

# Community Cohesion Advice for those designing, developing and delivering Area Based Initiatives

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Published – December 2003

# Community Cohesion Advice for those designing, developing and delivering Area Based Initiatives (ABIs)

**Building cohesion into regeneration and renewal**

Community  
Cohesion Advice  
for those  
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Based Initiatives  
(ABIs)

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The Home Office is grateful to all those who contributed to the preparation of this booklet. Area based initiatives can be described as central Government initiatives, pilot programmes or those delivered through regional/local partners which are targeted towards specific geographical areas ahead of, or instead of, a national rollout.

Home Office Community Cohesion Unit  
December 2003

## Executive Summary

- 1.** The Community Cohesion Review Team chaired by Ted Cattle investigated the circumstances that surrounded the disturbances in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in 2001. The Team's report<sup>1</sup> noted the existence of tensions and significant fractures in communities that needed to be identified, addressed, and understood.
- 2.** Progress has been made since the report was published in 2001; but tensions continue to exist in many local areas. These tensions may stem from circumstances specific to a particular locality. Wider issues of poverty, exclusion and discrimination, as well as political or international events, can also contribute to a breakdown in tolerance and understanding between communities. Recognition of the factors that build or undermine cohesion in a particular area is therefore vital.
- 3.** Area based initiatives (ABIs) can be highly effective in transforming areas of high deprivation and improving the life chances of communities not able to access sufficient mainstream funding and services. But there are risks that the concentration of resources on particular areas may result in resentment and frustration among some communities because of perceptions of favoured treatment.
- 4.** This document therefore provides advice on how best to address cohesion within both new and existing ABIs, to ensure that relations between recipient communities and their neighbours are not damaged. It is intended for Government departments, Government Offices for the Regions, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), Local Authorities, and the many statutory and non-statutory organisations involved in the development, delivery and monitoring of ABIs and regeneration programmes. It will also be of interest to community representatives involved in regeneration activity.

<sup>1</sup> *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*, Chaired by Ted Cattle, 2001

5. The document aims to provide context rather than set out a definitive process. It highlights the key issues, suggests a range of approaches and provides advice. It complements the *Guidance on Community Cohesion*<sup>2</sup> issued in December 2002, and the *ABI Guidance to Departments on the design and co-ordination of area based initiatives and local partnership based programmes* first issued in November 2000.<sup>3</sup>

### Key issues

6. Full and meaningful involvement of neighbouring communities in the development of ABIs is needed to ensure that tensions arising between disadvantaged areas receiving differential funding are addressed.
7. Use of a good **communications/marketing strategy** to explain the objectives and the rationale for funding decisions will have the effect of positively influencing local perceptions.
8. Meaningful **consultation** and communication with recipient communities needs to take place, which leads to local ownership of renewal activity by communities. This will help to build sustainability and community cohesion at a local level. Consultation and engagement with communities takes time – it is recommended that a "year zero" should be built into the planning process to allow adequate time for this.
9. Flexibility in the application of **scheme boundaries**, and careful consideration of the best means of providing benefits to both direct and indirect participants will lead to more cohesive communities.
10. Care should be taken to avoid **funding rules** and mechanisms becoming a barrier to interaction between communities. Geographic boundaries tied to the funding rules can play a part in creating barriers to cohesion. Thematic or geographical approaches that offer the opportunity for

<sup>2</sup> LGA/ODPM/HO/CRE/Inter Faith Network *Guidance on Community Cohesion*, December 2002

<sup>3</sup> *ABI Guidance to Departments on the design and co-ordination of area based initiatives and local partnership based programmes* RCU, first published November 2000, revised 2002, 2003.

greater contact between communities to maximise cross-cultural contact should be considered.

- 11. Twinning** areas for advice, support, and learning on cohesion, offers an opportunity to share good practice at local, regional and national level in addition to formalising the process of community capacity building.
- 12.** Developing an approach to governance that enables boards, senior officials, and elected members, at local level to take a lead on the importance of community cohesion and communicate the benefits to all.

## Defining Local Need

- 13.** Recognising that a community's needs differ from that of its neighbours can provide a valuable opportunity to building community cohesion by 'designing in' approaches that get communities working and living together whilst respecting each other's difference and diversity.
- 14.** Schemes should be examined from the outset to ensure that, in meeting the need of a community in an area, they do not serve to stigmatise that community, or reinforce its separateness and give the (false) impression that the needs of other disadvantaged communities are not recognised.
- 15.** The problem often stems from how 'need' is defined. Information and data that is ward-based may limit our horizons to particular areas in which one community is located. A finer analysis of the data, however, may reveal that pockets of disadvantage exist across many neighbouring communities, particularly if each separate strand of the multiple deprivation indicators is dis-aggregated.
- 16.** The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal<sup>4</sup> signalled that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) now run a neighbourhood statistics

<sup>4</sup> National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, SEU 2000



service. This will be particularly valuable in defining area needs on a more localised basis and designing programmes that capture pockets of deprivation in an otherwise more affluent area.

### *Examples of better defining and meeting need:*

Using local knowledge and involving local people from different communities in addition to statistical evidence to determine the real needs.

Twinning areas prior to, during, and after the implementation of ABIs to maximise learning on community cohesion and other aspects of this experience. This might entail visits to areas further afield, which are addressing similar issues, or are at more advanced stages of addressing community cohesion in scheme development.

## **Flexibility and Area Focus**

- 17.** Both area and thematic programmes can be used to provide solutions across broader areas. Cross-cultural contact should be built into programmes regardless of whether the approach taken is geographically focused or thematic. Departments and others must consider the potential problems associated with single community schemes.
- 18.** The key barrier to cohesion within area focused approaches to regeneration is that schemes are in danger of drawing rigid boundaries in a target area which may coincide with a single or minority ethnic community. The boundaries of areas should be selected in such a way as to avoid drawing them tightly around particular communities, and should ensure that there is flexibility to respond to further needs within a wider area. The target area should be as wide as possible to embrace different communities and their needs.

## *Different boundaries for different programmes*

- 19.** Regeneration schemes are multi-faceted and do not always need to be confined within the same area boundaries. The concept of ‘area focus’ should, therefore, be fully explored as a means of creating more flexible areas, recognising that some programmes can have different boundaries to reflect different needs whilst still maintaining an area approach. Well-designed ABIs can have a positive impact on cohesion, whilst those which are not can exacerbate existing problems.

## *Thematic work*

- 20.** Thematic programmes, which cross over a number of neighbouring deprived communities, could be used to bring different communities together. Thematic programmes can also be seen as complementary to the area approach, providing means by which more widespread deprivation or specific pockets of deprivation are addressed and communities are encouraged to work together. For instance, ABIs addressing crime may choose to include target hardening in a particular area but include neighbourhoods in pockets of deprivation in more affluent areas.
- 21.** ABIs can build in ‘controlled flexibility’ that allows take-up by non-target communities who, whilst not strictly within the defined scheme boundaries, do meet the need criteria. Controlled flexibility will ensure that the target area remains the main focus of activity and that the approach is not diluted as a result of the services being extended to ‘outsiders’. For instance, NRF may only cover one area, but where there are shared services operating across local authorities, funding can be used beyond the local authority boundary. This approach recognises the needs of a particular community without alienating others.

## *Working with other ABIs in the area*

- 22.** One of the most effective means of meeting local needs would be to align existing programmes. There may be structural barriers to ABIs

taking a more co-ordinated approach which need to be tackled at local level, but greater awareness of how best to align ABIs through local collaboration and how to explain the intended benefits to communities would impact positively on cohesion.

### *Examples of controlled flexibility:*

Sure Start and Parental Support Networks, both of which serve different communities under a single umbrella organisation, are able to promote the development of cross-cultural networks between white, black, and Asian communities.

Establishing thematic programmes across the city, or a number of regeneration areas, can draw people together and get them to work on common problems on a cross-cultural basis. For example, vocational projects for disaffected young people.

Developing schemes to reflect wider boundaries of particular services, such as establishing housing improvement programme targeted within a ward boundary but also including several streets in a neighbouring ward with a similar design and standard. These streets may also fall within a recognisable community boundary.

Twinning particular activities to bring different cultures from distinct communities together. For example, within a DfES programme developing extensive mentoring programmes, joint curricular and extra-curricular activity.

Operating approaches to parental development with schools outside the area (with different cultural communities) which can promote cross-cultural contact within schools where this does not exist.

## Relationships between Communities

- 23.** Rigid area boundaries may limit the possibility of bridge-building work between disadvantaged communities in different parts of the same town or city. Whilst initiatives must recognise the needs of particular groups and be culturally sensitive, care must be taken when considering exclusive single community schemes. Programmes should therefore be designed to provide an opportunity for cross-cultural contact, from the outset, at all levels.
- 24.** Positive interaction between communities is best when it occurs naturally, as part of daily activity. However, this is not possible in some segregated communities, which are essentially mono-cultural in nature. Some promotion of cohesion can be woven into daily life if the area-based approach recognises from the outset that the 'area' targeted embraces different communities. ABIs should promote and share mechanisms to address cohesion within the infrastructure of a locality, e.g. in a school or workplace, as well as through the more popular means of sports and cultural approaches.

## *Twinning*

- 25.** The isolation and insularity of areas can limit horizons and make some schemes inwardly focussed. The 'twinning' of regeneration areas should be encouraged as a means of bringing different communities together to work on common problems, share experiences and build trust and understanding.
- 26.** Twinning exists in many programmes but rarely from a community cohesion perspective. Twinning areas across a number of cohesion-related issues might lead to more creative solutions. This process can be developed in a variety of ways that would allow exchange of experiences and a sustained dialogue between areas. This could involve visits arranged to previous and present regeneration areas, with the emphasis on cross-cultural visits, to discuss 'what works'. In this way,

programmes can be designed to build individual and community confidence on a cross-community basis, deepening the understanding of each other's communities.

27. Twinning could be established as a rolling programme of learning in regeneration that enables learning to take place between areas at different stages of the process. Community Empowerment Networks (CENs) may be well placed to facilitate this, potentially involving other Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) members.

### *Examples of interaction and twinning:*

Institutional links between different areas can be established. For example, schools can form 'families' of schools across districts to encourage the development of cross-community extra-curricular activities when addressing initiatives aimed at young people or educational attainment.

Similarly, a largely mono-cultural estate or area could join forces with another area to develop a joint festivals programme, exchange experience on housing management, produce joint local newsletters and establish joint activities when for instance addressing regeneration schemes.

Links can be forged through voluntary networks, such as sporting, social and cultural organisations. Many such possibilities can be created to develop contact between communities and should be seen as a legitimate part of the regeneration programme.

Specific links can also be developed, completely outside deprived communities. For example, initiatives such as Business Start-Up mentoring can be used so that where adjoining or other areas have a large number of small businesses and expertise, they can assist development in areas of deprivation.

- 28.** Community interaction should not be used as an excuse to stop targeting resources for communities in need. Rather, separate communities can be incentivised to develop links with other communities and to share in a sustainable development process by meeting with resident groups from outside their area and sharing successes and failures.

## **Consultation and Community Capacity Building**

- 29.** Many people who live in poor neighbourhoods do not feel they can play a part in the process of improving the quality of their lives or the way they are governed. Local residents sometimes feel that central and local government are out of touch with how local people wish funding to be allocated and that regeneration is ‘done to’ them rather than by and with them. This can manifest itself in a sense of resentment amongst local residents who may believe funding is not being used for services that are needed or wanted locally.
- 30.** Community capacity building is widely acknowledged to be the key to strengthening and building skills and confidence within communities. It is essential that the promotion of resident involvement in the implementation of the programme contributes to local ownership and responsibility for the success of the initiative. It is easy to underestimate the time needed to develop effective, inclusive consultation – a process often based on trust.
- 31.** Whilst consultation is widespread, the issues which impact upon community cohesion are:
- Does the programme allow sufficient time to develop effective and meaningful consultation and capacity building – not just with the main representative organisations but with isolated and marginalised groups, and in particular with younger people where appropriate?
  - Are mechanisms in place to employ a range of participation structures and processes, which can maximise this involvement?

- How do we ensure that communities work with other areas and with different cultures in developing ABIs?
- 32.** It is essential that lead-in time be built in at the beginning, for consultation to take place early on, rather than at the implementation stage. Early consultation is not sufficient in itself, but should contribute to on-going participation in the decision-making process. For more details on effective, inclusive consultation, please refer to the *LGA Guidance on Community Cohesion* which gives further details on this aspect.
  - 33.** Consultation should provide a range of options as early as possible so that consultees can make informed choices from the possibilities. Perception surveys are often successful in obtaining a wide range of views. Where proposed, they should feature attitudinal questions in relation to cohesion. However, care should be taken to avoid reinforcing the separation and isolation of communities, particularly those that are dominated by one culture or group. It is important to involve a cross-section of the community to cover age, culture, faith, gender and race.
  - 34.** Consultation should extend beyond the direct beneficiaries of any scheme to those likely to be in close proximity, or in other potential regeneration areas – informing them of the intended use of the funds and asking them for their views.
  - 35.** Consultation mechanisms should adopt diverse culturally appropriate methods for different communities. Local knowledge and services should be used, for example, the local Council for Voluntary Services, or place of worship, to devise ways of consulting. Methods that encourage involvement from as large a section of the community as possible are essential.
  - 36.** It is important to note however that expectations can be raised in communities through the process of engagement – and that unless momentum is maintained and transparent processes put in place, people

can quickly feel let down and become disengaged. Quick wins can be highly effective in countering this, but must be tied to longer-term goals.

- 37.** Community capacity building is widely acknowledged as key to strengthening and building skills and confidence within communities. Sustainable community capacity building, which enables residents to build social capital and own the lengthy process of renewal, rests at the heart of the community cohesion agenda.

### *Examples of approaches to improve cohesion through consultation:*

Community-run organisations in the country have used Single Regeneration Budget funds to create jobs, establish community businesses, healthy living centres and neighbourhood planning programme. All of this can be achieved over time and is more likely to be successful if consultation with the full range of local communities is integral to the process.

Residents will be more likely to receive the resources they want and need through effective consultation rather than being offered a limited range of pre-determined options.

## **Communication**

- 38.** Good communications are vital to both enable an initiative to achieve its objectives, and to ensure that in doing so it promotes community cohesion. Some regeneration projects have been hampered by a lack of awareness amongst residents and practitioners of the schemes in their area, and the reasoning behind the allocation of area-based funding. This has led to a perception that areas receive funding unfairly, and on a basis other than real need. A lack of awareness as to the benefits of the



various schemes, means that communities are not benefiting from services designed to help improve their life opportunities.

**39.** From the start those designing and implementing ABI related projects at a local level should communicate clearly their intention to adapt their structures and processes to the needs of local people, including flexibility of boundaries and opportunities for cross-community working.

**40.** Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) can play a key role in communication and take responsibility for communication and co-ordination. The communications strategy can harness local knowledge to determine methods of communication using a tailored approach for a variety of audiences. Staff should be equipped to explain concepts of need and the decision-making process in a sensitive way. LSPs, who have a clear co-ordinating role regarding ABIs are well-placed to facilitate effective communication.

**41.** Communications are essential and must be properly resourced, both within areas and between the area and the wider community. A good communications strategy will set out:

- the context,
- objectives,
- critical audiences,
- key spokespeople,
- key messages for recipients,
- key messages for adjoining communities,
- key messages for partners,
- key messages for the media,
- methods for implementing, monitoring and reviewing the strategy.

### **Context**

**42.** The communications strategy should clearly state the reasoning for allocating funding to the area(s) involved and what is to be achieved by

the funding. It should explain why particular communities or themes are being targeted and clearly state the geographical and thematic boundaries. This overall context should match central government guidance about the overall purpose of the ABI.

## **Objectives**

- 43.** The objectives of the communications strategy should include promoting the benefits of the ABI and of community cohesion, and facilitating a sense of ownership among local people. The roles and responsibilities of each partner in disseminating the messages must be clear, as well as indicating who will manage/take responsibility for the communication strategy. The strategy must include the rebuttal of misinformation and myth busting. The Neighbourhood Renewal PR and Media Toolkit<sup>5</sup> includes a specific section on community cohesion. The communications strategy could harness examples of approaches that have proved to be successful in similar areas/situations to illustrate the objectives.

## **Critical audiences**

- 44.** The communications strategy must target not only the recipient community, but also any adjoining communities and be clear about which communities are being addressed.

## **Key spokespeople**

- 45.** Identifying champions in all the stakeholder groups will help ensure local ownership and maximise dialogue across communities. Professionals and community and business partners must have the capacity to address sensitive issues around objectives, funding awards and benefit.
- 46.** Communities are complex, have multiplicities of issues to be addressed, and are in constant flux. Training may be required to ensure that all

<sup>5</sup> The Neighbourhood Renewal PR and Media Toolkit, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU), 2003

those involved in the ABI are equipped to address these issues. Any strategy must foster positive attitudes and be supported by practitioners, boards and elected members who have been trained in communications, know the local area, the local community and the current issues. For the ABI to be marketed appropriately, the communications strategy will need to address the various audiences and ensure the programme meets their needs.

- 47.** Key partners must be identified from the outset and include any long-standing partnerships that have built up a good level of trust, encouraging pride in the diversity and vibrancy of businesses in the area. Celebrating diversity and cultural richness must sit alongside the need to dispel misconceptions of key spokespeople.

### ***Key messages***

- 48.** The key messages may well be the same for each group but must be tailored to the group in order to be accessible and understood. Positive messages about the developments in the neighbouring area, explaining how they can benefit from overlapping and thematic programmes will be reassuring to communities.
- 49.** Messages require a range of media if they are to reach the full range of audiences. This may include the traditional vehicle of mainstream newspapers and radio, but also the specialist or ethnic press and places of worship.

### ***Implementing the strategy***

- 50.** Local knowledge should be used to develop an action plan to show how the communications strategy will be carried out in specific areas.

### *Examples of approaches taken to address cohesion within a communications strategy:*

Encourage local projects to use language in a sensitive way that does not single out any one ethnic group as benefiting from a service over another group. This, however, should be done in such a fashion as to avoid being criticised for extreme ‘political correctness’.

Use the communications strategy and the key messages developed from it to counteract negative messages in the press with support from key partners. Have the key messages ready in advance rather than waiting to develop a response once any negative press starts. Use different partners to put the message across in a way that recognises their different roles.

## **Leadership and Accountability**

- 51.** It is essential that those responsible for an ABI at local level, work with all involved to develop a sense of ownership and pride in the local community. Whilst it is useful to have key spokespersons and ‘champions’ in this area, it is also important that understanding is shared by people in a position to drive strategic approaches. They will be able to lead on developing partnerships with other bodies to help implementation and to explore the potential for sharing resources and mainstreaming cohesion within existing services. They will also be able to forward plan for the ABI, in relation to community cohesion.
  
- 52.** Alternative approaches can take place at local, regional and national levels. For instance, the Oldham Independent Review, chaired by David Ritchie, recommended introducing a compact to agree the core elements of the community plan and commitment to sustained main programme finance, in accordance with the direction and timescales agreed within

the plan. In return no further special, short-term ABIs would take place. Whichever approaches are finally chosen, those leading such approaches will need to issue clearer and transparent messages on the intentions.

53. Such an approach would require a joint investment approach by Government and other public sector agencies to deliver certain outcomes and outputs over a period. It might also enable a broader allocation to a variety of neighbourhoods rather than the selection of a few targeted headline areas.

### *Examples of approaches which address leadership accountability:*

Establish within the partnership or accountable body a programme of learning on effective approaches to community cohesion.

Elect a spokesperson/s to lead on cohesion whilst equipping the accountable body as a whole with the necessary tools to engage with all communities.

Ensure there is leadership capacity to manage those strategic issues that will drive cohesion on a significant scale as well as through incremental changes.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

54. An awareness of how ABIs affect communities is essential to help identify whether current practice is increasing tensions and resentment and what should be done to resolve this. It is also imperative that the work of local authorities and partner agencies in implementing ABIs is co-ordinated to ensure cohesive approaches to planning, economic development, leisure and their impact on community plans.

- 55.** Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Local Management Committees (LMCs), will need to monitor and co-ordinate ABI activity within their areas to ensure that there is a clear communication route between them.

## **Measurement**

- 56.** Initiatives should demonstrate how they would measure the impact of their projects on community cohesion. This should be part of the selection criteria used when assessing applications. A guide to measurement, entitled '*Building a Picture of Community Cohesion*'<sup>6</sup> has been produced for local authorities and their partners. This contains some useful information on measurement for those responsible for ABIs.
- 57.** The outputs being measured for any initiative should include qualitative outputs such as changes of attitude and feelings alongside quantitative measurements. Initiatives should also be monitored for their possible impact on community tensions.

## **Mainstreaming Community Cohesion within ABIs**

- 58.** The promotion of cohesion needs to be mainstreamed. Initial funding from ABIs can help start that process. The existing budgets may need to be reconsidered or even re-assembled to reflect the real needs in localities, and also monitored to ensure that longer-term investment is addressed. Addressing community cohesion can be integral to this process.
- 59.** ABIs may well have an impact on mainstream services. Regeneration initiatives are part of a continuum, which require an on-going process of consultation, development, implementation and review.

<sup>6</sup> *Building a Picture of Community Cohesion*, LGA/CRE/ODPM/NRU, 2003

## Conclusion

- 60.** Community cohesion will be affected unless ABIs are reflecting the needs of all communities fairly. The measures suggested in this document are a start to addressing cohesion if we adopt a different way of thinking. A holistic approach is needed by those involved in developing, designing and implementing ABIs to the tasks of consulting, planning and creatively delivering the programmes needed. Positive outcomes will be achieved if those involved at a local level work with others from the outset.
- 61.** It is also important to remember that even within existing programmes the scope for tailoring them more effectively to meet the needs of an area, within a cohesion framework, can be explored.

# developing and

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# delivering Area



## USEFUL WEBSITES

### **Community Cohesion Unit**

[www.communitycohesion.gov.uk](http://www.communitycohesion.gov.uk)

### **Home Office**

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

### **Commission for Racial Equality**

[www.cre.gov.uk](http://www.cre.gov.uk)

### **Local Government Association**

[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

### **ABI Website, Regional Co-ordination Unit**

[www.rcu.gov.uk/abi](http://www.rcu.gov.uk/abi)

### **Neighbourhood Renewal Unit**

[www.neighbourhood.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk)

[www.renewal.net](http://www.renewal.net)

### **Neighbourhood Statistics**

[www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk)

### **New Economics Foundation**

[www.neweconomics.org/default.asp?strRequest=aboutref](http://www.neweconomics.org/default.asp?strRequest=aboutref)

### **Runnymede Trust**

[www.runnymedetrust.org](http://www.runnymedetrust.org)

### **The Inter Faith Network for the UK**

[www.interfaith.org.uk](http://www.interfaith.org.uk)

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**Audit Commission –**

[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)

**Improvement and Development Agency**

[www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)

**IDEA Knowledge – Local Strategic Partnerships Toolkit**

<http://eshtwo2.idea->

[knowledge.gov.uk/80256C1A00481085/httpPublicPages/792F4932369FBFA180256C2A003EC172?open](http://knowledge.gov.uk/80256C1A00481085/httpPublicPages/792F4932369FBFA180256C2A003EC172?open)



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