neighbouring Burnley and Oldham led to 326 injured police officers, 14 injured members of the public and an estimated damage to public property of around £10million.⁴⁷ Steps were immediately taken to generate meaningful interaction between different groups in the community and there is a general view amongst community stakeholders that now, the area is fairly cohesive. Notwithstanding, there are underlying tensions in the area, in part due to antagonistic behaviour between young males; in some cases between different groups of Asian youths (Pakistani and Bangladeshi).⁴⁸

Competition for resources is also said to underlie community tensions and, in particular, the recent arrival of Eastern Europeans and asylum seekers has led to tension between the established and the new communities over access to local services. Political tensions are also present in the area with a number of BNP councillors in the city. Community stakeholders also attribute the general 'demonisation' of the Muslim community in the media as a cause of tension between White and Asian communities.

Addressing community cohesion

In direct response to the 2001 riots, the Home Secretary set up an inter-departmental group to identify ways of reducing the threat of future disturbances and fostering good relations across the community. Since then, community cohesion has been particularly high on the Bradford Council agenda.

In addressing issues of community cohesion, Bradford Council appointed a new director to its Safer and Stronger Communities team. The aim of the team is to oversee the community cohesion agenda. The strategy is multi-disciplined with partnerships across public, private and community organisations. Particular emphasis has been placed on partnerships with police, education and the private sector, in keeping with their overall focus on education and employment in the community cohesion strategy.

The new strategy has six distinct strands. The first and most fundamental strand is the strategy of improving education, building skills and rising employment levels across all communities. The second strand is the mainstreaming of community cohesion practices into service delivery. In practice, this will involve delivering services that consistently meet the needs of different groups and by doing so, break down barriers to services and provide equal rights to all communities. The third strand is to increase social capital, that is, to engage communities in consultations including those of a sensitive or challenging nature. Further strands include tension monitoring and mediation, and working with young people (with a particular focus on bringing young people from different backgrounds together). The sixth strand is to celebrate diversity through festivals and other community events. A number of regular meetings and forums across the community are also aimed at addressing community cohesion

⁴⁷ Yasmin Hussain and Paul Bagguley, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds. *Flying the flag for England? Citizenship, religion and cultural identity among British Pakistani Muslims since September 11th and the 'riots' of 2001.*

⁴⁸ According to community stakeholders.

and Bradford's Youth Service is considered central to the aim of bringing young people from different backgrounds together and helping new young residents integrate into their new community.

Improving skills and educational outcomes across all groups is considered by those at the strategic level in Bradford to be the main driver of community cohesion. Generally, activities to encourage mixing between groups, whilst considered important, are largely seen as acting as 'plasters on the underlying socio-economic issues'. Bradford aims to be 'focussing on the real business of people'.

Kingston-upon-Hull

Socio-demographic and economic profile

Table 4 Key socio-economic characteristics of the area

| | Hull local authority area | England and Wales |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------|
| | % | % |
| Ethnicity <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| Asian Bangladeshi/Indian/other | 1 | 3 |
| White British | 96 | 88 |
| White Irish/other | 2 | 4 |
| Black/Chinese/other | 1 | 4 |
| Economic status <i>Base: 16-74 year olds</i> | | |
| In paid work/economically active student | 49 | 56 |
| Unemployed | 6 | 3 |
| Economically inactive | 45 | 41 |
| Social-economic features <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| IMD – overall score | 42.17 | 19.14 |
| IMD – housing deprivation score | 6.27 | 21.60 |
| Limiting long-term illness | 24 | 21 |
| No qualifications/level 1 only | 59 | 46 |

Source:

Local Authority data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (199,293), residents aged 16-74 (173,787), adults in households (239,941).

National data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (42,668,974), residents aged 16-74 (37,607,322), adults in households (51,108,022).

IMD data: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004. Please note, that units are not percentages and the higher the score, the higher the level of deprivation indicated.

Local community cohesion issues

Hull has historically been an ethnically homogenous city but experienced significant change in the late 1990s as a result the dispersal of asylum seekers. The asylum seekers, mostly young men, were moved into empty former student housing in the ward area. There is widespread belief⁴⁹ that this unmanaged dispersal created tensions in the city and caused friction between the new and the established communities. Since then, a coordinated strategic movement of asylum seekers into the area has occurred, mostly under the management of National Asylum Support Service (NASS). In addition a small number of families have settled in Hull under the UN Gateway Protection Programme. Stakeholders report that the nature and number of different communities in Hull is undergoing constant change. For example, there have been a number of arrivals from new European countries and, compared to the late 1990s, an increased number of asylum seekers are in family groups.

Whilst there is a general sense amongst participants in discussion groups that tensions between local residents are low, and much improved, there is also a strong feeling that the legacy of the problems in the late 1990s persists.

⁴⁹ As reported by participants in discussions.

Of the reported tensions in the area, the most common are: racism/ethnic tensions, homophobia, intergenerational tensions and geographic tensions between the east and west of the city. Specifically participants reported tensions between newly arrived minority communities (for example, between those of Turkish and Kurdish origin). In some cases these tensions relate to access to asylum seeker services (for example, between African communities who have access to UN Gateway Protection Programme services and those who do not).

Stakeholders believe that in Hull economic factors underpin many of the cohesion issues and reported tensions – in particular, access to services, opportunities to enhance skills and gaining employment are issues for new and established residents alike.

Addressing community cohesion

Central to Kingston-upon-Hull’s approach to community cohesion is the Council’s Equalities Team, including the Strategic Equalities and Cohesion Manager and a reformed LSP with a Community Cohesion Group. Recently, a number of posts have been established across Council and supporting services to help drive forward the Community Cohesion Strategy. These posts include a Community Cohesion Coordinator and Hate Crime Coordinator. However, stakeholders report a move towards mainstreaming community cohesion so that it is the responsibility of all service providers and not the task of a separate dedicated team. The Equalities Team will act as advisors to service providers. The post of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Services Manager has incorporated communications work, combating myths about refugees and asylum seekers, as well as the management of the NASS contract. There is a proactive library service, which plays an important role in helping new arrivals to integrate and to access services.

In addition to these official channels, Hull has a vibrant community and voluntary sector, and Community Network. Improving coordination and communication within this diverse and vibrant community sector is identified as a priority by participants in the discussion group. Collectively, these organisations and individuals aim to foster community cohesion, build partnerships and actively engage with the community.

Kingston-upon-Hull’s Community Cohesion Strategy, created and monitored by the LSP, is currently undergoing a process of consultation and review. Future aims are likely to include improved measurement of success and more engagement with the business sector. Participants referred to an on-going debate about how to measure cohesion, beyond the monitoring of racial incidents and hate crime. A Citizens’ Panel is being developed, which will be a potential future source of a range of attitudinal measures of cohesion.

Adopting a more area-based is also central to the development of Hull’s approach to community cohesion. Hull is divided into seven local areas, and partnership boards are being established in each to address specific cohesion issues through local partnership working.

Reflecting on the key lessons from Hull’s approach to addressing community cohesion, participants refer to the need for a clear strategy, adequate funding for key posts, effective partnership working, realising the importance of and helping the voluntary sector, embedding cohesion in service delivery and properly evaluating efforts. The need to consult with a wide range of groups, rather than simply those who are easiest to engage, in the development of services and initiatives is also identified as a key challenge.

Peterborough

Socio-demographic and economic profile

Table 5 Key socio-economic characteristics of the area

| | Peterborough local authority area | England and Wales |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| | % | % |
| Ethnicity <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| Asian Pakistani | 3 | 1 |
| Asian Bangladeshi/Indian/other | 2 | 3 |
| White British | 87 | 88 |
| White Irish/other | 5 | 4 |
| Black/Chinese/other | 3 | 4 |
| Religion <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| Muslim | 5 | 3 |
| Christian | 77 | 79 |
| Other religion | 2 | 3 |
| Household composition | | |
| <i>Base: Adults in households</i> | | |
| Couple with dependent children | 36 | 35 |
| Lone parent | 9 | 8 |
| Single adult/couple only | 39 | 39 |
| Large adult/other | 16 | 18 |
| Economic status <i>Base: 16-74 year olds</i> | | |
| In paid work | 59 | 56 |
| Unemployed | 3 | 3 |
| Economically inactive | 38 | 41 |
| Social-economic features <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| IMD – overall score | 23.42 | 19.14 |
| Limiting long-term illness | 20 | 21 |
| No qualifications/level 1 only | 49 | 46 |

Source:

Local Authority data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (124,416), residents aged 16-74 (111,697), adults in households (154,633).

National data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (42,668,974), residents aged 16-74 (37,607,322), adults in households (51,108,022).

IMD data: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004. Please note, that units are not percentages and the higher the score, the higher the level of deprivation indicated.

Local community cohesion issues

Participants in discussions attributed local cohesion problems to the pace of change in the city. Peterborough has received significant numbers of asylum seekers in recent years and participants believe the city is now a focal point for migrant workers in the East of England. As a 'new town', Peterborough and its established residents are accustomed to the arrival of new communities, however, there are reported concerns about newer arrivals – there are uncertainties about whether or not they will settle in Peterborough in the long-term. The result of this may be that certain groups are less involved in community matters. The established communities, according to participants, have felt threatened by this and perceptions that they are not receiving as much attention as the new arrival groups. Stakeholders suggest that although Peterborough is a relatively small city, it has the cohesion issues of a much bigger place, such as high population concentrations, urban poverty and housing.

Addressing community cohesion

The overall approach to addressing community cohesion in Peterborough is a 'cross-cutting' approach; all services and agencies integrate cohesion into the delivery of their services. There is also an LSP Cohesion Board which drives the cohesion agenda in the city. There are concerns amongst some discussion participants however that the Board's newly appointed Cohesion Manager will be seen as the person responsible for cohesion rather than the person to *advise* on cohesion.

Peterborough's primary strategy is to remove obstacles to cohesion, in effect, to address issues before tensions are raised and cohesion problems are created. Central to this is New Link, a 'one stop' service for new arrivals which aims to address the cohesion issues caused by new communities in the city.

The strategy is very closely linked to the Council's empowerment agenda – residents are encouraged to come forward, to participate in local decisions and voice their concerns and in response, the Council has become more openly accountable to its population; issues are discussed rather than simply enforced. Peterborough is also piloting a neighbourhood rather a service based approach to cohesion. In practice, this means local services share information of benefit to other local services creating a neighbourhood knowledge base.

Key lessons to be learnt from Peterborough's experience are that all organisations within working partnerships must to be involved and integrated at the start of the strategy. The partnership agencies also need to be accountable to each other and should encompass different levels of seniority within their organisations. There also needs to be clear and committed funding. A move away from project-based initiatives is advocated as these initiatives can often be ad-hoc and reach few of their intended audiences. Embedding cohesion practices within service delivery is considered a more effective way of addressing community cohesion. Finally, it is believed that the role of the voluntary sector should be central to the cohesion agenda.

Tower Hamlets

Socio-demographic and economic profile

Table 6 Key socio-economic characteristics of the area

| | Tower Hamlets | England and Wales |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|
| | % | % |
| Ethnicity <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| Asian Bangladeshi | 26 | * |
| Asian Pakistani/Indian/other | 3 | 3 |
| White British | 49 | 88 |
| White Irish/other | 10 | 4 |
| Black/Chinese/other | 12 | 3 |
| Religion <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| Muslim | 31 | 3 |
| Christian | 47 | 79 |
| Other religion | 4 | 3 |
| No religion | 18 | 15 |
| Household size and composition | | |
| <i>Base: Adults in households</i> | | |
| Mean number of persons | NA | NA |
| Single adult/couple only | 33 | 39 |
| Large adult/other | 28 | 18 |
| Economic status <i>Base: 16-74 year olds</i> | | |
| In paid work/economically active student | 49 | 56 |
| Unemployed | 6 | 3 |
| Economically inactive | 45 | 41 |
| Social-economic features <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| IMD – overall score | 43.80 | 19.14 |
| Educated to Level 4 or 5 | 34 | 27 |
| No qualifications | 34 | 29 |
| Country of Birth: <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| UK | 65 | 91 |
| Elsewhere | 35 | 9 |
| Tenure: <i>Base: 16+ year olds</i> | | |
| Owned | 27 | 68 |
| Social rented | 52 | 19 |
| Private rented | 17 | 10 |
| Other | 3 | 3 |

Source:

Local Authority data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (164,234), residents aged 16-74 (143,433), adults in households (193,985).

National data: Census 2001. Base: Residents aged 16+ (42,668,974), residents aged 16-74 (37,607,322), adults in households (51,108,022).

IMD data: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004. Please note, that units are not percentages and the higher the score, the higher the level of deprivation indicated.

Local community cohesion issues

Community stakeholders are of the view that the area is generally cohesive and harmonious given its particular circumstances. However, problems exist and tensions are present. Community stakeholders report problems reaching out to some of the newer communities who they say can be quite insular and unwilling to access services. There are also problems relating to the area’s high unemployment levels. Despite having a young and potentially economically active population, many of the local population are not suitably skilled or qualified for the new jobs in their area. Stakeholders report tensions in the community, specifically as a result of the growing affluent ‘White middle class’ population who are moving into the area and being seen to take the jobs. Tensions also exist between residents from different areas and territorial tension is considered as significant as racial tension.

Addressing community cohesion

In addressing community cohesion, Tower Hamlets has built cohesion into their overarching Strategic Plan. The strategy is shared by a number of local partnerships who each have a set of outcomes relating to safer, stronger communities and this ethos runs across all policy fields. The approach is therefore embedded in all aspects of service planning and delivery and a number of forums have been created to encourage partnership working and successful outcomes. There have been some criticisms of this approach with some stating that a more specific Community Cohesion Strategy was necessary. It was felt by some that a dedicated strategy would ensure that communities are not only supported but proactively brought together. In direct response to this particular criticism, the Bridging Communities project has recently been established. This project will focus specifically on fostering cohesion in schools and its remit extends to addressing all forms of equality and diversity. Other forums and teams include The Youth Rapid Response Team, set up in 1999 to address youth conflicts and gang culture, which continues to respond to emergency situations by intervening in actual or potential hot-spots and resolving tensions through mediation. The Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum brings people from different faith backgrounds together to help them discuss common concerns, understand each others perspective and generate inclusive solutions. The Race Hate Inter Agency Forum aims to prevent and deter hate crimes and incidents. Built into the aims of each of these bodies is the aim of ‘promoting community cohesion’.

In terms of lessons learnt in Tower Hamlets, participants in discussions refer to the need to involve local people and those who are actually representative of their community in the strategic development and service delivery processes. The approach must be flexible and supported by all agencies in the various partnerships. Indeed, partnership working is considered essential and the best partners should be involved, even if they do not fit neatly into arbitrary organisational boundaries. There is a strong belief by participants that cohesion must be focussed in education; by reaching young people early, the likelihood of impacting positively on their lives is greater. Forging relationships with the voluntary sector is considered vital and emphasis is placed on creating relationships with faith groups. One of the reasons Tower Hamlets does not have an explicit strategy for community cohesion relates to the scepticism felt by some that community cohesion cannot be a fixed, rigid concept that can be measured.