

THEMES, MESSAGES AND CHALLENGES

A Summary of Key Themes from the
Commission for Cohesion and Integration
Consultation

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Communities and Local Government Publications

PO Box 236

Wetherby

West Yorkshire

LS23 7NB

Tel: 08701 226 236

Fax: 08701 226 237

Textphone: 08701 207 405

Email: communities@twoten.com

or online via the Communities and Local Government website: www.communities.gov.uk

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SECTION A

Cohesion and Integration: Threats

1. Definitions of Cohesion and Integration

Integration is the process by which new individuals and groups take their place within the majority community, achieving and being accorded their full rights as citizens. Integration can be full or partial and can take a long time, perhaps generations, to happen.

Cohesive communities are ones that are able to exist together in a state of harmony and peaceful relationships, characterised by a climate of mutual understanding and respect.

Absence of fear – a cohesive society is not one where some groups fear to use services or venues – if this is the case it is a challenge for the whole society.

Identity – cohesion implies a society in which differences of culture, race and faith are recognised and accommodated within an overall sense of identity. An integrated society does not depend upon **assimilating** these differences into a single identity.

Quality of life – cohesion is a reflection of the overall quality of life for all those living in the local area.

2. Measuring Cohesion and Integration

Methods for monitoring which groups are and are not accessing services are by definition sophisticated and require the efforts of **local partnerships**. Groups defined as hard-to-reach differ by service and change all the time – and the planning processes must respond to these differences.

There is **no single measure** of cohesion or integration – work is required from all partners to refresh current guidance on measurement, in order to plan service delivery and monitor progress towards more cohesive communities.

Local population data, based on the Census may be inadequate for planning services for mobile populations – with direct impacts on community cohesion.

Local Authorities often rely on a relatively crude (annual) process of quantification of community feelings about how well people appear to get on together, as a working measure of cohesion and integration.

Police forces tend to use a national model to assess community tension, collecting information from a number of mostly police sources. This now tends to be seen as insufficient and too police-reliant and attempts are being made to develop a more sophisticated model.

3. Cohesion and Integration: key issues

Integration may have to include an element of **capacity-building** because of the fact that the presumption of the society may be in favour of a literate, formal and democratic decision-making process, which may be quite different from the experience or expectations of new members.

Apparent tranquillity where many feel vulnerable or alienated through poverty, fear of victimisation or lack of care is not sustainable – a cohesive, integrated society requires **peace based on justice for all**

We must not forget that **conformity** is not necessarily the key to cohesion and integration and that much human progress can be traced to people who were non-conformists.

The **cohesive community** would normally have a strong sense of what is normal and acceptable but this is seldom found in a post-modern era. Even where there is no ethnic or cultural diversity, integration seems to imply that there is a stable community into which people can integrate but this may be lacking in a mobile city environment.

An integrated and cohesive community is desirable but these characteristics may have to exist in **creative tension**. Poorly organised integration can destroy cohesive communities.

In relation to problems of cohesion and integration, some detect a **national mood of pessimism**, which they relate to a loss of confidence in the concept of the common good and a weakening of the sense of mutual responsibility and of the spirit of solidarity.

Communities that are cohesive and integrated can be achieved through investment and by influencing change-makers – and above all impacting on the causes of poverty. It is considered crucial that projects aimed at achieving cohesion and integration are **long-lasting and sustainable**.

An integrated, cohesive community is one which is **at ease with itself**. In the past it would have been uniform in terms of religion, ethnicity and class but

today it is very different and the challenge is to provide sensible and sensitive integration across these differences. The basic conditions for this seem to be confidence in your own separate identities, sufficient understanding of the other and shared activities. There is also a need for government pressure against those who preach separation and hatred.

Integration of disparate groups through a **common allegiance to values** is at the heart of cohesion, values such as equality, human rights and democracy.

An integrated and cohesive community is one where people from various backgrounds and circumstances live and mix in freedom and peace and **thrive in every way**. It is based on tolerance, trust, respect, civil rights and a celebration of diversity with equal access to local services.

The **root of alienation**, and therefore the process of support and integration, is often complex. It may have to address fundamental problems of history, identity, political and religious values, culture, racism, legal status, lack of skills and the absence of life chances.

4. Community tensions today

Factors **other than race**, language and cultural diversity are now key in creating tensions in some areas – including youth/age, wealth/poverty and differences in levels of education.

The **expansion of the EU** and the migration of economic workers can impact significantly on community cohesion, putting pressure on housing and local services and increasing inter-ethnic rivalry and resentment over employment opportunities and services.

Tensions in some **country areas** are often between generations or between second home-owners and full-time residents. Problems of cohesion and integration can also occur in a rural setting when poor sections of the community are cut off through poor transport facilities etc. from participating in the economic life of the town.

Complex **underlying tensions** can exist in communities otherwise apparently cohesive. In one example, the four key underlying tensions are said to be:

- a dwindling Afro-Caribbean community that feels politically and socially forsaken
- young Muslim men, who are targeted by active groups
- newer East European and African immigrants, tending to live in poor conditions with few channels to integrate
- an established white community, prone to a siege mentality

In some areas, **youth disaffection** is said to have changed from a sense of social class exclusion towards a perception of racial exclusion, both among whites and others.

Gang culture may occur as an alternative to more creative activity for young adults, when youth facilities are lacking. This may appear as race rivalries, if gangs are made up of particular ethnic or language groups.

Intra-group tensions include in some cases inter-generational tensions – eg younger people being excluded from decision-making in communities, or in other cases, drug turf tensions, or clan and caste tensions.

5. Key sources of community tension

The key underlying source of tension is **economic deprivation**. Each community feels threatened by the competition with other groups for scarce jobs, housing, education etc.

Tensions are generally brought about by **miscommunication** and misunderstanding of genuine issues from ignorance or hate, linked to stresses around resources. Also a **resistance to compromise** from both sides. Solutions are often complex and need time to agree and develop. Most of the problems are in poor areas between disadvantaged groups under stress.

One major obstacle to achieving societal cohesion is **cynicism about national and local politics**, which erodes any concept of an underlying philosophy, allegiance to which is necessary as a ground rule for successful shared life.

The vacuum left by the departure from religion has not been filled.

White community members sometimes **resent BME people** who succeed professionally and financially, on a false perception that economic migrants take work away from the existing population.

Young Muslim men particularly have a sense of living under pressure, mostly for economic reasons aligned with racism, suspicion in the media about terrorism and regular public debates about subjects such as veils or faith schools. The result is that some withdraw into their own community for safety.

Tensions often come from **misinformation or misunderstanding** – underlining a need for openness and transparency over housing and school allocations and police activity.

Tensions may appear **seasonally** – eg fireworks at Guy Fawkes, Diwali etc.

Immigrant cultures tend to be based heavily on **family ties** and a strong sense of family responsibility tends to keep extended families together, making it difficult for outsiders to establish close relations, a division which can be reinforced by religious affiliation.

Gender tensions can exist in any community but at an overt level are frequently around personal relationships forming between people of different ethnicity.

Overall, the key barriers to integration and cohesion **for women** are said to be unequal access to power, money and justice – ethnic minority women are said to face multiple disadvantages within these barriers.

It is not always easy to know how local tensions arise as experience shows that violence and riots can flare from **random incidents**, rather than as a result of planned operations. For example, a change in police policy on stop-and-search can be the immediate cause of conflict.

Police forces acknowledge that sometimes policing interventions have heightened tensions. The lessons from this are about communicating with communities and explaining the rationale behind police activity rather than assuming it is obvious and they will understand. Community mediation services can be used when appropriate.

6. Parallel lives

There is no reason why parallel living should threaten cohesion unless there are no effective means of **communication** between the two groups.

It is not a problem that some forms and degrees of segregation and separation between communities will continue to shape the pattern of life in some towns – given increasing **levels of interaction** between people. What is important is that segregation does not become polarisation and that separation does not express itself in ignorance, prejudice and fear of other people.

It may take generations to become established and gain the **confidence for integration** and therefore forming separate communities and living parallel lives is not necessarily negative.

Some communities choose to live relatively separate lives but live alongside other communities in relative harmony, such as Hasidic Jews or Amish. However, if it is **inward-looking and exclusive**, a particular area might be relatively cohesive itself but have a negative impact on cohesion in the wider area.

Some believe that extremism will be reduced and integration will occur only when communities **move from living parallel lives** and come together in all aspects of daily life.

SECTION B

Specific Factors Related to Cohesion and Integration

7. Deprivation/inequality

Inequality, coupled with misconceptions and prejudice, rapidly **undermine cohesion** or raise barriers to integration. This is a much broader picture than the traditional debate around cohesion and integration on ethnic and faith divisions.

The UK is one of the **most unequal** societies in the EU, people at the bottom becoming frequently disaffected from the mainstream.

Poor housing or multi-occupancy dwellings can be a source of conflict between those living there and with landlords.

Poverty may be the greatest threat to social cohesion. Integration and cohesion can therefore only be achieved by **promoting equality** alongside that of good community relations.

8. Crime/anti-social behaviour

Criminal gangs can exploit a lack of community cohesion and gain momentum from such circumstances. Neighbourhoods where integration and cohesion is affected by people moving in and out of the area may provide the necessary cover to allow criminal gangs to operate.

Anti-social behaviour will often cause community tension. Conversely, anti-social behaviour will often be a product of a lack of community cohesion and integration. Police tend to believe that a **reduction in anti-social behaviour** will lead to more integrated cohesive communities.

9. Residential segregation

The dilemma of choice in housing allocation policies. Some ethnic groups want to be re-housed in some areas only, leading to concentrations and inevitably to tensions between groups.

The **Choice-based Lettings** system, generally popular with Local Authorities, can cause tensions through its complexity – and may need revision.

Residential segregation is negative for cohesion where people from one group are housed close together and are unlikely to mix with others. This can apply equally to white middle-class districts.

There is tension between making an area better and more attractive to live in and ensuring that social divisions do not widen. Some poorer residents may be driven from a borough by higher house prices and lack of availability of affordable social housing stock, a factor which leads to the risk of polarisation.

The pressure caused by immigration from Eastern Europe has impacted particularly on housing. There's already a severe shortage of housing but pressure has been added to both the private rented sector and affordable housing which, unless it is addressed, will increase tensions in the future as those less well-off end up competing with each other.

10. Segregation in the workplace

Tensions can come from newcomers competing for jobs and thereby pushing wages down.

More broadly, the great threat in the workplace to community cohesion is unfair **discrimination** on any grounds.

11. Other forms of segregation

Segregation by lifestyle – Gypsy and Travelling communities, as important in size as the Bangladeshi community, are separated from the mainstream by lifestyle which makes access to public services and the political process problematic for them and leaves their children as those most at risk of failure in education. These tend to be lost in official monitoring and statistics and they are not well understood. They tend to experience prejudice and discrimination from all sides and inadequate site provision often puts them against the law.

Segregation by age group – young people, especially the unskilled, homeless and/or unemployed, may live a separate existence away from services, feeling that they are unable to access services, unable to participate and contribute to society. Most cannot get a good education, and can be let down by Connexions which has been used primarily by young people already in education.

Segregation through schooling. Wealthier people living in mixed communities may increase local social polarisation by educating their children at a distance.

12. Attitudes: racism/prejudice/extremism

The fight against extremism is **fundamentally different** to the cohesion agenda. The government, police and security forces' responsibility in that respect must be developed without disrupting wider approaches to cohesion and integration such as those on which the Commission is focused.

Bigotry and prejudice thrive on ignorance about other people and their cultures and ways of life, affecting not only religiously and socially segregated communities but all sorts of other groups – older people, lesbian, gay people etc.

Visible difference encourages racist attitudes. Contrast Irish people who move within a generation or two from suffering prejudice to becoming indistinguishable from the majority, with second and third generation black Britons who may become more alienated than their forebears in a reaction to racism.

There is much work to be done to repair the sense of attack and siege felt by the **British Muslim community** and an open and genuine debate is required in a spirit of partnership and real consultation with Muslim organisations.

Racially-motivated crime has increased significantly in some areas. In one borough, analysis reveals that half of it is crimes against the person, the people concerned being primarily male up to the age of 40, from a mix of groups.

Religious discrimination may exist as a direct product of a rapidly secularising society. Mutual distrust can come from the reluctance of faith groups to focus on their religious motivation for community activity and Local Authorities' nervousness that these contributions are biased to their own groups.

Prejudice against sexual difference is a form of segregation, one thought to have been frequently exploited by those seeking power.

The problem of **Islam extremism** has not been a focus for tension in some towns with a history of community disorder, involving Muslims. It is condemned there by Muslim organisations as much as everyone else.

13. Language/communication

A common language is a sine-qua-non of a cohesive society. *'If you can't communicate, you can't belong'*

Agreement on **language and definitions** regarding communities and integration is needed. Guidelines are needed on appropriate language and

appropriate procedures to ensure that these guidelines are followed, particularly in times of crisis.

14. External events

The rise in anti-Semitism within the UK since 2000 is seen as linked to some degree to events in the Middle East, particularly the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

External events, national and international, clearly affect community tensions. The government now needs to find a way to express concerns about British foreign policy – it is inappropriate to dismiss any link between suicide bombings and foreign policy. Young British Muslims feel more angry and frustrated when the government dismisses this link. Without this openness such youth are unlikely to be drawn into the political process.

15. The media

Sensational media reporting of myths and misinformation about unequal treatment of groups by public authorities can be particularly effective for the purposes of Far Right groups wishing to scaremonger.

There is a **lack of media-literacy** and a need for training among many groups wishing to contest the role of the media in eroding community cohesion in the UK.

In one significant example of racial disturbances, the local paper was found to have played a divisive role over time in exacerbating racial divisions and community tensions. With Local Authority intervention, this situation has now been changed.

SECTION C

Building Cohesion and Integration

16. General solutions to local tensions: leadership/vision/engagement

In general, there needs to be social interaction, discussions and contacts between different communities **at all levels** of our society. This will counteract intolerance, ignorance and scaremongering by extremist organisations. Friction between groups is not inevitable.

The commission is urged to resist **top-down initiatives**. Cohesion and integration occur more readily when transformation works from the inside.

Suggestion that, for greater cohesion, the UK should move towards an **inclusive concept of secular society**, in which religion is included within the public space rather than excluded.

It is crucial that **young people** be persuaded to turn back to the political process which they have tended to abandon in the view that it is selfish, empty and corrupt.

Those authorities claiming most success in improving community cohesion indicate that a necessary early step is the development of a compelling **shared vision** for the area and its communication. For greatest effect, this should be developed with local people in partnerships and the process itself will help to foster greater understanding, trust and respect within communities.

17. A sense of belonging

Religious affiliation is said to be powerful for creating a sense of belonging. One example is the Catholic Church, whose congregations today are from many origins worldwide.

Some are **sceptical** that schemes as such can promote a sense of belonging. They can help the process if they promote decent employment, clean streets and security etc.

One national organisation sets down the **conditions for helping people to feel that they belong:**

- 1) the ability to contribute their skills
- 2) feeling appreciated and rewarded for what they do
- 3) being involved in local institutions
- 4) having others show an interest in them
- 5) having a range of different relationships with people

Inter-group celebrations or cooperations – eg Christmas/summer parties, youth trips, etc. sometimes run by faith organisations, can increase the sense of belonging to an area, but are ultimately dependent for effectiveness upon real relationships being formed.

18. Community involvement

Local Authority Youth Councils, elected by young people, draw them in to the local political process.

Tenants' and residents' groups, sometimes inter-generational, advise councils on the delivery of services – with apparent success.

Schools can sometimes provide good opportunities for positive community involvement – see separate section.

Encouraging greater levels of participation in decision-making and community projects is crucial for cohesion and means reaching out both to **those who do not normally play an active part** in the life of the community as well as engaging with networks or groups based in the community. This can involve a Local Authority in the organisation of a plethora of committees, projects, forums etc.

Barriers to increasing the number of **BME councillors** or other public figures, such as magistrates, should be addressed so that the make-up of communities can be better reflected in these roles.

The delivery of services to local people by **staff who are closer to them** and better understand their needs, is recommended as a strategy for greater cohesion.

Women into Public Life is a community-focused campaign which has encouraged ordinary women from diverse communities into public roles – with some success.

In one borough, a **Community Chest** was set up to address the weak community infrastructure and has resulted in a network of community groups emerging to work together to improve the neighbourhood and give a voice to previously excluded groups. This includes annual street party events with cohesion at the heart.

19. Citizenship: education and celebration

The UK needs to set a clearer **definition of Britishness**. This should reflect the concept of trans-national identity and loyalty.

The chief value of Britishness as a concept is a way of promoting a greater sense of integration and belonging. It must not simply be seen as a philosophical concept but requires further exploration as to what it can mean in policy and practical terms. Britishness must not be seen as a threatening identity, but must exist alongside other identities, both national and religious.

The concept of **Britishness is constantly evolving** and is not a fixed identity. There needs to be a shared understanding of Britishness wide enough to reflect the complexity of the more diverse society. It needs to be **inclusive** so that some groups are not seen as less British than others. To encourage this it is relevant that overseas links be seen as a source of strength not weakness in British society, enhancing the openness of our society to the world.

Citizenship ceremonies, as initiated in one London Borough, are said to reflect a view of British identity which is tolerant, open to the world and respectful of different backgrounds and heritages.

The emergence of the citizenship ceremonies can provide a ground for sharing values or 'ground rules'.

'GROUND RULES FOR CITIZENSHIP'

Emphases can vary between different organisations and groups, but the main anchors are a respect for human rights and the rule of law, respect for others and a cooperative attitude – from a sense of good will more than from legal enforcement. Cultural heritage is to be respected, except where it contradicts the ideals of liberal democracy.

The potential is being explored of using a **post-citizenship ceremony** with celebratory activities, bringing together those who have undertaken their citizenship ceremony and existing community groups.

20. Changing attitudes: combating ignorance and prejudice

Fundamentally, most negative perceptions of people from different backgrounds are based on **ignorance and fear** and the best way to counteract them is for different communities to **get to know** and respect each other in the neighbourhood, school and the workplace.

22. Migrants and host communities

Asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants often live without the **legal status** to fully participate in society, encountering animosity on all fronts and unable to rely on normal services and support.

Existing residents often expect others to adapt and assume that such norms are neutral – rather than systemically biased towards some groups and discriminatory towards others. Incoming groups may respond by forming separate communities and living parallel lives when faced with this kind of institutionalised discrimination.

New migrants from Europe and elsewhere often need help with the language and learning how society works, as well as the basic needs. However, this often requires only **short-term support**.

New members of the community need friendship and acceptance, possibly best achieved through **personal visits** from local community, faith or church organisations.

When large numbers of new migrants arrive together, as with dispersed asylum-seekers, a **communal welcome** is appropriate, possibly in the form of a community meeting, which looks for ways to help them to settle.

Concern that further **tightening of immigration controls** and, in particular, the tagging and detention of asylum-seekers, is making it difficult for those facing persecution. Instead, public resources should be given to provide new arrivals with skills for employment, ensuring equality of opportunity in the labour market.

To help them settle, new migrants need **information** in their own languages, **access** to English language classes, **advice** on benefits, education, training, employment opportunities including assistance with job applications, housing and **help** with contacting existing support and social groups or setting up new ones. They need **encouragement** to get involved in their local communities and neighbourhoods and to access and engage in the democratic process.

This places **responsibility** on public organisations to translate into languages used locally and make sure that services are accessible for new arrivals as well as existing residents.

New communities are sometimes **mapped**, using a range of **up-to-date** data sets such as school role, National Insurance and electoral registration data and links are made with local community groups to identify service needs. Where local community organisations do not exist as with many of the new European communities, **focus groups** are run.

Research suggests that **personal involvement** in the process of welcoming migrants encourages positive attitudes to them.

SECTION D

Key Players: Roles regarding Cohesion and Integration

23. Central government

Central government is urged to revise the national basket of Community Cohesion Indicators, to make them more reflective of local tensions, migration patterns and social exclusion.

Central government should direct more resources to combat the evils of social and economic deprivation which inhibit cohesion. This would include **housing initiatives** to provide better homes, reducing overcrowding, reducing time spent in temporary accommodation. Also **regeneration initiatives** for economic development, providing training and creating jobs and **environmental initiatives** to transform run-down areas to places where living is enjoyable. Also **social support** such as children's centres and youth activities is needed.

A national debate on young people is called for – this should highlight key issues affecting young people from all communities. The debate should address how the government can ensure that young people can achieve their full potential in the UK.

Central government is urged to increase substantially the level of provision for **learning English**, to support the efforts of Local Authorities and agencies in this.

24. The role of Local authorities

COHESION STRATEGIES

The LGA believes that Local Authorities have a central role to play with respect both to settled communities and new migrants in helping to promote cohesion and integration, based on strong leadership and a shared vision, active community engagement and clear communication at the local level.

Local Authority **cohesion strategies** tend to reflect the degree of diversity in the area and the level of awareness and experience of community tensions – ranging from highly diverse regions with long experience of building

community cohesion into all policies to others where issues are relatively new and experience of diversity limited.

Among the more diverse boroughs, some have central cohesion strategies, featuring for example, equality targets and diversity implications requirements for all relevant policies. Others claim to have no specific cohesion strategy as such, but instead to concentrate upon improving services and creating opportunities for all, in the belief that community tensions arise primarily from inequality, both economic and in relation to life chances.

Explicit cohesion strategies are normally based on **“mainstreaming” equality and diversity issues**, so that these two factors are considered at every stage in policy, planning, service delivery and review processes. Every new policy is considered in terms of its potential impact on various different groups and actions identified to mitigate any negative impacts.

LOCAL AUTHORITY PLANNING AND REGENERATION

Development plans frequently consider planning policies in relation to **social needs and problems and their impact** on BME communities, religious groups, older people and disabled people.

Planning issues for **places of worship** can be a prominent source of tension. In itself the planning system may have a neutral effect on cohesion but in its administration it can have some negative impact. In some areas there is a fast growing demand for places of worship and/or community space linked with places of worship. The sites identified by local groups may not meet current planning policy requirements and provide some frustration.

Corporate Property strategies in some boroughs ensure that BME and other minority groups have **equal access** to leases to council premises such as shops and to community facilities and to market stalls.

Regeneration projects may be based upon deprivation indices and not on the cultural mix of areas. In that way both indigenous and BME areas have been regenerated – and tensions can occur with more affluent areas whose inhabitants feel they are missing out.

Where the council focus is more directly on equality and the creation of opportunities (than on community cohesion as such) regeneration projects may be targeted at the most deprived wards in the borough, the primary focus being to tackle **problems of worklessness**. Targeting worklessness geographically is seen to contribute to social inclusion and the overall economic development of the borough.

PROBLEMS

Local Authority regeneration schemes can sometimes have the **negative effects** of displacing working-class people, increasing house prices and bringing young, mobile professionals into a newly regenerated area.

Some regeneration funding regimes are **output-driven** and may only pay on the achievement of outputs. This makes certain projects targeted at hard-to-reach groups risky to implement. Also those projects which involve community consultation may be given a lower priority due to the higher costs involved.

LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING AND COMMUNITY POLICIES

Housing

Housing policies are seen as crucial for tackling deprivation and issues of residential segregation.

Where there are high levels of diversity, authorities can be obliged to give **reasonable preference** to certain categories of household defined by need. Certain BME groups are over-represented in terms of need and therefore are equally over-represented in social housing allocation.

Housing policy is also widely influenced by **CBL [Choice Based Lettings]** following government guidelines on giving more choice to applicants. To ensure that allocation policies do not cause segregation, CBL offers applicants the choice of where they move to and all allocations are monitored and reported on.

With **new housing** both **tenure and size mix** are determined to produce mixed communities and all policies are subject to impact assessment.

Lettings policies tend to award points reflecting a household's housing need. The system is intended to be transparent and to make it clear how and why points are awarded. Monitoring can ensure against trends of one group becoming concentrated in one area.

New developments on land owned by the Local Authority are subject to architectural design that encourages communities to interact

There are frequently **specialist teams** dealing with anti-social behaviour and neighbour relations as well as neighbourhood wardens who tackle issues such as graffiti. Council policies on harassment and ASB may include specific clauses in tenancy agreements related to this (as do housing associations).

Vulnerable households moving across borough boundaries may get appropriate support.

Community policies

Some councils have **anti-social behaviour action teams**, which aim to prevent low-level anti-social behaviour escalating, through proactive measures such as mediation, assessment and work with young people and their families

The use of **public buildings**, e.g. libraries and sport centres is frequently monitored through various mechanisms to ensure that users are reflective of the community as a whole

Information systems and procedures to capture data about service take-up enable routine monitoring so that action can be taken if any groups are under-represented among **service users**.

One council runs a programme five times a year on the subject of cultural difference, for all new staff and any others who need it. The aim is to enable participants to develop confidence in dealing with situations which may require a deeper understanding of the cultural, religious and social norms of the diverse communities of the borough.

The Out and About **travel training guide**, produced by one authority in partnership with Transport for London, helps people with learning disabilities to travel independently and is now being used all over the country.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES: MYTH BUSTING/MEDIATION

Local Authorities are encouraged to use all networks and events to dispel the myths that asylum-seekers are getting an unfair share of local resources, effectively taking from the settled community. They should also articulate the many benefits which immigration brings to the country, reiterating that far from being a drain on our public services migrant workers are often responsible for keeping those services running.

In some counties, it has been necessary to work at parish level and with the voluntary sector to provide information to the local population about the **need for migrant workers** to come into the county to support the agriculture industry, the benefits for the county and the need to make them welcome.

LOCAL AUTHORITY LANGUAGE/COMMUNICATION

Authorities tend to believe that it is critical for new communities to learn the English language and support sometimes an enormous range of opportunities for this. However, the sheer volume of demand is a major challenge and resources to tackle it have not been the government priority they should be.

A Local Authority warning about communication – All those involved in making statements about cohesion must take responsibility and show restraint and wisdom in making broad sweeping statements, to prevent the demonisation of some communities.

LOCAL AUTHORITY EMPLOYMENT

A key starting point for integration and cohesion is the workplace. Public services are a major local employer and the work force should **reflect the diversity** of the community.

25. Role of community organisations/leaders

ORGANISATIONS

Ultimately, the requirement may be to arrive at integrated community organisations, not just a range of separate groups for different sub-communities.

LEADERS

Communities can steer people away from **extremism** only when community leaders are convinced of this need and engage in it.

Emphasis is placed on the importance of the leader and chief executive of local authorities showing strong visible **personal leadership** of the cohesion/integration agenda.

Tensions are less likely to occur in areas where there is dynamic local leadership that regularly consults individuals and communities and understands their needs.

Inter-generational tensions occur where older leaders do not understand or represent the interests of younger people.

Many “community leaders” can be self-appointed and tend to be older men. More needs to be done to engage with women and encourage **participation of under-represented groups**.

In some areas, ways still need to be found to develop a closer relationship with the **wider Muslim population**, particularly young people and females.

26. Role of schools/education sector

Schools are said to be **the main means** in a diverse society whereby negative perceptions are countered and also networks of support and social services are developed

Primary schools in particular have the potential of bringing parents closer to mutual understanding. In multicultural areas, schools may be the only place where people from different backgrounds are encountered.

The dual system of education within this country, voluntary aided schools within a larger state system, encourages and is part of the foundations of a **new concept of secular society**, which is inclusive of all faiths and none.

Shared values can be promoted through schools and build cohesion between different groups from the start. The challenge for **faith schools** is to combine their distinctive teaching with fostering a sense of belonging to a wider community.

SCHOOLS: STAFFING POLICIES

Schools staffing policies can produce schools which are **cross-cultural** and this mix of staff and pupils tends to create good relationships across the divides, at least in primary school.

Governing bodies are more of a challenge and minority ethnic organisations may need to be deliberately targeted.

The **ELLE programme** is a joint training venture from five countries across Europe aiming to give teachers a better understanding of diversity, confront their own attitudes and develop an understanding of the needs of learners.

Staff and governors in schools may come to reflect the local community but this happens less at **leadership level**.

Some councils have implemented a **BME graduate teacher training programme**, which recruits more teachers from the BME community who will be good role models for BME pupils.

SCHOOLS: ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Admissions policies seem to focus mainly on proximity to schools. The make-up of particular locations means that minority ethnic groups are concentrated in some schools.

Local Education Authority views of this vary – some prefer the concept of children attending locally rather than travelling large distances.

In other areas, steps are taken to ensure that schools are mixed. In one example, the following rules apply:

- No voluntary aided school can reserve places for applications of their faith and all parents are able to preference these schools.
- there are no single sex schools
- parents are not asked about their ethnicity, sex nor religion – these issues have no bearings on admission
- interviewing of applicants is prohibited
- there is no academic selection

SCHOOLS: CURRICULUM/CULTURAL POLICIES

Curriculum factors

Elements of the curriculum, especially Religious Education (RE) and citizenship, are specifically designed to **promote cohesion** and there are many opportunities for pupils to debate these issues through school and youth councils. The two main problems are said to be:

- 1) reaching all pupils – those most at risk of becoming radicalised or joining gangs are less likely to be influenced by these aspects of the curriculum
- 2) locating sufficient competent teachers of the subjects

Attempts to include diversity in the school curriculum and ethos include:

- **Twinning Programmes**, to pair ethnically and socially dissimilar schools in order to develop friendships and understanding between groups that could otherwise regard each other with suspicion and even hostility.
- A policy of including **images** representing all communities.
- Welcoming **the language skills** which pupils bring into classrooms from a range of local communities and encouraging young people to see their language skills as a national asset.
- **Welcome to The Borough** DVDs produced in different community languages and British Sign Language (BSL) for newly arrived and asylum-seeking pupils and their families, as well as others, to improve understanding of the education system and other matters.

- A **diversity-awareness** training programme for newly-qualified teachers joining the borough schools.
- Children are taught about **equality and diversity** issues as part of the personal, social and health education agenda.
- A policy of **foreign exchange programmes** with schools in Europe, USA and Africa which helps provide a development of a global understanding among pupils and staff.
- **Regular review** of schools' policies to check they are responsive to different cultural and religious needs.
- Use is made of **local places of worship** to extend children's knowledge and understanding of other faiths. Also, visiting speakers and visitors to the classroom to enrich the curriculum in this context.
- Some **authorised absences** each year for religious observance.

SCHOOLS: SOCIAL/FAMILY POLICIES

Examples of school social/family policies aimed at greater cohesion include:

- **Communications** between home and school aimed at increasing parental involvement, with translators and interpreters used where appropriate. Some schools encourage parents to join the school community and meet others through participation in family learning programmes, ESOL classes or school visits.
- Setting up ethnic minority **parents groups**.
- Provision of **opportunities for parents** and families (eg ESOL) within the school setting and in adult learning centres.
- Equality and Diversity Services home-school liaison officers providing **support to any BME parents** who do not speak English, in relation to issues about their children's education.

Suggestion that the success of school twinning policies should be built upon to involve parents.

SCHOOLS: DISCIPLINE POLICIES

Schools are often the first to **identify tensions** in the wider community, eg through changes in the level of reporting of racial incidents. This can feed in to a wider process of monitoring of discrimination in the community

School policies related to discipline with potential impacts upon community cohesion include the following:

- **Anti-bullying** conferences, as annual events
- **Buddying** systems and special staff assigned to provide support and counselling to children vulnerable to bullying
- **Working relationships** with the Local Authority, the Police, parents and community groups to diffuse tensions which may be inter-ethnic or cross-boundary between schools. (Emphasis on the need for cross-area communications networks and systems in place for early warning and intervention)
- 'Ownership' of the school **equal opportunity policy** by staff and governors, as an assurance of success.

SCHOOLS: EXTRA-CURRICULAR/AFTER SCHOOL POLICIES

After-school clubs in areas of high levels of diversity can play an important role in creating a sense of belonging for parents and children.

27. Role of public services: health/housing/etc.

New arrivals – eg economic migrants and asylum-seekers – can cause little or no tension with established communities, if **community facilities** in the area are well utilised.

Poor access to services is a major barrier to integration for people facing multiple disadvantages and those from minority communities – a need to develop access and advocacy.

Hospitals serve local communities and the trend to **more local health provision** is welcomed. However, policy that forces small local GP surgeries to join larger, more distant surgeries are questioned as this will further erode relationships between patients and GPs.

Welfare can be **culturally sensitive** and discrimination may occur through insensitivity or ignorance.

Customised provision of health care services is required, adapted to specific cultures, sometimes with particular health needs.

Libraries and community education services should reflect the diversity of the area in their provision.

Public services need to imbed inclusive approaches and support for cohesion at the heart of their **strategic planning** – this is more effective than contrived and piecemeal attempts to bring communities together.

A need to **build dialogue** between statutory services and community and faith organisations working with children and African and Muslim faith groups – to focus on issues around children’s welfare in the light of traditional, cultural practices.

HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

The Commission is urged to explore further the role of planning policies and funding frameworks that enable housing associations to contribute to the development of mixed communities, that cover a spectrum of housing types and tenures. These include:

Affordable housing,

Low cost home ownership,

Intermediate renting,

Market renting,

Ownership.

The purpose would be to cater for a range of incoming groups and household types as well as existing alongside housing delivered by private sector landlords and developers. Affordable housing should be **indistinguishable** from private sector housing, this helps to avoid stigmatisation and promote cohesion.

It is suggested that **housing associations** and other voluntary statutory and community groups have a **central role to play in making links** with BME communities in the areas in which they operate, and in both enabling them to support themselves and play a part in influencing local decision making. Linked with this is the challenge of building links with religious groups and their local leaders, who may be more likely to engage with HAs if they can see a benefit to their members.

Housing associations are said to be ideally placed to **work in partnership** with other statutory, voluntary and community groups, to help deliver projects that are targeted at tackling social exclusion and in particular those that seek to maximise income and address poverty.

28. Role of voluntary and community services (VCS)

Organisations making up the voluntary and community sector can make **major contributions** to community development and therefore to the process of increasing cohesion and integration, whether they are long established national bodies or community and faith-based groups that have emerged more recently. The strength of this sector lies in their **closeness to communities** and their ability to respond quickly and flexibly to needs and opportunities.

A general sense among VCS respondents that **long-term engagement** in community projects yields far greater benefit pro rata than any short-term involvement.

Volatility – a suggestion that staff turnover/mobility can inhibit VCS effectiveness, as individuals often move on too soon

Funding organisations are said to sometimes be more reluctant to fund **grassroots organisations**, than others with a more developed bureaucracy and infrastructure.

Criticism of what is seen as a current preoccupation in the VCS sector with **capacity-building** – too great a focus on courses and too little on learning on the job.

RACIAL EQUALITY ORGANISATIONS

The CRE believes that deep and meaningful interaction between people who come from different backgrounds is key to fostering a sense of belonging. That is why the CRE, through both its policy as well as grant making function, encourages projects that bring people from different backgrounds together to work on common issues or interests.

Experience shows that, in team with the Local Authority, an energetic focus on hate crimes and offenders can reduce offences dramatically.

29. Police/criminal justice

Good policing is a key ingredient to maintain cohesive communities. This is achieved by instilling confidence and trust in policing by all sections of the community.

Community policing initiatives have brought benefits in crime reduction and public trust. Each project has a series of aims and benefits against which it is evaluated. However, the challenge of evaluating the impact of individual projects on the wellbeing of a community is difficult and remains work in progress.

Police forces increasingly take opportunities to engage with local communities by participating in **community events/initiatives** that allow members of the community to meet the police on neutral or friendly terms, rather than in a setting where they are a suspect/offender or victim.

Neighbourhood policing can affect community cohesion in a number of ways. Stronger links between a community and their local policing team strengthens communities and also provides for better community intelligence. The relationship is also said to benefit from the fact that Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Specials tend to better reflect the ethnic backgrounds of the diverse communities they police.

Policing terrorism, when carried out without effective operational impact assessments being conducted or any meaningful community consultation being considered, can and has caused significant problems within some communities. Events in other parts of the country can have a significant impact on local communities – this has not been helped by the portrayal of issues within media. **This can be offset** by effective and sustained engagement and relationship-building with relevant communities

To monitor tensions more effectively, it is suggested that the police should develop a universal recording facility rather than leaving it to the discretion of individual forces – eg for the categorisation of specific crimes.

The police need to access the role of the Local Authority more in order to build and foster a **more open relationship** with the community, to present a partnership-based approach to community needs.

Recruitment The ethnic/gender breakdown of police officers and staff is monitored countrywide. Forces tend to employ a Minorities Liaison Officer with the role of engaging with all minority communities, to promote the police as an employer of choice and encourage them to consider applying for both officer and police staff roles.

30. Role of faith groups

Faith groups can contribute hugely to encouraging integration and cohesion by providing **physical opportunities** for different groups to come together.

Today, in Britain faith congregations say they are sometimes the **only institutions left** in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and they have long, deep histories which a group starting from scratch cannot replicate.

Faith groups are suited for involvement in issues around cohesion and integration, which are at base discussions of justice. **Faith is focused on value** and it is the faith community's role to raise value issues such as justice – and to train members for effective involvement.

Some faith groups are already strongly concerned with creating cohesion in their own, now increasingly diverse, congregations – to the general benefit.

A need for training – recent research suggests that the bulk of faith representatives feel insufficiently trained for tasks related to increasing cohesion.

From December 2006 it is the government policy that all future grants to ethnic and religious groups are to be assessed against tests of promoting cohesion and integration. There is a proposal to produce a charter along these lines for faith-based organisations applying for public funding – to operate as a **nationally recognised kite mark**.

Recent research suggests that **secularists** may be particularly **prejudiced** against faith representatives in public life and this needs to be faced through open dialogue

A **broader debate** may be required about the nature of faith, not just religion – in particular the motivational nature of faith, said to be largely unexplored by government and other agencies. There is a perceived need to train local government officers on how faith relates to the equality and diversity agenda.

FAITH GROUPS – WORKING WITH OTHER FAITH GROUPS

Faith communities **create cohesion** by acknowledging and cooperating with each other.

Churches can help to create cohesion by bringing together the various faiths in the area for a variety of activities, including festivals, community development and creative arts, theological discussions etc. etc.

Extremism can be countered in a small way by building inter-faith relationships with local Mosque leaders to strengthen them to oppose their own problem people.

Multi-faith response in **times of tension** is only likely to be effective if the sense of community solidarity is permanent.

FAITH GROUPS – WORKING FOR THE COMMUNITY

Faith-based community workers can benefit the whole community, if they are appropriately focused and not overly concerned to proselytise.

Secular attitudes to the involvement of faith groups in community activity can vary. Some choose the faith representative for office as the most trustworthy. Other VCS organisations distrust faith organisations' commitment to the community as a whole.

Faith representatives believe that faith projects such as visiting homes, hospitals or prisons, industrial chaplaincies, drop-in centres, faith schools, care and social service provision etc. etc. create cohesion and demonstrate that faith organisations are not exclusive in their concerns.

31. Youth/sports organisations

Sports, art and culture are a force for improved health, learning and crime-reduction. They can break down barriers between diverse communities and create a sense of local pride and belonging.

Problem young people need to be reached through detached youth work and schools' work. Such work is costly and hard to sustain.

Local Authority Youth Services can achieve significant success in drawing young people into cohesive activities, beneficial to their relationships with each other and with the wider community, increasing the sense of belonging. However, levels of performance clearly vary between authorities.

Some Local Authority leisure facilities collect personal data that allows them to **monitor the use of facilities** by people from different backgrounds – helping them to be aware of which groups to encourage.

Privatisation of Local Authority sports services has not necessarily helped cohesion as these commercial organisations may not have the ability to engage youngsters from diverse communities – many of whom may require pastoral support as an aid to integration.

32. Arts/cultural sector

Carnivals – and similar events – can serve to showcase local talents and demonstrate publicly that ethnic communities can work harmoniously together.

Training of **childcare providers** can explore concepts of identity, diversity and equality – equipping them with confidence and skills to address issues of equality and diversity with young children in a sensitive way.

33. Employers/private sector

Employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of black and minority communities in society. Employment is also an area where people from different backgrounds work together in an environment where they can potentially mix and overcome negative perceptions about other workers from different communities.

Measures need to be taken to increase the employment of black and minority workers in the private sector, which represents the largest part of the labour market. **Without positive measures** which reward those employers that develop good anti-discriminatory practice and penalise those that do not, the employment gap will remain and efforts to integrate communities into wider society will inevitably fail.

Response to the Commission from the private employment sector was extremely limited. One major British retailer listed its own policies and practices with respect to encouraging cohesion and integration in the work-place – summarised below:

- 1) The policy is to employ people who reflect the diverse nature of society and a Diversity Advisory Group meets every six weeks to monitor that the workforce mirrors the composition of the population as a whole.
- 2) To help them understand and support staff, all managers are given some education in issues of diversity and supplied with a cultural and religious tool-kit and a selection tool-kit for local recruitment.
- 3) The company tries to make jobs more attractive to people from ethnic minorities, for example supplying a prayer room during Ramadan.
- 4) Basic training is offered in different languages and in one store, briefings are held in four languages.
- 5) Flexibility of dress and of holidays is allowed to accommodate cultural and religious norms.

- 6) Flexible working conditions are offered where possible – eg family friendly shifts, paid paternity leave, equal training and development opportunities for part time workers, childcare vouchers and a career break scheme. Also job share, flexitime, compressed hours, shift swap, working from home and part time work are all encouraged, when practical.
- 7) Campaign material reflects the appearance of people from different backgrounds.
- 8) Targets are set for the employment of disabled people.

34. Media

The media can **help or hinder** the process of cohesion and integration. The media can **help build communities** by the quality of its presenters and the nature of its programmes.

There is no doubt that more work needs to be done to counteract powerful, **negative messages** coming from the national media agencies. These messages reinforce misconceptions and aggravate community tensions locally and nationally.

The media can have a powerful **impact on cohesion** in enabling different communities to understand what is happening in their area, how it affects them and encountering emerging urban myths.

To support the media it is crucial that authorities and their partners develop **better ways of communicating** more informative and accessible information about services and their impact about how and why decisions are made and resources are allocated.

Independent voices must be cherished too and the tension between council and media is one feature of local life that must be tolerated and worked on.