

THEMES, MESSAGES  
AND CHALLENGES:  
A FINAL ANALYSIS OF  
KEY THEMES FROM THE  
PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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## A. COHESION AND INTEGRATION: THREATS

### 1. Definitions of Cohesion and Integration

#### ***Need to re-define?***

The Commission is advised by some that useful definitions of cohesion and integration are already current and productive in public life and that further debate may prove counterproductive, a distraction from the important work of achieving greater levels of both.

#### ***Inter-relationship of cohesion and integration***

However, throughout the response, cohesion and integration are generally proposed as *mutually dependent, inter-related concepts*.

*Cohesion* is a desirable state of society, which enables people to live together harmoniously in local areas and in the nation as a whole.

A pre-condition of a fully cohesive society is the *integration* of individuals and groups into society, to a degree that society can claim to be a single functioning entity, albeit made up of elements which can be disparate in many ways.

#### ***Not assimilation***

Very many of the definitions of cohesion and integration offered in the response to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (Hereafter COIC) consultation spontaneously include a level of concern to distinguish integration from *assimilation*, stressing the importance for true cohesion of accepting – and celebrating – difference. Individual and group *identities* should not be endangered by the process of integration, but rather they should be enriched within both the incoming groups and the host nation. Cohesion implies a society in which differences of culture, race and faith are recognised and accommodated within an overall sense of identity, rather than a single identity, based on a uniform similarity.

However, some fear that any government definition of integration can be seen as a *euphemism for assimilation*, in the view that recent years have seen an **'onslaught on multiculturalism and Black and Minority Ethnic communities'**, with Muslims and Islam as particular targets.

### ***Time factor***

*The process of integration* takes time. It is seen as a process whereby 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.

Integration requires change on both sides and currently many cultural and religious identities are going through a difficult period of change, trying to find their place in modern British society. It is important to be sensitive to this and not to expect too much, too quickly – for fear of threatening the integrity of traditional identities.

### ***The cohesive society***

A cohesive society is the *product of growth* – of mutual awareness and trust, of changes in attitude and movements towards co-operation and interdependence – and consequent changes in world view among the involved groups. Such people movements cannot be forced, they can only be facilitated and encouraged.

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*. There is an awareness of the behavioural and cultural norms of the area and a shared concern about important local issues. One submission suggested that the most significant sign of a cohesive community is the willingness of neighbours to support each other following an incident of some significance.

### ***Equality***

Cohesion cannot be defined without regard to issues of *equality* and therefore includes a concern for the overall *quality of life* of all those living in the local area. The three essential components of true integration, and therefore the pre-requisites for a cohesive society, are equal opportunities and full participation and interaction between all sections of the community.

### ***Commitment***

A cohesive society is one which commits to providing the basis for universal participation in society and to the removal of obstacles to participation – including prejudices and biases which result in disparities negatively affecting the quality of life for some and their ability to engage effectively with others.

*Absence of fear* is therefore one vital characteristic of a cohesive society, which 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. A cohesive society is one where there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities, founded on mutual respect under the law.

## 2. Measuring Cohesion and Integration

### ***An important necessity***

It is important to measure the levels of cohesion and integration in society for the sake of understanding problems and progress.

Local Authorities show a particular concern in this respect but 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.

However, there is *no single measure* of cohesion or integration and dynamic strategies for measurement are required in reflection of the speed at which society evolves and changes in this age.

### ***Monitoring service usage***

Many attempts are made to monitor which groups are and are not accessing services. However, these methods of measurement 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.

*Local population data*, based on the Census, may be inadequate for planning services for mobile populations – with direct impacts on community cohesion. There are calls for this situation to be remedied, including the re-introduction of a mid-term census, perhaps scaled down, but with greater detail on ethnicity.

Work is said to be required from all partners to refresh current guidance on measurement, in order to plan service delivery and monitor progress towards more cohesive communities.

### ***Monitoring community tensions***

At a different level, 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.

Other activities include a Voluntary and Community Services (VCS) project to monitor racial tension and agitation, which is seeking to mainstream the process through other community partners, including Local Authorities and Government Offices.

Local Authorities may sometimes lack the *resources* to chart specific elements of community cohesion such as, for example, the incidence of race crimes.

### 3. Cohesion and Integration: key issues

#### ***Background: social change today***

This is an era of *unprecedented social change*: half of all migrants arrived within the last generation and a third within the last decade. Also today, people move home more frequently than ever before. Living with 'strangers' is a characteristic of the age.

*Diversity* has increased, with more than 40 ethnic minority communities of more than 10,000 people now living in the UK.

For the people from these groups, community fragmentation through dispersal can be balanced by the bonds – social and economic -sustained across national boundaries in a globalised world. Community loyalties become extended beyond solely the place of abode and community is re-defined as a *feeling of connectedness* – to individuals or groups – rather than geographically, in relation to a particular place.

#### ***Cohesion today: problems; changing norms***

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.

Although wealthy as a nation, Britain is still a place of inequality, poverty and isolation, with civic laziness on the rise as voter turnout and community engagement decline.

Some feel that the withering of institutional religion and the rise of secularism have led to a breakdown in the common understanding of morality and social mores, resulting in a society which *devalues community cohesion* in favour of individualism.

Traditionally, a cohesive community would 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.

However, in all circumstances, for a cohesive society, the integration of disparate groups requires a *common allegiance to values* – such as equality, human rights and democracy.

Integration may therefore 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.

In these circumstances, it should not be forgotten that *conformity* is not necessarily the key to cohesion and integration and that much human progress can be traced to people who were perceived as non-conformists within the conditions of their society.

### ***Achieving cohesion through integration***

An integrated society is one which is constructed with the needs of its citizens at its core.

An integrated and cohesive community is therefore 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. It requires the existence of strong local partnerships and networks and good local leadership.

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.

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

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, a lack of skills and the absence of life chances.

Much depends on the approach taken to achieving integration and cohesion – today, these two characteristics may have to exist in *creative tension*. If the process of integration is not well-founded and well-organised, it can threaten cohesion in society.

*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*.

## 4. Community tensions today

### ***A complex picture***

Today, the picture is more complex than a few years ago. While ethnic differences remain important factors in the profile of community tensions, factors other than race, language and cultural diversity are key now in creating tensions in some areas – including youth/age, wealth/poverty and differences in sexuality and levels of education.

Community tensions can vary geographically. Some local areas, especially urban, can claim to experience a wide range of different sorts of tension, while in other areas some of these sources of tension may not be present at all.

### ***Expansion of the EU***

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. These sorts of tensions are mentioned in a wide swathe of submissions, more or less country-wide.

### ***Rural tensions***

Tensions in some country areas are often between generations or between second homeowners 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.

### ***Inter-generational tensions***

Inter-generational tensions can occur where young people feel excluded from participating in society or where some, young or old, believe that their opportunities are reduced because of their age.

Many young people do not feel listened to, nor that they are able to contribute equally. The long-term consequence of this is said to be low aspirations to participate in *community and civic life*.

In some areas, *youth disaffection* is said to have changed from a sense of social class and generational 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.

Some observers report a growth in *negative rhetoric* around young people, perpetuating myths which ignore the more positive contributions made to society by young people. Others simply observe tensions resulting from adult perceptions of threat from young people seen to hang around the streets with little apparent purpose.

*Inter/intra-group tensions* are a common feature of minority communities today, often reflected in relations between different generations of incomers or simply inter-generational tensions, for example, due to younger people being excluded from decision-making in some communities. In other cases, drug turf tensions, or clan and caste tensions may become significant within and between specific communities.

### ***Underlying tensions***

Community tensions are not always immediately evident and complex underlying tensions can exist in communities otherwise apparently cohesive. In one example, apparently typical of many less-privileged urban locations, the four key underlying tensions were 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

### ***Class tensions***

Tensions are said to be often underpinned by class and economic differences, but to be interpreted differently as, eg, intolerance of ethnic, religious or sexual difference, giving a higher profile to these causes of tension than they deserve.

## **5. Key sources of community tension**

### ***Fundamental basis: economic deprivation***

Submissions stress repeatedly that 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. Most significant problems occur in poor areas between disadvantaged groups under stress.

## ***Contributing factors***

### **Misunderstanding**

Tensions are frequently brought about by miscommunication and misunderstanding of genuine issues from ignorance/hate, linked to stresses around resources.

Tensions based on misinformation can be increased by a lack of openness and transparency over, for example, housing and school allocations and police activity.

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

### **Bunker mentality**

Frequently, there may be a *resistance to compromise* on both sides of any conflict. Solutions to community tensions are often complex and need time to agree and develop.

### **Cynicism**

One major obstacle to achieving societal cohesion is thought to be *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.

### **Cultural/Religious differences**

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 factors**

*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.

*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.

### Specific triggers/policing interventions

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

### Emergence of the extreme right

The BNP recently won its highest level of votes since World War II and some fear that this organisation may be on the verge of a major breakthrough into national politics. The negative influence of this organisation on community cohesion, with its strong associations with violence and racism and open disapproval of multi-culturalism is not fully calculated, but remains an object of some concern to many.

## 6. Parallel lives

### ***A Temporary Situation?***

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.

However, there is also a broad recognition that it may take generations for communities to become established and gain the *confidence for integration* – and therefore forming separate communities and living parallel lives is not necessarily negative.

People in immigrant communities can live partially parallel lives in a new country, being both members of their own communities, with the language, culture and history of their country of origin, alongside their new identities in the new community. This is neither negative nor positive, just a consequence of moving to a new society.

It should be recognised that, historically, the choice made by BME groups of where to settle is often related to choices of the wider community to move away from particular areas – and to Local Authorities community policies which have helped shape the development of communities.

### ***Parallel but not isolated***

In some sense, people from different backgrounds have always led separate and parallel lives, a factor which is not necessarily negative if there is *participation* in the social,

economic and political life of the immediate environment. Separation becomes a concern only when the segregation persists, becomes *entrenched* and is not broken down by social and economic mobility.

Living separately from the 'mainstream' is a feature of economic difference at both ends of the scale – lack of means limits life chances, while wealth can bring a much wider range of experiences, leading to entirely different sorts of lives.

*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.

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

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.

## B. SPECIFIC FACTORS RELATED TO COHESION AND INTEGRATION

### 7. Deprivation/inequality

The link between poverty and inequality with poor social cohesion was made numerous times in the submissions.

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

In areas of economic deprivation, high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, within the context of limited public services and social facilities can produce segregated and polarised life-styles. In these circumstances, feelings of *isolation, neglect and fear may become the norm*.

Any motivation to integrate into society is reduced or annulled if what is on offer is second-class citizenship in a society (such as Britain) where most ethnic minority Britons are poorer, less well-educated, less healthy and less politically engaged.

The UK is a wealthy country, with the fourth largest economy in the world, but it is also one of the *most unequal* societies in the EU, people at the bottom becoming frequently disaffected from the mainstream. Inequalities that exist in Britain for the most disadvantaged groups continue to widen.

Academics point to the link between industrial decline and the arrival of new groups. The key problem is not the growth of cultural diversity but the interaction of increased cultural diversity with institutional racism, within the context of the threat of poverty.

*Local authorities* with the experience of major problems of social cohesion readily link economic with social polarisation. For example, in one urban area, sophisticated data gathering and analysis techniques have indicated clearly how exclusion within the county is linked to factors such as low income, poor access and the high cost of living, including the cost of fuel and water.

*Poor housing* or multi-occupancy dwellings, emblematic of poverty and inequality, can be a source of conflict between those thrown together there and between these and the landlords.

*Poverty* may be ultimately the greatest threat of all 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

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

*Violence* is a particular cause of concern for integration and cohesion, especially when – as in the case of the growing incidence of *hate crime* – violence corrupts our ability to function and live together as a society and denies our humanity and value as human beings.

*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.

For greater community cohesion, much may depend on the *relationship with the police*. Forces are aware of the limitations of a relationship built mainly on reactive interaction and often seek to build trust on a broader basis.

### Self-policing

Criminal networks may often be united by a common culture, where factors such as language and custom both unite and isolate communities and criminal networks. Where isolated communities become vulnerable to abuse and victimisation – victims and offenders may come from the same community – these communities can become susceptible to self-policing. Police see criminal attempts to encourage distrust of the police as a crucial tactic to increase their influence over communities.

## 9. Residential segregation

### ***Problems of 'Ghettoisation'***

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.

Some ethnic groups want to be re-housed in some areas only, leading to concentrations and inevitably to tensions between groups.

Where areas are built up and densely populated, the incidents of conflict are often higher and where these communities are ethnically diverse, the potential for community conflict is higher. One example is 'post-code wars', said to be traditional among young people – eg fear of attack on a neighbouring estate.

An example of rural tensions related to housing is families who have accepted isolated rural housing, for example RAF stock, because nothing else was available. Many now find themselves unable to move to more accessible or better serviced accommodation, because being in accommodation, their claim to re-housing has become very low, while escalation in private housing prices excludes them from this option.

### ***Housing and planning dilemmas***

*Local Authority housing allocation policies* face the dilemmas inherent in providing client choice and also avoiding unhelpful concentrations of particular groups. The *Choice-based Lettings* system, generally popular with Local Authorities, can cause tensions through its complexity – and may need revision.

There is also 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.

*Housing Associations* are also aware that letting policies are important for defining the characteristics of local areas. In this sector, an often well-meaning, but misguided approach to catering for BME groups is now acknowledged as having contributed to residential segregation.

*The private housing sector* is also said to have given little thought to promoting mixed communities – and effectively to have encouraged segregation by tailoring developments to individual groups (eg large Asian families) without regard to any broader implications.

### ***New competition***

The pressure caused by immigration from Eastern Europe has impacted particularly on housing. There was 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.

### ***Homelessness and poor housing conditions***

Homelessness has grown disproportionately between social groups, to the significant disadvantage of BME communities – who are three times more likely than white people to experience homelessness. (Over a decade, the number of Local Authority homelessness acceptances in England has decreased by 8%, but increased by 16% among BME groups, mainly Black African and Caribbean households). The number of 'hidden homeless' in the UK is calculated to approach 400,000 today.

BME people are also twice as likely to live in *poor conditions* and more than five times as likely to experience *overcrowding* than their white counterparts.

These established facts run counter to the sorts of *propaganda* used by right-wing extremists to foment race-hate on a basis of perceptions of Local Authority favouritism of immigrant communities.

## 10. Segregation in the workplace

*Employment* is a key part of the integration process and is seen as central to the participation of BME communities in society. Employment is also an area where people from different backgrounds can work together and potentially overcome negative perceptions of other groups.

*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 – age, ethnicity, disability, etc. This relates to gaining both employment and promotion, particularly in the largest section of the labour market, the private sector. Unfair discrimination leads to occupational segregation, perpetuates inequality and reduces the potential for integration.

### ***Area differences***

*Work opportunities* vary greatly in relation to general levels of affluence in specific areas. For example, levels of enterprise in deprived areas are significantly lower than in more affluent areas. Excluding London, in 2003 the 20 most deprived local authority districts in England had 28 business start ups per 10,000 residents, compared with 58 in the 20 least deprived districts.

Where there are *low unemployment rates*, jobs are secure and relatively well-paid and the community in general believes there are opportunities, migrants are more welcomed, or at least viewed as less threatening. Where communities have higher rates of poverty, *unemployment is high* or wages are low and job security poor, with few opportunities, then migrants are seen as more of a threat, including to jobs.

### ***The economic benefits of immigration***

Britain benefits greatly from the work of immigrants and government recognition of short-term and transient migrant workers is a step forward, which should be complemented by the recognition that a significant number of workers are effectively immigrants rather than migrants and will settle in the UK.

## 11. Other forms of segregation

Other main forms of segregation mentioned in the submissions included:

*Segregation by lifestyle.* For example, 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 groups tend to be lost in official monitoring and statistics and, generally, 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.* Particular groups of 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 and unable to participate and contribute to society. Most cannot get access to good education, let down by Connexions which is said to have been used primarily by young people already in education.

On a broader basis, generational segregation has become a feature of society as the oldest are segregated into care homes or sheltered accommodation and inner cities attract young and single people, couples with children tending to move out to the suburbs.

*Segregation through schooling.* There has been a drift into school-based segregation in areas of BME concentration. Wealthier people living in mixed communities may increase local social polarisation by educating their children at a distance. Within schools, a segregation of achievement tends to occur between BME and other less-advantaged groups and children from more privileged homes.

*Segregation through religion.* Religious belief can introduce irreconcilable differences between people, where beliefs are in conflict or where there is non-belief. This can inhibit the bonding which can occur among people otherwise concerned to explore difference and resolve issues.

*Segregation through disability.* (Mentioned as a compounding factor in discrimination, but not the subject of any specific submission). A cohesive society would view disabled people as equals and would remove the barriers that prevent them from participating fully.

Exclusion through *inaccessibility* cannot foster integration – many buildings and services are still inaccessible to disabled people, despite legal requirements laid down in the Disability Discrimination Act.

Equally, the *fragmentation* of statutory services for disabled people and the continuing *lack of communication* between departments provides a major impact on service delivery, producing a strained and weakened service.

## 12. Attitudes: racism/prejudice/extremism

*Much of white Britain* is said to be in need of learning how to integrate and practise community cohesion – they mainly live in all-white areas where there are unacceptable general levels of racism and prejudice.

Tensions can arise because of personally held attitudes or beliefs, for example homophobic or racist views. It is possible for relatively small groups of people or even an individual with these views to destabilise a community, without being organised.

### **Racism**

Racism is said to be fed by global media and reinforced by a search for identity by between-culture youth, negative stereotypes and protectionist attitudes on the part of traditional family religious groups – all of this actively promoted by various pressure groups.

*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.

On a national basis, a growing incidence of '*hate crimes*' is seen as evidence of growth in inter-community tensions, though the statistics are acknowledged to be unreliable, not least from the perception that only one in five of many types of these crimes are reported.

*Visible difference* encourages racist attitudes. There is said to be a general fear of certain aspects of different cultures, including those of Roma origin, women who wear the veil or anyone who looks or behaves differently. Contrast is drawn between 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 can become more alienated than their forebears, in a reaction to racism.

*Government policy* on race is said to be influenced by the 'myth' that people act on the basis of their race or ethnic group, leading to an unsustainable and unhelpful differentiation of social policy by ethnic group

### **Prejudice**

Immigrant communities are said to be subjected to *unprecedented* levels of harassment today, leading to a situation where all British citizens who are perceived as immigrants become targets. These forms of prejudice and intolerance are thought to require a harder stance from authority.

Research demonstrates that throughout the EU, younger, more educated people with higher incomes tend to view immigrant communities most positively. The contrary is also true, demonstrating a *link between lower socio-economic status and prejudice*. Those most directly in competition with new migrants are most inclined to perceive them as 'queue jumping' or 'free-loading'.

*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.

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

*Religious discrimination* is a form of prejudice which 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 authorities' nervousness that these contributions are biased to their own groups.

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 said to be required, in a spirit of partnership and real consultation with Muslim organisations.

### **Extremism**

The fight against extremism is said to be *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.

The problem of *Islamic 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 by everyone else.

## **13. Language/communication**

### **Speaking English**

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

Community tensions can be exacerbated by a lack of English and the ensuing isolation of certain communities. Incomers to a local area can be easily marked out by difficulties with the language or speaking with a heavy accent.

Recent research suggests that all ethnic groups within the UK see English as a common language uniting people and a desirable element for their identity.

*Refugees* overwhelmingly look to their own communities where a language and culture are shared. In many cases, mainstream agencies are not well prepared to work with little English or understanding of the British system. The role of the refugee-led sector in fostering refugee integration is said to be often overlooked and undervalued.

Insufficient public investment has been made in the process of enabling newer communities to adapt to communicating in English.

In the interim, there is a continuing need for translation and interpretation to avoid exclusion. One example of exclusion by default is said to be that of minorities not being involved in public consultation around regeneration schemes, because planners fail to provide multi-lingual material.

### ***Use of language***

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.

For example, there can be a link between community tensions and extremism, but the language around this needs to be used with extreme care and a clear distinction drawn between extremism and terrorism, which is at the furthest reaches of the extremism spectrum.

## **14. External events**

As Britain becomes more diverse, the reflections of global conflicts will become *more common* in our own society.

Some police forces report a rise in inter-community tensions with their roots in external events, which may be as long ago as the partition of India or as recent as the wars in Kosovo or Iraq.

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.

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.

## 15. The media

Inaccurate and unfair media coverage generates hostility and fear and *undermines* community cohesion.

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 rectified.

*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.

Observers suggest that some media coverage of the asylum issue in the UK is negative, misinformed and one-sided. This has a very real impact on asylum seekers and refugees who experience at first hand the hostility it can create in the communities in which they live.

## C. BUILDING COHESION AND INTEGRATION

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

#### ***Importance of contact and 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.*

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. More generally, the profile of those involved in public life should be extended to include people of all ages, including women and children.

#### ***A collective approach***

It is acknowledged that prejudice, particularly racism, Islamophobia and discrimination experienced by immigrants and refugees, needs to be understood as something collectively developed and maintained in explicitly and implicitly institutionalised discourses and practices. Therefore, negative perceptions and attitudes need to be tackled on a *collective level*, through education, the media and politics.

#### ***Need for leadership***

A commitment from local leaders to diversity in its widest sense is important. Local leaders can respond to and prevent tensions by acknowledging different elements of communities and encouraging interaction and cohesion. Conflict between communities can be fed by a low awareness and understanding among local leaders of existing cohesion.

At leadership level, there needs to be a respect for difference, including, for example, acknowledgement of the lesbian and gay communities, even if the person believes that being gay is negative in some ways.

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

#### ***Need for vision***

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.

The local vision should stress the commonalities between elements of the community rather than the differences and positive rather than negative factors.

In the belief that Britain is now essentially a secular society, it is also suggested that, for greater cohesion, the UK should move towards an *inclusive concept of secular society*, in which the right to practise any or no religion is safeguarded, but no religion should have a public role.

## 17. A sense of belonging

Having a *sense of belonging* to the place one lives is very *important* to one's emotional and physical development. At the same time, living in a diverse environment is not only a condition of modern life but also an *opportunity* that everyone can benefit from. The potential benefits are numerous and include enriched knowledge and cultural norms and a broader sense of human possibility and creativity.

*Many complex and inter-related factors* influence attitudes and whether people identify themselves as belonging to the UK. These include:

- Country of birth
- Immigration status
- Length of time in the UK
- English language skills
- Country and level of education
- Occupation
- Place of residence and
- Family social, religious and cultural background

The wider context of external events also affects feelings and the sense of belonging – eg the sense of rejection which can come from being ignored or treated discourteously or abusively.

Other factors which threaten the sense of belonging include, most importantly, a lack of fluency in English and becoming trapped in unemployment or work with no potential for progression.

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

*Involvement and choice* in service delivery builds a sense of belonging, a sense of place and a sense of control which build self-esteem and therefore respect and understanding. People are said to be happier in democracies where the right exists to express choice or opinion.

Inter-group celebrations or co-operations e.g. 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.

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. Ultimately, serious investment in *active citizenship* and real opportunities to contribute views and influence policy and services are at the heart 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.

## 18. Community involvement

Numerous examples of opportunities for community involvement, as a means of encouraging integration and cohesion, were given in the submissions.

For example:

- *Local Authority Youth Councils*, elected by young people, drawing them in to the local political process.
- *Tenants and resident groups*, sometimes inter-generational, which advise councils on the delivery of services – with apparent success.
- *Training staff* drawn from specific communities to deliver services to these groups on the basis that they are closer to them and understand them better

The more people can be brought to address the problems of their own neighbourhood – e.g. crime/disorder – the less they are thought to be likely to focus negatively on world events and drift towards ‘extremism’.

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 of the event.

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.

### ***Cultural factors***

However, significant cultural elements in the functioning of trans-ethnic community forums, such as for instance Ward meetings, can prove testing for those involved, especially those from the host culture. Cultural factors pointed out as requiring understanding and perhaps patience can include an aversion to blunt speech, an unwillingness to pass on an unwelcome truth, an overweening concern for appearances, the power/financial politics of extended family groupings etc.

### ***Balancing participation***

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.

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

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

## **19. Citizenship: education and celebration**

### ***Britishness redefined***

A *clearer definition of Britishness* is thought to be required today. This should reflect the concept of trans-national identity and loyalty. Globalisation means that the rules of multi-ethnic Britain are under constant challenge as we encounter new cultures and our own culture changes.

We need a modern day contract for multi-ethnic Britain.

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*. Indeed some believe that it is impossible to define a single national identity for Britain. 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.

### **'Ground rules' for citizenship**

Emphases 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 should be respected, except where it contradicts the ideals of liberal democracy.

These rules cannot simply be decreed by government, but rather they should be the subject of debate and agreement. They have to work in everyday lives, preserving fundamental values and implying the acceptance of responsibility for participating in and preserving the integrity of the community.

However, there is also a warning that debates around shared values should not emphasise difference, but rather be an opportunity to establish common practices.

### **Historic Christian values**

Some point to what they see as a sickness in our British cultural identity and community cohesion, predating the relatively recent influx of other cultures and rooted in a loss of shared values due to the undermining of the Christian heritage and the rise of individualism. These believe that *Christian values* should be taken into account in the attempt to establish ground rules for shared life. Despite some possible contention from militant secularists and some branches of Islam, these values are seen as likely to be respected and supported by people from all cultures.

### ***Citizenship ceremonies***

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'.

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.

### ***Celebrating diversity***

The concept of publicly celebrating the diversity of the British community today is endorsed throughout the responses, in the sense of encouraging a *positive attitude to difference*, whether it be based on country of origin, culture, age, gender, sexuality etc.

However, the celebration of diversity is also seen as a double-edged sword, which could threaten cohesion by *stressing difference*. Research is said to confirm manifestly that prejudice is lowered when people are perceived either purely as individuals or as sharing a common group, rather than belonging to a distinctive and separate group.

Some believe that the 'so-called' celebration of diversity should be replaced by *promoting the values* that should bind society together, without distinctions of gender or ethnicity etc.

Others believe that, at the least, the historic diversity of the 'host' community in the UK should also be included in any celebration of more recent diversification.

## **20. Changing attitudes: combating ignorance and prejudice**

The overall effect of no positive contact between groups is profound. It is difficult for people to find shared identities and commonalities with other groups with which they have little or no contact.

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.

This is a crucial theme in the responses to the consultation.

There is a *key role for the media* in ensuring that they do not serve to deepen ignorance and prejudice, but rather take a more balanced approach to contentious community issues

There is some feeling that the emergence of the Far Right has not been treated with sufficient seriousness by government today. Some would counsel the establishment of a *Commission on the Far Right* in the UK, to examine the extent to which specific organisations inflame religious and racial hatred and should possibly be proscribed.

## 21. Migrants and host communities

### ***Incomer needs***

The needs of new migrants, to help them settle are spelt out multiply in the submissions. In summary, these are widely perceived to be:

- *information* in their own languages, including information on the history, culture and social and legal norms of the host community<sup>1</sup>
- *free and immediate access* to English language classes
- *advice* on how to obtain housing, welfare, education, training, employment opportunities including assistance with job applications.
- *help* with contacting existing support and social groups or setting up new ones.
- *encouragement* to get involved in their local communities and neighbourhoods and to access and engage in the democratic process.

This list clearly 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.

In the case of *new migrants* from Eastern Europe, these needs are suggested to be mainly short-term.

### **Refugees/asylum seekers**

Refugees and asylum seekers have similar needs to other migrants, but recent research among them suggests that they often experience a particular difficulty in obtaining these essential tools of integration.

<sup>1</sup> New arrivals should be made fully aware of the diverse nature of UK society. For example, people from countries where lesbian and gay people are denied basic human rights should be informed of the legal framework within the UK that protects these groups.

There is 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 to obtain a healthful sense of respite in the UK.

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.

### ***Welcoming new migrants***

Research suggests that *personal involvement* in the process of welcoming migrants encourages positive attitudes to them. True acquaintance, as opposed to casual contact, decreases prejudice.

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

Over time, 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 for example with many of the new European communities, some authorities hold *focus groups* with incomers and their interlocutors.

Local authorities should encourage *interaction* across different communities about *local issues*, as common concerns provide a fertile ground for positive interaction and participation.

### ***The host community***

Clear and consistent *political leadership* on migration is vital to create the conditions in which migrants can be positively received. For example, the strategy of the Scottish Executive in this respect is said to have had an overwhelmingly positive effect on public discussion and understanding of migration.

Settled communities need to be kept *well-informed* of new arrivals. Transparency of information and communication is important for avoiding a 'them and us' attitude towards inclusion and exclusion.

Local communities also need *resources* to enable them to deal with the issues created by immigration and the arrival of new groups within their areas. This is particularly

important for poorer and more deprived neighbourhoods and communities where services can be stretched to breaking point by greater demands being placed on them, without additional funding.

There is an onus on the host community to help *create a sense of belonging* in new migrants, essentially by allowing them to move on from their initial needy status to being able to grasp opportunities and feel they have a stake in society.

It is seen as crucial for new migrants to feel that they receive fair treatment, *the equal of that given to the host community*. Unequal treatment of immigrants by the host community results both in marginalisation of the immigrants and contempt for the rules the host community abuses in its own favour

### **False expectations**

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.

This situation can be exacerbated and the process of integration further held up by the racist and intolerant behaviour of individuals towards incomers, as acknowledged in some submissions. Ultimately, only education and the experience of meaningful contact can undermine these negative attitudes.

### **Migrants: a broader definition**

It is important to recognise that discussion of the needs of new arrivals and the obligations of the 'host' community can also embrace – **mutatis mutandis** – any groups who may be viewed as 'different' – including many established BME communities, gays and lesbians, disabled people etc.

## D. KEY PLAYERS: ROLES REGARDING COHESION AND INTEGRATION

### 22. The Role of Central Government

#### ***Promoting understanding***

The promotion of the *understanding* of racial and cultural differences is seen by some to be required as a key part of all government policy and practice.

To increase the understanding of community tensions, 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.

#### ***Influencing the superstructure***

All of the organisations considered in the work of the Commission have influential roles with respect to contributing to cohesion and integration. However, they are all constrained by the superstructure of society, which grants them legitimacy to act. It is primarily the role of central government to influence the overarching superstructure, the law, the economy etc. in ways that make for greater rather than less cohesion.

#### ***More resources***

The specific issue of the funding of *English language classes* for migrants was raised frequently throughout the submissions. 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.

More generally, 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, reduce overcrowding, reduce time spent in temporary accommodation
- *regeneration initiatives* for economic development, providing training and creating jobs and
- *environmental initiatives* to transform run-down areas to places where living is enjoyable.

## **Economic development**

The provision of better training and greater access to the jobs market through helping the creation of new businesses and assisting small businesses to provide local communities with greater power and resources – will have a significant impact on community cohesion and integration.

Specifically, it is also suggested that central government should adapt its own job market agency, *Jobcentre Plus*, to cope better with migrants in general and refugees in particular. There is said to be a pressing need for refugee awareness training of staff, plus the development of services to help refugees and other BME groups to access the employment advice system.

The continuation and enforcement of the *minimum wage* is seen as an important contribution to fostering equality.

## **The environment**

Some submissions place particular stress on the significance of the *environment* in contributing to disunity, both now and in the future, as climate change threatens to make resources scarcer. The creation of sustainable communities should have at its heart united action against a challenge faced by everybody, regardless of ethnicity, gender or class.

## ***Focus on youth***

*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 UK.

In addition, there should be increased *social support* for young people, such as funding for children's centres and youth activities.

## ***Other roles for central government***

Many submissions focused on the following three roles as crucial for the promotion of cohesion and integration:

- Combating racism
- Monitoring the role of the media
- Issues around UK foreign policy

## Racism

A national action plan against racism should be implemented, such as is said to have been agreed to at the relevant UN world conference in 2002. For success, this initiative will require the participation of BME communities and NGOs working in this field.

Allied to this, is pressure for government to improve the participation of BME people in the *political process* – increased political representation is seen as an essential aspect of the promotion of community cohesion, through giving BME people a greater sense of belonging and a stake in the British political mainstream.

## The media

It is seen as imperative for social cohesion and integration to be a daily reality, that people of different backgrounds or ages are not 'demonised' or made to feel unwelcome. The treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in particular by some sections of the media, is seen by some as 'inflammatory' and should be addressed urgently. This would 'send a powerful message to all communities that those fleeing persecution can expect fair and equal treatment in a democratic society and those who wish to use their skills in a vibrant economy, will be given the opportunity to do so.'

## Foreign policy

The UK's stance internationally on human rights and support for international law, together with its aid to less developed countries and actions on tackling climate change all impact on community cohesion and integration.

The government should take responsibility for past mistakes and 'work to rectify them before irrevocable damage is done'.

## 23. The role of local authorities

### ***Local Authorities: The Outside View***

This section of the report is mainly drawn from the submissions of local authorities and provides a summary analysis of Local Authority approaches to issues around cohesion and integration, a mix of achievement and aspiration in their own account.

Other categories of respondent to the consultation largely focused on the need for Local Authorities to fulfil many of the various roles which they acknowledge in their own submissions. The key points made in the non-Local Authority submissions may be briefly summarised as:

- Local Authorities have a key role at local level to provide a local sense of *vision* and to foster an *enlightened approach* to migrants and BME communities in general

- They should be particularly active in ensuring *fair access to services* of the different communities within their area – and in providing *transparent information* on the criteria for delivery of the most contentious services, such as housing
- Local Authorities have the *prime community leadership role* for the area and should be active in bringing people and organisations together in order to foster mutual understanding and respect
- At a *political level*, Local Authorities should ensure that campaigning is not divisive and that potential local tensions are not exploited for political gain

The Local Authority account of their approach to issues of cohesion and integration is sub-divided as follows:

- Cohesion strategies
- Planning and regeneration
- Housing and community policies
- Myth busting/mediation
- Language/communication
- Employment

### ***Local Authority Cohesion strategies***

*The Local Government Association* 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 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.

The Commission is urged to promote changes to mainstream services, rather than any other special initiatives. Some suggest a requirement for a parallel to the Race Equality *Impact Assessment* strategy, to assess the extent to which services meet cohesion objectives

### ***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 group, 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 always meet current planning policy requirements, a factor which can be a source of some frustration within these communities.

*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 of regeneration**

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

### **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 towards one group becoming concentrated in one area. The whole process is also monitored.

*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 for doing so.

#### **Community policies**

Again, 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.

At least one council runs a training 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.

## 24. Role of Community Organisations/Leaders

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

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

### ***Definition of community leaders***

More generally, the term 'community leader' emerges in the response as somewhat contentious. The term has been used to identify individuals within specific groups who are able both to represent and consult with their group. In many cases, this may not be the case. Minority groups may not be monolithic but may contain much diversity within them, with important implications for the definition of 'leadership'.

Some point to what they see as the failure of the government's Community Empowerment Programme, which they claim delivered resources more to traditional voluntary groups, which were often inadequate in their response to BME groups – rather than to the real point of need. In this analysis, the result has been a 'generation' of community leaders who are both 'ill informed' and 'disengaged'.

Some endorse the principle of working with 'community leaders' on issues related to community cohesion and integration, but caution that this should not be to the neglect of community members who do not form part of the supporters of these individuals.

Others question the term itself, asking who they are, how are they appointed – and how representative are they? It is seen as important to deal with people who are recognised in their communities as having the mandate to speak on their behalf. However, many 'community leaders' are said to be self-styled and appointed and ultimately not strongly representative of the groups they claim to represent. Dealing with them in this role may serve to endorse difference and traditional, maybe segregationist values, in the process marginalising many members of the communities.

It is quite strongly suggested in the response that this is an important area for revision – that today the basis of community leadership may in many cases have moved away from a mainly religious or racial definition to other bases such as profession or workplace, neighbourhood or region, or membership of various interest groups.

Traditional community 'leadership' has tended to be focused on older men, to the neglect of women and younger people in general, who may come to feel disenfranchised. This may be particularly the case with some Muslim communities.

Nevertheless, it is also suggested that community leaders, as currently defined, often play a critical role in the management of their communities – for example, in steering individuals away from extremism.

### **Community Organisations**

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

Community organisations are considered further below, in the section on Voluntary and Community Services.

## **25. Role of schools/education sector**

### ***Instruments of cohesion***

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.

*Shared values* can be promoted through schools and build cohesion between different groups from the start.

The dual system of education within this country, voluntary aided schools within a larger state system, is thought to encourage and be part of the foundations of a *new concept of secular society*, which is inclusive of all faiths and none. The challenge for *faith schools* is to combine their distinctive teaching with fostering a sense of belonging to a wider community.

Some would prefer that schools become *entirely secular* in ethos, in opposition not to religion as such, but to the institutionalisation of religion within education. Religion should remain a purely personal matter for life outside school.

There was some suggestion that the increasing number of *Trust schools and Academies* should be monitored to ensure that they do not impact negatively on cohesion.

### ***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, particularly in primary

school. Any suggestion that BME staff should teach only BME pupils is firmly rejected as contradicting the role of schools in promoting cohesion.

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

Recruiting BME members to *governing bodies* is more of a challenge than recruiting BME staff and minority ethnic organisations may need to be deliberately targeted.

Some councils have implemented a *BME graduate teacher training programme*, which recruits more teachers from the BME community with the intention that they become good role models for BME pupils.

Some councils have also implemented *diversity-awareness* training programmes for newly-qualified teachers joining the borough schools.

Also mentioned was the *ELLE Programme*, a joint training venture from five countries across Europe aimed at giving teachers a better understanding of diversity, helping them to confront their own attitudes and develop an understanding of the needs of learners.

### ***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 (LEA) 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 and citizenship*, are specifically designed to promote cohesion and there are many opportunities for pupils to debate these issues through school and youth councils. Children are taught about *equality and diversity issues* as part of the personal, social and health education agenda. The two main problems are said to be:

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

Some stress the importance of including within this process education on children's rights and obligations as members of a national community – and (separate issue) – in line with this, reducing the voting age to 16.

Those least in favour of faith schools, believe that schools should promote a unifying identity based on human rights, rather than religious identities, which rely on the exclusion of others. Religious Education should be balanced between a range of different faiths and also humanism and atheism.

### **Cultural policies**

Other attempts to include diversity within the ethos of the school include:

- *Welcome to The Borough* DVDs produced in different community languages and 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 policy of 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
- A policy of including *images* representing all communities.
- Visiting *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
- *Regular review* of schools' policies to check they are responsive to different cultural and religious needs

### ***Inter-school links***

Some schools have *foreign exchange programmes* with schools in Europe, USA and Africa, aimed at providing some development of a global understanding among pupils and staff.

There are also *Twinning – or ‘Linking’ 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.

Some, with experience of these sorts of programmes caution that there are important conditions for success and sustainability, which include:

- A clearly defined strategy and a sound theoretical base for embarking upon these activities
- A focus on learning
- ‘Considerable’ funding and support from LAs
- Whole school commitment, including training for staff

One LEA<sup>2</sup>, in a particularly diverse area, claims significant success in improving the lives of young people through Linking, using different models for different situations, and has published a guide to good practice, which other LEAs have taken up.

### ***Schools: social/family policies***

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

- Focus on *communications* between school and home aimed at increasing parental involvement, with translators and interpreters used where appropriate.
- Encouraging parents to join the school community and meet others through participation in family learning programmes, ESOL classes or school visits.
- Setting up ethnic minority *parent groups*
- 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.

- Policies to address issues of:
  - Domestic violence and other harmful practices such as forced marriage
  - Low attendance rates of some BME girls
  - Low participation of same in school activities

Some activities, such as ESOL, basic skills or citizenship courses may also be based in *Further Education Colleges* or *Adult Learning Centres*, locations which are said to often be the first official agencies encountered by new arrivals

It is also suggested that the success of school *twinning/linking* 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 an annual event
- *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.
- Concern for other potential aspects/results of '*institutionalised racism*' – particularly the under-achievement of BME children. School policies are needed to address this and other factors such as racist bullying and disproportionate rates of exclusion.

### ***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.

*Social action projects* organised by schools, asking young people to tackle problems they have identified in their own communities, can be powerful tools for empowerment and cohesion.

## 26. Role of public services: health/housing/etc.

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.

For example, libraries and community education services should reflect the diversity of the area in their provision.

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

*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.

### **Healthcare**

Healthcare – and welfare in general – 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. Sensitivity in this area can contribute powerfully to service users' feeling of belonging.

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.

There is said to be a specific 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**

Essentially, housing associations are seen as having an important responsibility for aiding *community development*

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.

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. Allied to this is the challenge of building links with religious groups and their local leaders, who may be more likely to engage with Housing Authorities if they can see a benefit to their members

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, covering 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 promotes cohesion.

Housing associations can contribute positively to integration by working towards *mixed sustainable lettings*, rather than promoting segregation.

Also, importantly, they can help provide *community facilities* where people can meet and interact.

It is seen as important that housing associations should be as involved as local authorities in *challenging myths and in sanctioning ASB*, for example through terminating contracts.

## 27. Role of voluntary and community services

### ***A diverse sector***

The response stresses that the *community as a whole* should be prepared to become involved in the resolution of conflicts and not simply delegate issues to the state and

to professionals. *Voluntary organisations* are vital in this respect, focusing on a great diversity of activities from dance groups to older people's lunch clubs, from gender groups to adventure activities (e.g. the Duke of Edinburgh Award) – activities aimed at bringing people together, building communities and supporting community cohesion.

Many provide information, advice and support to people in relation to civil rights and responsibilities, or provide help related to personal traumas, such as unfair discrimination or the threat of homelessness.

### **Major contribution**

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 often lies in their *closeness to communities* and their ability to respond quickly and flexibly to needs and opportunities.

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

### **Criticisms**

A number of interesting comments/criticisms were made in relation to this sector, eg:

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

*Capacity-building* – too much focus in the sector on courses and too little on learning on the job.

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

*Tensions between disability groups* – some suggestion that policy makers are often frustrated by a lack of foresight and communication in this sector – that the sector should provide a more coordinated response to government policies and campaigning groups should respect more the work of moderate disability groups.

### **Racial equality organisations**

The Commission for Racial Equality (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.

### ***Women's organisations***

Women's VCS groups are said to have a *unique*, but possibly under-appreciated role in building cohesive societies – for example by their ability to engage with otherwise hard to reach groups, including women who are refugees and asylum seekers, sex workers, teenage parents etc.

Women's groups claim also to work towards reducing gender inequality in the long term, by campaigning to change policy and laws that fail to protect women's human rights and restrict their ability to contribute fully to society.

## **28. The role of the police/criminal justice**

### ***The police***

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

*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 that Police Community Support Officers and Specials tend to better reflect the ethnic backgrounds of the diverse communities they police.

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.

*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.

It was suggested that 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.

*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 – e.g. for the categorisation of specific crimes.

*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.

Overall, the police are seen as critical partners for helping the process of cohesion and integration. However, they are also seen to face a number of *internal challenges*, which need to be addressed urgently, to make their impact more effective.

### ***The jury system***

The jury system is said to have a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion and should not be eroded.

## **29. The Role of Faith Groups**

Faith groups and leaders can play a *vital part* in promoting harmony and understanding between faiths and in encouraging community cohesion. Faith can transform conflict, rather than create it and help people of many different faiths and none to learn how to live together.

However, research suggests that a majority of the population see religion more as a *force for division* than for understanding, in the tendency to emphasise religious identities to the exclusion of other identities. At this time, therefore, it seems important that faith leaders become more active in promoting *equal rights* and community responsibility and participation.

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

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

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.

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

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

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*.

### ***Need for open dialogue***

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 claim to 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.

Some believe that *without serious dialogue* between Christians, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs and others, social harmony in Britain will prove *impossible*. It is suggested that resolving issues of difference in the *local area* will create a basis for the same problems to be tackled *globally*.

*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. create cohesion and demonstrate that faith organisations are not exclusive in their concerns.

## **30. Youth/Sports Organisations: The Arts and Culture Sector**

### ***Youth organisations***

Throughout much of the response, there is stress on the importance of involving young people in the process of achieving community cohesion, inferring a unique importance for youth organisations.

Young people are seen as critical for overcoming community tensions as their influence can be profound if they have a developed sense of belonging, ownership and responsibility for their area. Some point to the generosity with which young people can become involved in volunteering as an example of this.

Alternately, if young people feel disenfranchised, this can reinforce divisions between different groups.

Some observers note a 'general undercurrent of hatred and prejudice in white youth of non-white people', sometimes reflecting tensions fuelled by a sense of marginalisation and discrimination between communities over resources and government funding.

To resolve these sorts of tensions, a *process of mediation* may be required and youth organisations can play an important role in this, possibly by encouraging volunteering on projects which cross cut racial and ethnic divides.

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

One opportunity for fostering cohesion among young people was suggested to be in the training of *childcare providers* – which can explore concepts of identity, diversity and equality – equipping carers with confidence and skills to address issues of equality and diversity with young children in a sensitive way.

## ***Sports, art and culture***

*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.

*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.

*Arts, sports and culture groups* have an important place in building communities as well as reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and encouraging self-expression. They bring different groups together in shared activities and provide a means for individuals to meet and learn about people from different backgrounds.

The whole sector is seen as having great potential as an *agent for integration*, whether it is in creating heroes to admire or teaching the value of historic places etc. – there is power in this sector to celebrate or to ignore communities.

The activities of the sector can also be important for preventing inter-ethnic conflict, for example by channelling inter-community rivalries through sport or artistic activities.

Theatres, arts centres and sports associations are important cultural institutions which can 'foster feelings of sameness' between people of different ages, gender and ethnic origin.

It is seen as important that institutions such as, for example, the British Museum – and other museums and cultural institutions – who play an important part in defining and projecting British identity, should be *inclusive in their approach*.

Art and sport are said to have proved particularly effective in founding partnerships with *refugee* communities.

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

### 31. The role of 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.

At present, the gap in the employment rate of ethnic minorities and the rest of the community is said to stand at over 15%. *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.

There is seen to be a need to draw greater attention than has occurred in the past to the role that the private sector can potentially play in embedding community cohesion principles in local life.

The pivotal position of the private sector in UK communities implies that there are a *variety of ways* in which they can play a positive role in building a more cohesive and integrated society. For example, some consider that employers should do more both to *recruit and train* people from excluded communities and, in the case of new immigrants, provide or facilitate *language training* or other integrative support.

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 – these are 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

## 32. The role of the media

### ***Power of the media***

The media has a particularly *influential role* in contributing to cohesion – or in maintaining in circulation prejudicial forms of knowledge and harmful myths.

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 in encountering emerging urban myths

Broadcast media can *help build communities* by the quality of its presenters and the nature of its programmes.

### ***Need for balance***

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

There is therefore a need for greater *balance*, both in *reporting* and in the composition of the *reporting community*, who are seen to be drawn disproportionately from advantaged groups.

### ***Need for skills***

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.

### ***Local media***

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

### ***National media***

Some criticise the national media in particular for trying to improve the newsworthiness of their stories by seeking *more extreme views* and repeatedly using these often self-appointed commentators on sensitive topics for which they have no real mandate to speak.

### ***New media***

Modern technology allows immigrant communities to continue to access media outlets in their countries of origin and/or their first language. It is suggested that the possibility of using these international media outlets to communicate and inform immigrants within the UK should be explored as a means of aiding and encouraging the process of integration.

### ***Role models for cohesion***

The increasing tendency of the media to focus upon 'celebrity' role models might be taken advantage of for the celebration of any such who emerge from newer communities, possibly as a result of participation in sporting or artistic activities.