Commission on
Integration&Cohesion

OUR INTERIM STATEMENT

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Foreword

Why have a commission on integration and cohesion? Are these issues new?

It is true that a number of the challenges we now face in promoting integration and cohesion have been with us for some time including; tackling poverty and inequality, improving housing, employment and raising the educational potential for all.

However the new elements for the Commission and the nation are:

- The pace of change has stepped up markedly over recent years
- Patterns of immigration to the UK and of temporary migration for work purposes have also altered dramatically – the countries of origin and the destinations of choice are now very different
- Debates around identity and "Britishness" often reveal a growing crisis of confidence in who we are as a society and what binds us together.

This means that we are seeing new and complex pictures of diversity in our local communities, reflecting globalisation and economic change. Communities with little experience of migration, particularly in rural areas, are experiencing significant change. Local authorities are feeling ill-equipped to respond to the pace of change without consolidated data. And we are facing big questions about how people and communities of diverse backgrounds can live together comfortably and without fear, respecting differences, yet sharing a common sense of belonging, purpose and pride.

"I am a British Asian". A seemingly simple statement such as this might not have attracted much attention a few years ago, but in today's climate of confusion about identities and shared values this will cause some people to express deeply felt concerns. To understand these concerns we need to acknowledge that our identities are a very personal commodity, that it is perfectly reasonable to have multiple and fluid identities and that for some, fears about migration and change are a result of a lack of confident expression of identity.

We also need to understand the difficulty in imposing shared values: that paradoxically in an effort to bring people together we can exclude them if we don't get the language right, and involve people from the start.

The nature of the debate around integration and cohesion has several characteristics which are of concern to the Commission:

- In our attempt to classify and categorise, we can fall into the trap of assuming that vast groups of people are all the same and can only have one identity
- We have become prone to the habit of simplifying issues to the point of shallowness, which does not allow us to understand the complexities involved
- In an effort to respect difference, we may inadvertently be promoting separation – and in an effort to help newer arrivals integrate, we may inadvertently be leaving behind disaffected groups within white communities in particular
- Some label key institutions as problematic whilst not recognising that they can add real value to integration and cohesion – witness the obsession by some with faith schools as automatically a bad thing without looking at the contribution they have made.

In the centre of this debate it is local leaders and local Councils who have to make sense of it all. It is public managers and teachers who have to deal with increases in demand or the need to change the nature of service provision. It is the voluntary and faith sectors that have to craft new types of approaches which bring people together rather than keep them separate.

But integration and cohesion are all about people and not just policy. The people in local neighbourhoods who have to work to build stronger communities and adapt to changes in the local mix. The people in both settled and new communities who take pride in their contribution to society – and in particular, the young people who often feel disenfranchised by these debates.

And it is about people from all communities, not just minority groups. Our consultation has highlighted a question about re-balancing our perspective. We may need to challenge what can be interpreted by some as an obsession with a narrow focus on minorities and think more "broadband". 39% of the population live in the 86 most deprived areas – that is 19.1m people. Although 65% of people from ethnic minority groups live in these areas, the majority – over 16m – are white. Is it time that we created a clear and explicit strategy to connect and respond with more longer term established communities as well as dealing with the most vulnerable of the new and emerging groups?

This is the arena in which the commission is operating. The interim statement provides a picture of the issues we have covered so far and some of the views that have been expressed to the Commission through our consultation. It covers some of the key issues that will form the foundation of our recommendations to be published in june 2007, including our early thoughts on:

- The barriers to integration and cohesion: including the need for all communities to speak English, and for employers and other responsible parties to take action to achieve that
- The complexity of relations across communities: in an environment where integration and cohesion is no longer just about visible difference or difference in cultural practice, but where tensions also result from competition for shared resources
- The importance of interaction: in education and employment, but also in wider sites including social and sporting clubs
- The resonance of shared values: expressed at a local level through civic pride, but acting as a framework for national identity.

These are not our final recommendations but shape the debates we will have over the next 4 months.

New opinion polling produced for the Commission by MORI has indicated that 82% of people were proud of their local neighbourhood – and that for 57% of those, it was their neighbours and the people that lived nearby that made it a place to be proud of. I am heartened to see evidence of existing civic pride that I think will be the key to taking our work forward.

The Commission is therefore pleased to offer its interim statement on the focus of our work so far, and to present some headline themes emerging from the widespread public consultation process to date. If you have views and ideas on the points in this interim statement, and particularly the 'key insights', we would be very pleased to hear from you.

Darra Singh, OBE
Chair of the Commission

The Commission's journey so far...

1 The Commission is an independent advisory group, appointed by the Communities Secretary, and due to report in June 2007. Commissioners are serving in a personal capacity. We come from different sectors and walks of life, and each have a commitment to promoting confident, compassionate communities where citizens actively tackle local challenges and find practical solutions to them.

2 This interim statement is a short summary of our thinking so far – it signposts several of the areas we think will be important to consider in more detail in our final report, but in an attempt to be brief does not deal with each in full. Essentially, it encapsulates what we have heard to date – without quoting from lots of other work[1], and without making final recommendations at this stage.

3 Since our first meeting in September 2006, we have primarily been 'in listening mode'. As a group, we have visited local communities and areas to understand the barriers to integration and cohesion in

1 Although we recognise that we are building from a solid foundation, and do not want to reinvent messages from landmark reports such as Cantle, Crick and Parekh.

different local situations. We have spoken to researchers and practitioners working on integration and cohesion related projects. We have had over 600 responses to our consultation paper – *'Your chance to tell us what you think'*. And we have held 5 Commission meetings to assess themes and patterns across these inputs.

4 That analysis of patterns is not yet complete, and our consultation is ongoing – this interim statement will therefore not play back everything we have heard. But we would like to thank everyone who has engaged with us in such good time – from individual residents, to voluntary, community and faith sector organisations, and national public bodies. The responses to the consultation in particular provide a unique body of comprehensive statements and supporting evidence. A list of people and organisations who have sent in responses so far is available on the Commission's website, where we have also posted a summary of the key themes and messages emerging by sector. They will continue to inform our work towards the final report – and when that is completed, we will make available a selection of consultation responses and local good practice case studies that you have told us about.

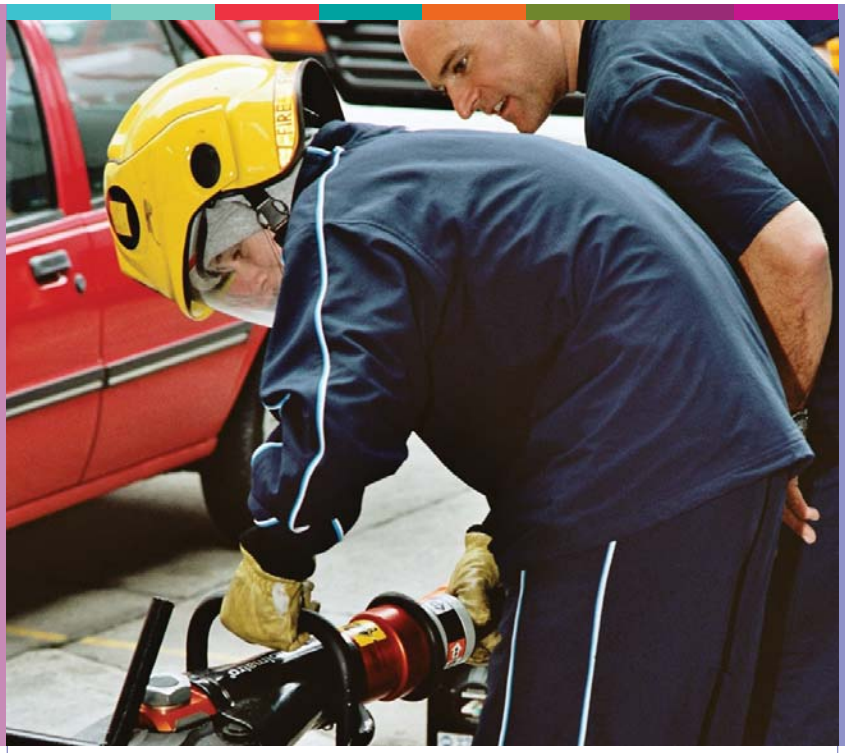
5 In the meantime, our programme of visits to local areas in the different English regions, consultations, special focus 'round tables', meetings and events will continue until May 2007 – including one event aimed specifically at young people. So too will the Commission's programme of research: we have included in this document some initial findings from polling conducted for the Commission by MORI, but full results from this and other research projects will be included in our final report.

6 Finally, from what we have seen and heard so far, we are clear that work to build integration and cohesion has to be both local and practical to unify communities. We have heard about many good examples of individuals, groups and public bodies working in partnership, to develop good community relations in their neighbourhoods – we will be including case studies in our final report and also plan to make them available on our new-look website www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk.

Based on the questions we set out in our consultation document, this interim statement starts by setting out the key challenges we have drawn from the wider context (section A), and by playing back some of the key points about integration and cohesion from the people who have contributed so far (section B).

Section C outlines some of the key barriers to integration and cohesion raised by respondents – with the final sections exploring what they have said about the importance of interaction (section D) and a shared set of values that brings people together to give a sense of belonging and identity (section E).

In structuring this interim statement in this way, we are not being complacent about just how difficult these issues are. And we also recognise that there are many different parts of the debate – from levels of deprivation to shared values – which need to be thought about together. Some of you have told us that the integration and cohesion agenda is at risk of oversimplification – becoming so vague that it is meaningless. We will aim to guard against that in the rest of our work.



A Context

7 Community cohesion is typically characterised in terms of the disturbances of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001. The experience of those towns brought tensions between communities to the surface, sparking a debate about what more could be done to bring people together – respecting differences, but developing a shared sense of belonging and purpose.

8 But as this Commission prepares for our final report in June 2007, it is clear not only that those towns have moved on, but that the debate has too. The pace of economic and social change in our communities, continued campaigning against poverty and deprivation, and an intense media focus in the wake of 7/7 have all combined to create a national debate with wider reach and wider importance.

9 What feels different to us from our first six months of work is that although there are a set of 'chronic' and familiar issues that are still of vital importance to building cohesion (tackling inequalities and

discrimination; ending deprivation and poverty), alongside these are a set of more 'acute' issues. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Rapid change to the UK labour market and workforce:** Young migrant workers are arriving in places that may have limited recent experience of migration (particularly rural and coastal towns). Respondents have highlighted the challenges of using available data to plan for their arrival, and raised questions about how both migrants and settled communities can best respond to these demographic changes.
- **Apparent scrutiny of particular communities:** While it is not within our terms of reference to advance arguments for change in the framework of foreign or domestic policy, some comments we have received have made clear the significance for some of international events, aspects of the UK's foreign policy and of events at home, such as the London bombings of July 2005. Amid increased concern about how to tackle extremism and prevent further acts of terrorist violence, much of the public debate about integration and cohesion has also become strongly linked to issues of how Muslim communities integrate. Many respondents – and not just Muslim respondents – are telling us that we must remember that integration is about **everyone** of every background in the UK finding ways to interact and engage positively for the common good.
- **Increased public concern around immigration:** In May 2006 a regular MORI poll found for the first time that "race relations/immigration/ immigrants" was named as the main issue facing Britain today – the first time it had overtaken crime. Concern about these issues has varied, but in December 2006 a MORI survey commissioned by us showed it to be again at the top of the agenda.
- **Confusion around the idea of 'multiculturalism':** Some respondents highlighted confusion around the term multiculturalism in coverage of particular debates on topics such as schools admissions policy and housing allocation, where it is often used as shorthand for divisions between communities. As a term, it seems to be used to mean different things by different people.

10 Our deliberations are therefore taking place within the context of national and often controversial debates. However, we see our task as being to translate those debates into **practical support for local areas** trying to build communities at the sharp end of some of these questions. When we were appointed as a Commission, we were asked to focus on the local and practical – in recognition of the fact that the impact of these debates varies from one place to the next, and that different circumstances will call for different solutions.

This does not mean we will not make national recommendations, but that where we do, they will stem from local voice, local priorities, or from barriers to local action.

Concern about immigration: how is it reflected locally?

New polling commissioned by us for our final report supports earlier findings that immigration/immigrants is seen as the most important issue facing Britain today – 18% of people identified it as their top concern, ahead of crime. Race relations was only identified by 2% of people, suggesting that it is change within communities rather than visible difference that is causing concern.

But probing on further questions suggests that this national concern is not reflected in people's experience at a local level: only 7% of people thought that for local communities to get on, the people in them had to have the same ethnic background.

11 We also see our task as being about **all** communities. We recognise that many tensions are linked to visible difference or difference in cultural practice, and that existing residents can feel uncomfortable with "newness" or change. But we have also seen that differences and tensions can arise between people from different age or income groups, different political groups, and within the boundaries of single ethnic groups. This makes integration and cohesion 'everybody's business'. It is about the tensions that define a locality and the work that has to be done to mediate those tensions. That is why integration and cohesion is as important in largely white middle class areas as it is the inner city. Recognising the forces that divide means we can act pre-emptively to build bridges and links between groups and individuals.

12 Our focus over the next 4 months will therefore be on how we can move policies on from tending to focus on single groups, to focusing on common barriers that affect everyone. We need to shift our thinking from accentuating difference to one where we use all our efforts to build commonality.

13 But the overall picture is not bleak. While we are hearing about problems with cohesion in some areas, one of the key – and very positive – messages so far is that people believe that they are living together with a good level of tolerance and that tension is overstated as far as their own areas are concerned.

14 And just as positive is the message coming through that many communities are already galvanising around issues that affect their everyday lives, and the physical places and spaces they live in, and want to use safely. (Although many people we have engaged with in recent months have said that progress has

been hard won, and has required determination and tenacity on the part of individuals, and local and national bodies alike).

15 As we set out our initial ideas in the remainder of this document, we all need to recognise that integration and cohesion need constant and sustained work and together we can do more.

B Integration and cohesion – from words to practical realities

Definitions

16 Our consultation paper started by asking people about what integration and cohesion meant to them. Our intention was not to waste valuable time in over-analysing definitions – but what is clear from the results so far is that many people are 'turned off' and distanced by the jargon around the current integration and cohesion debate.

17 When asked to give a short definition of cohesion, for example, most people said that to them cohesion means 'creating supportive communities', where 'everybody feels at home', and 'sticks together', regardless of the pressures such as economic inequalities, or ethnic, racial, faith, political or other differences. That seems to resonate more than the current definition of community cohesion (see Annex B), which people working at a local level seemed to find too high level and aspirational, and which does not seem to them to set out clearly what can be done to achieve cohesive communities.

18 People have also told us that there needs to be agreement on what integration means. It has traditionally been understood as a two way-process that new arrivals and established communities go through, where new people learn enough about the country they have moved to in order to settle effectively; and where existing residents (of whatever race or faith background) adjust to, welcome, and accept their new neighbours. However, when integration is discussed in the public arena, and in particular in the media, it is often perceived as a call for assimilation. The Commission opposes any notion of integration based on assimilation or forced loss of distinctive aspects of group or individual identity – and our task must be to address those misperceptions.

19 As for 'multiculturalism', more heat than light has been generated over the term and whether it is incompatible with integration. The debates have been at times passionate and often confused. Part of the problem seems to be that 'multiculturalism' is a very broad term understood differently by different users – sometimes with the focus on upholding the rights of separate communities clustered within one wider community, and sometimes with the focus on a society where many communities need to live in active engagement with each other (not so far from much thinking about integration). Our view is that we need to update our language to meet the current climate. We therefore intend to avoid using the term 'multiculturalism' in our report because of its 'catch all' and confusing quality. Our focus is on what practical policies we need to make our complex society work – where race, faith, and culture are important, but not the only, elements of that complexity. Where the "dignity of difference[2]" is respected but the building of commonality is paramount.

20 To get to those practical policies, there is therefore an opportunity to provide more user–friendly definitions of integration and cohesion, setting out clearly what integration and cohesion means to people, their families, their interests and democracy. This would not be a return to the drawing board – which would risk disrupting valuable work already happening in communities who have hit the ground running with cohesion – but a chance to spread this crucial work.

21 Based on the consultation responses, this user–friendly definition could have five ingredients:

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

2 *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilization, Jonathan Sacks* (London and New York: Continuum), 2002.

22 But we would like to give this some more thought. In particular, we would like to consider a recommendation in our final report that these ingredients (along with others identified) could be used by practitioners to ask local communities to define what cohesion means for them, particular to their local area. Respondents have told us that ownership of the cohesion agenda works best where communities – not policy makers – determine what integration and cohesion means to them for their neighbourhoods. People may come from different social, economic, political or belief stances when they explain what it means, but our consultation responses indicate that whatever that stance, they believe it is tremendously important – and that they will have different and equally valid contributions to make.

Key challenges

23 It seems to us at this stage that there is a subtle but important difference between the two processes of integration and cohesion. Integration is about responding to difference within our local and national mix – making spaces and places for people from different backgrounds to interact, and enabling both existing and new people to adapt and contribute to their new circumstances. It's important to note as well that 'new arrivals' may be from different places within the UK, given that economic change often means frequent changes to people's jobs.

24 Cohesion is about how we ensure that our complex and mixed society comes together on the basis of common values whilst also celebrating diversity. This has to be flexible enough to respond to, and be resilient to, any strains placed on it by continuing change.

25 Both processes are inter-linked, must go on at the same time, and affect everyone in society, although they may not be equal in their impact on different people. Both are also importantly linked to the development of a wider sense of belonging – as one respondent put it both are about "enabling communities to take pride in their contribution to Britain".

26 But importantly for us, one obvious place for both integration and cohesion to be brought together is in the shaping of a particular place – as local authorities and their partners develop a shared sense of belonging to ensure sustainable and healthy communities. And both integration and cohesion can also be brought together to create a vision of a **shared future** within communities, painting a picture around which all community members can unify.

27 Respondents have also rightly stressed the fundamental importance to integration and cohesion of tackling inequalities – even while recognising that cohesion demands a separate but related approach. For some, integration and cohesion are seen as being one piece of a wider social jigsaw to produce a complete picture for better communities. The themes you mentioned included:

- Reducing inequalities
- Tackling racism and discrimination
- Good quality public services
- Cross cultural communication, including inter faith work
- Improving community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour
- Improving local areas' built environment to provide mixed housing tenure and increase civic space.

28 We have found the idea of a jigsaw useful, but we would like to give more thought to its component pieces. In our efforts to keep the Commission focused on what can be delivered practically to build integration and cohesion, this may help us develop additional ideas for some of the mainstream programmes that can be bent towards the integration and cohesion agenda – something respondents have flagged as having a significant potential impact.

Key insights

There is room for improvement in the language we use to debate integration and cohesion – somewhere between the oversimplified use of terms in some media, and the dry academic debate of research papers, we think there is room for practical guidance for local areas delivering strategies to bring communities together and create shared futures.

We also recognise that integration and cohesion are one element in a wider jigsaw that will ensure a healthy society – and that integration and cohesion are dependent on a foundation of equality and social justice.

C Your thoughts on the key barriers to integration and cohesion

Deprivation and inequalities

29 As outlined above, nearly every response to the consultation so far has told the Commission that isolation, alienation and segregation go hand-in-hand with poverty, inequality, discrimination and other forms of multiple deprivation.

30 This is backed up by analysis of the DCLG Citizenship Survey[3], which has shown that:

- as **deprivation** increases, there is a fall in the number of people who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and a fall in the number who agree that residents respect ethnic differences between people;
- as the level of **ethnic diversity** increases there is no change in the number of people who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together and no change in the

3 *Citizenship Survey, Topic report: community cohesion*, DCLG 2006.

number who agree that residents respect ethnic differences between people.

31 The link with deprivation also chimes with some of our wider questions about whether it is still relevant for local authorities to understand integration and cohesion as primarily being issues that affect Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. While there are a disproportionate number of people from minorities living in deprived areas, and policies to improve their life opportunities will always be critical, further analysis of the Citizenship Survey suggests that white people are most negative about community cohesion (measured by a question about whether people from different backgrounds get on well together), and that white people in deprived areas are particularly negative about how people get on. Our view therefore is that integration and cohesion is about all communities: majority or minority, BME or white, new or settled.

Competition for shared resource

32 People are also telling us that tensions can arise not only from differences between groups but also because of groups in an area competing against each other for resources – education, jobs, housing, welfare payments and public grants are shared concerns that can prove divisive.

33 Importantly, respondents suggest that tensions result from divergent views on who is most entitled to such resources. Perceptions of entitlement are often linked in people's minds to ethnicity and length of residence in the UK. This means that white communities or long settled minority communities may have a perception that other newer communities get unfair, preferential treatment.

34 Local authorities and businesses need to do more to explain how resources and opportunities are allocated; and be aware of the risks of perceptions of favouritism. We have seen examples of excellent work by local councils in clearly articulating the rationale for decisions on where resources should be allocated or who benefits from local projects – including communications campaigns focused both on shared values and on open messages about how public services are delivered.

35 But those same local authorities need to be better equipped to understand how public services should be allocated. In some areas, people feel that the balance between the support provided to established and emerging communities is off-kilter – even if we do not have evidence that is the case. Confidence in the data might be one key step towards this balance – and we have considered with interest a call for the reinstatement of the mid-term census, for example.

Competition for resources: how is it reflected locally?

Headlines from our new MORI polling suggest that 57% of people think that some groups of people in Britain get unfair priority when it comes to public services… but when asked to think about their **local** area in particular, only 25% agree that other people are getting unfair priority over them.

This suggests that the perception that some groups get preferential treatment may be partly a result of the national debate rather than personal and local experience. It gives us food for thought when considering how best to combat perceptions of favouritism – and suggests that good communication is vital.

An inability to speak English

36 Lack of English is something that many of you have said is a critical barrier to integration and communication for new arrivals. We are also conscious that lack of language skills in settled communities can also create social distance. We are therefore adamant that not speaking English is a barrier to integration and cohesion. It hampers people's efforts to integrate economically and to access the labour market. And it prevents them from developing a sense of belonging to bring them together with others.

The most commonly identified barrier to "being English" in our polling was **not speaking English** – with 60% of respondents identifying language as a key issue.

37 More effort is therefore needed to build skills in this area. And when doing this, more consideration needs to be given to the timing and length of language courses. Respondents have told us that it is unrealistic to expect a new migrant worker to attend (and in some cases pay for) English classes after a 12-hour shift on a low wage, for example. But respondents have also identified the key role that employers can play in providing English language classes in the workplace, helping new staff to integrate, and in some cases sharing data with other local partners about population change.

38 We have also heard that there may be a need to review delivery mechanisms at a local level and also ensure that we improve the quality and focus of the language skills on offer – particularly in the light of recent announcements on the linkage between allocation of benefits and the need for people to speak English. We will want to say more about this in our final report – and to

investigate further some of the responses that suggest that in stating the case so plainly for speaking English, we should be aware that there are significant waiting lists for ESOL[4] classes in some parts of the country.

Translation of materials

Our consultation has also uncovered some uncertainty about the appropriateness of translating materials into community languages. Clearly there will be times when translation is necessary – to help new arrivals in particular, and to ensure that vulnerable groups are protected. However, it is also apparent that translation of public materials can also prevent interaction between groups, prevent language skills being developed, and in extreme cases even cause suspicion across groups. There are also costs involved in providing appropriate translations to rapidly changing communities. We will therefore want to say more in our final report about the practical impacts of translation, and to provide guidance on the key questions local authorities should be asking before making decisions as to what to translate.

Fear of crime

39 We have also seen some evidence of the impact that crime and fear of crime have on integration and cohesion. People have told us about the impact of anti social behaviour, no-go areas, and lack of respect, which undermine the common values upon which cohesion is based and put barriers in the way of interaction. Respondents have emphasised that fear of crime makes them less likely to approach their neighbours, and that even low level crime has an impact on how they feel about their public spaces. In our next phase of consultation we want therefore to think more about particular types of crime and their relationship with integration and cohesion.

Residential segregation: we should not overstate the case

40 There has been a lot of debate about whether residential segregation is a major barrier to integration and cohesion. Some have suggested that minority communities have chosen to self segregate; others that the real segregation is about "white flight" (i.e. white residents moving out because of resistance to change), or affluent communities of all ethnic backgrounds choosing to move to more prosperous areas.

41 However, many of the consultation responses contested this view of self-imposed separation in the UK. We should recognise that where people live is a

4 English for Speakers of Other Languages.

combination of choices they can make, and of forces which can restrict those choices. Living together in separate communities is sometimes a matter of choice and sometimes linked to factors such as shared religious requirements. But at other times, it is clearly not entirely a matter of choice and factors such as deprivation, racism and housing allocation (including that provided by private landlords) play a key part in forcing separate living.

42 Others respondents noted that the tenor of the debate was often unhelpful. The assumption underlying the term segregation, for example, seems to be that minority ethnic communities are a problem when they cluster together. We need to be bold about questioning such assertions, and brave in busting such myths. And we should recognise that there can be benefits to communities in gathering together organically – it makes shops, places of worship and other shared cultural facilities viable. Our consultation identified some positive aspects of separateness experienced either as individuals or single-groups:

- Security and safety (when faced with discriminatory or threatening behaviour)
- Similarity – e.g. a need for identity and connection with what they know
- Psychological well-being – occasionally having privacy and space when needed.

43 The separate issue of how residential segregation should be measured was also cited in some responses, alongside the State of the Cities report[5], which shows that while there is statistical evidence of residential segregation in some places, they are few, and that diversity across England is increasing. However, the main message here seemed to be that how people feel about their areas is more important than statistics – that whatever the data suggests, it is people's perceptions that will drive cohesion. Or, as one respondent put it, 'focus first on what people feel not facts'.

44 Going forward, therefore, when we discuss residential segregation, we want to concentrate on process not patterns. We have noted the speed and dynamism of change in a successful economy, compared to the slow pace of change in deprived areas. This is why it is so important that regeneration and the creation of new communities takes integration and cohesion into account – that such schemes have in-built integration and cohesion impact assessments as standard. We would also question why people should have to gather together in certain areas as a form of self defence; or feel that some areas are 'no go areas' not for them.

45 But above all it is our view at this point that it is social segregation more than residential segregation which is the main barrier to integration and cohesion.

5 *State of the English Cities Report*, DCLG, March 2006.

It does not matter where people live, but it's about whether they feel comfortable in meeting and mixing on a day-to-day basis in the following settings:

- Education
- Work
- Healthcare and other public services
- The neighbourhood and public spaces
- By getting involved in making local decisions and democracy
- Places of Worship
- Youth groups such as Scouts/guides
- Voluntary groups
- Shopping, food and leisure activities
- Public transport.

46 The next section of this statement therefore explores the importance of interaction in more detail.

Key insights

Integration and cohesion policies cannot be a substitute for national policies to reduce deprivation and provide people with more opportunities: tackling inequality is an absolute precondition for integration and cohesion.

Competition for limited resources is an additional barrier: cohesion is no longer simply about visible difference or difference in cultural practice, but is also about the concerns that are shared across groups in terms of access to resources. Local participation in decision making is key – and more thought needs to be given about how resources are allocated, particularly in areas of shortage.

A shared language is essential to integration and cohesion: provision of language lessons is therefore critical, and employers have a key role here.

Data on residential segregation is important, but what really matters is how people feel on the ground. Within that context, though, residential segregation is not a key barrier to integration and cohesion – efforts to reduce segregation must therefore focus on ensuring people are given the opportunity to meet and mix socially and in informal ways.

D Integration and cohesion – interaction is key

47 Interaction serves to build a bank of 'social capital'[6] in communities. It builds better citizens, provides links between people which can help solve problems and conflict, and allows the sharing of knowledge and resources. We recognise that talking about these interactions as "friendships" makes it sound as if there is no sharp edge to integration and cohesion – and that it risks undermining the seriousness of interaction across groups. But what should concern the whole nation is the cumulative effect of a lack of interaction across whole areas of our daily lives means that we are drifting into division.

48 Many people have told us about how lack of social interaction undermines a sense of community, through:

- Insularity and parochialism
- Ignorance

6 *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* by Robert D. Putnam (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

- Exclusionary behaviour, activities and space
- Discrimination
- An inability to relate to others, poor social skills
- Selfishness, or an over emphasis on personal rights over responsibility to the local community.

49 We recognise that we cannot force people to interact with others, make links with them or be friends. And that in some cases, fear or unfamiliarity prevents people from getting involved with their communities. But it can happen organically if the right conditions and environment are provided – and we have heard evidence of a wide range of benefits:

- A reduction of prejudice and anxieties
- A reduction in seeing others in terms of stereotypes, a greater likelihood to see others as individuals
- Greater understanding and trust
- An ability to generalise from encounters – i.e. that positive feelings about one person from a group are transferred to others in that group.

50 Many of you have said that for interaction to have these benefits, we cannot just encourage any random mixing – if we throw people together, then we risk a negative interaction. But the best interactions were identified as those that:

- Are in depth and sustained
- Are positive
- Acknowledgement of differences as part of the interaction
- Are around shared activities and common issues
- Take place in everyday, safe contexts – school, work & neighbourhood.

Social mixing across groups: how is it reflected locally?

We asked the people in our opinion poll how often they had mixed socially with people from different ethnic groups to them – and found that although relatively large numbers of people interacted with others in everyday settings such as work and the shops, these chance interactions were not being translated into meaningful relationships:

– 32% indicated that they had daily contact with other ethnic groups at work, school or college, for example. 47% had at least weekly contact with other ethnic groups at the shops.

– But 42% indicated that at their home, they mixed socially with people of other ethnic groups **less than once a year**. And only 33% of people surveyed had mixed socially outside work or school with people of different ethnic groups from themselves.

Given what we understand so far about the need for interactions to be meaningful in order to promote integration and cohesion, it is worrying that more sustained encounters are not being developed. But our work has uncovered positive signs about the sorts of areas that might help us influence interactions in our four key areas: schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods and arts/cultural.

51 One of the key roles for public agencies is therefore to identify the main areas of social segregation, and to gauge when and how to address it, so that it doesn't widen fault-lines in communities. Councils and other public bodies have a key role to play in promoting citizenship, getting people involved in local decisions, and in providing good quality public services that are accessible to everyone. And for integration and cohesion to work, public bodies need to be brave in challenging discrimination and mistreatment, as citizenship in itself will not eradicate discrimination.

52 It is for local authorities – as the stewards of overall social, economic and environmental well-being – to find pragmatic approaches in their local areas. Elected members also have key role to play in their neighbourhood and ward roles in connecting with residents, and in supporting local communities in shaping the place in which they live. The "community call to action" in the recent Local Government White Paper[7] will give added importance to the Council's mainstream scrutiny function and the transparency of decision making.

53 One thing we want to resolve before we make any recommendations on this issue is the relative importance of interaction to improving integration and cohesion compared to, for example, reducing inequalities. This is by no means a straight trade off. But given limited local authority budgets, we need to be able to identify the different value of interactions.

7 *Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Local Government White Paper*, DCLG, 26 October 2006.

54 However, from what we have heard so far there are four key areas where interaction can take place:

- The starting point for positive meaningful interaction needs to be at **school**. We need to give children the skills, knowledge and opportunities to interact. In a complex society, children and adults need the life skills of effective communication, mentoring, mediation and 'lively conversation'. School twinning is a good start, but we would like to see more sustained efforts – providing space for discussion of issues which affect and are relevant to children and young people, and which they can come together and work on. There are, of course, different issues involved in pupil interaction depending on whether schools have a diverse student body or whether pupils are mainly from one background. We note that a duty to promote community cohesion has been placed on the governing bodies of maintained schools, which will be accompanied by a duty on the Chief Inspector of Schools to report as part of routine school inspections on the contribution made by schools in this respect. We also note with interest the recent findings on citizenship education – particularly suggestions about education for a more global type of citizenzhip[8]. We believe that there may be particular opportunities for further development of this agenda, to include an understanding of how 14–19 reform and Further Education institutions can be harnessed to build cohesion.
- We then need to continue to provide these opportunities after school – and the **workplace** is paramount in this. Work defines our place and status in society. It gives us the chance to meet and work toward common goals with people from different groups; and it allows us to develop our skills, achieve success and reach our potential. But workplaces do not always reflect the diversity of the local community, invest in developing a diverse workforce, and can be intolerant of difference and non-conformity. And yet, as one consultation response – pointed out: '*much human progress (in justice, arts, sciences, services etc) has emerged because people have thought and acted in ways which did not conform to a single norm*.' There is a real opportunity for employers, and trade unions to become facilitators for integration and cohesion, by ensuring people get a fair wage, for a fair day's work; and that they invest in the changing workforce to eradicate gender, occupational and wage segregation.
- Outside of education and employment, **sports, culture and leisure** are key sites of possible interaction. In particular, these social activities provide a common purpose and shared goals around which communities can unify. We want to look into how we could promote neighbourliness and community service. We are wary of suggestions that solutions should be

8 *Diversity & Citizenship Curriculum Review*, DFES, January 2007.

imposed rather than it being made easier for grassroots organisations to develop the welfare, cultural and sporting activities that many of you have said are so important to driving integration, and shaping culturally sensitive services. And we recognise that local democracy is key here, so we should be encouraging local groups to come together to tackle an issue such as improving the local environment or roads.

– **Shared public spaces and residential areas** – although as outlined above, the importance of residential segregation is often over-emphasised. We want to think more about how to build integration and cohesion at a neighbourhood level by using community pride. We should not forget the importance of public spaces for interaction. Good small scale urban design should provide places to meet and mix – parks, shops, open spaces and so on, that people feel they are safe in, and can share together.

55 And our thinking so far has been about the layers of separation across these four areas. It still seems possible for some communities not to interact at all in these spheres, and to therefore be living separate but "parallel lives[9]".

Encouraging interaction: how is it reflected locally?

Going to work, school or college together emerged as the top way of encouraging interaction in our recent opinion poll, with 47% of people identifying using shared education resources as a motivation towards mixing together. This would suggest that improving the value of these everyday education and employment interactions would have a significant impact on cohesion.

But interestingly, the second most popular answer was social events – 30% of people thought that socialising outside of school or work encouraged mixing, and 22% thought that shared hobbies and sports clubs were important. If one of our challenges is to improve the earlier statistic that suggested 42% of people did not mix with others at home, social events and shared interests seems to provide that opportunity.

56 In an increasingly complex society, the public sector is not necessarily the appropriate facilitator of interactions to mediate this. Faith communities, community development workers, youth groups, clubs and societies and voluntary and community sector organisations as a whole have a key role to

9 *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team* Chaired by Ted Cantle, Home Office 2001.

play in providing locally delivered responsive, flexible services that respond to local need. In particular we have heard about the important role that many churches and other faith bodies are playing as first staging posts in the journey towards integration of new arrivals. Local empowerment will mean that third sector organisations can continue to reach the parts of communities that public sector bodies cannot.

Shared routes, not separate roots: Funding to promote interaction

We see merit in the view that public sector funding for bodies representing particular communities should come with a requirement to demonstrate that they support integration and cohesion. But the burden of this expectation falls on local authorities and grant-making organisations, who must balance capacity building for particular communities and the continued protection of distinct identities with the need to promote a spirit of openness and collaboration.

Some respondents suggested that **all** publicly funded programmes should have in-built integration and cohesion criteria, asking programme deliverers to show how their work has brought about interaction and built bridges between two or three groups that have traditionally not engaged with one another. We want to hear more on this as we move forward and will provide further guidance alongside our final report.

57 We also need to consider how the media and leading political figures can discourage interaction by perpetuating negative and unhelpful stereotypes. With accurate information and a balanced viewpoint, both the media and leading politicians can play a key role in sharing people's stories and in busting inaccurate myths.

58 Finally, some people have told us that they see faith schools as a significant barrier to integration and cohesion. Others, especially from faith communities, have said that faith schools are vital to helping their young people develop as strong and confident British citizens. Our initial thinking is put faith schools in the same category as residential segregation, almost as a 'red herring' in the debate – i.e. there is no problem as long as there is social interaction outside the faith school, and the faith school is delivering a quality service to its pupils

to help them realise their potential in wider society. But we are aware of other work[10] currently being carried out looking at faith schools and cohesion and will aim to reflect relevant recommendations in our final report.

Key insights

We should be doing more to provide people with the opportunity to interact, and to remove the barriers to interaction

We cannot just encourage any interaction — it has to be meaningful and sustained, in a constructive and safe setting, and if possible focused around practical actions where communities work together to improve their local neighbourhood or area

Schools, employers, faith communities, the third sector, local leaders, public bodies, urban planners and the media all have a vital role to play in encouraging interaction

10 *Faith Schools and Community Cohesion, Runnymede Trust 2007*. (Unpublished)

E Shared values and a local sense of belonging

59 The Commission's focus is on strengthening local communities, and our starting point is that a strong local community is one where people have a real sense of belonging. That means having a clear sense of place and of being a welcome and valued contributor to local life. Early responses to our consultation have underlined the importance of this – but have also raised broad questions about what local belonging means in a context of national and global belonging.

60 One of the current major national debates is about what it means to be British. Is it about having an agreed set of values such as freedom, democracy, fairness? Is it about history? Culture? And how does Britishness fit with other geographical and cultural aspects of identity?

61 Identity is important, but we must be cautious about pigeon-holing people. Across recent decades, there has been increased use of monitoring to help ensure fair and appropriate service delivery and to underpin equal opportunities – commissioners recognise the

great importance of this. At the same time, we note that many respondents so far have indicated that they don't want to be 'put in a box' and to have only one part of their identity recognised. Individuals belong to overlapping communities, and will emphasise different aspects of their identity at different times. The Commission also recognises that these multiple identities will change as people change, and that for some individuals some identities are equally important as others.

62 We also recognise that "Britishness" is an important unifying force, and our early thinking is that it is at its best when developed in a way that resonates with all communities. A focus on the local provides a practical shared concern for communities to rally around.

63 We are therefore coming to the view that shared civic values are the best way to make national debates resonate with people – struck by the fact that our polling indicates that 82% of people are proud of their local neighbourhood, and might therefore more prepared to unify around it. And our consultation feedback to date indicates overwhelmingly that values of citizenship need to be at the heart of any definition of integration and cohesion, alongside any 'ground rules' this definition might develop.

National pride: how is it reflected locally?

Since our launch, the World Values Survey has shown that 56% of Britons identify with their locality first, compared to 26% with the nation.

But the results of our polling are somewhat different. They show that for 29% of people, identified most with their immediate neighbourhood – but that for 26% of people, Britain was what gave them a sense of their identity.

And when we combined results, 40% of people identified with either Britain, England, Wales or Scotland, whereas 38% chose a more local emphasis – answering that their neighbourhood, local authority area or county was the space they identified most with.

We want to do more analysis of this in time for our final report, but it suggests that both national pride and local civic pride could be of equal importance when we are considering policies to build integration and cohesion.

And our sense from our consultation to date is that a focus on the local may well be what makes Britishness mean something to people at grassroots level. Government might facilitate the debate by setting out a framework of civic values and providing a common language for people to talk about identity, but our view is that this would then need to be taken forward at a local level as part of local communities' efforts to build a sense of belonging.

64 This is a clear opportunity for local government – strong civic values were what made it great in the past, for instance in the period after the industrial revolution these values were reflected in the development of buildings, parks, museums and philanthropic foundations that made a real difference to people living in towns and cities across the country. In some respects, the pace and scale of current economic and social change is not incomparable with the industrial revolution, and we should therefore be considering our response in this light – by fostering a local debate on shared values based around a national framework, helping the local devolution discussed in the Local Government White Paper, and enabling local authorities to negotiate local identities by posing the question 'What is it to be from Birmingham?" (for example) and seeing if a local consensus can be built.

65 An inclusive approach to local empowerment, based on the foundations of meaningful engagement of communities, and built around community development, will help connect people and places, so that local communities themselves will be positioned to tackle many of the challenges they face. This is where we need to recognise that community development grants – even small ones – go a long way for residents and voluntary and community sector organisations alike.

What might those shared civic values be?

66 We are still listening to what people are saying about things that bring them together and give them a common sense of belonging and sense of identity. The Commission's first reflections on a possible framework of civic values reflect suggestions from our consultation:

- Respect for the rule of law
- Democracy and engagement
- Protecting the disadvantaged
- Commitment to make a contribution and participate e.g. volunteering, school governors, becoming a councillor, attending area forums
- Commitment to equality and fair play, not looking to blame

- Listening to all views and not excluding any
- Interaction and communication, including learning English
- Freedom of speech where it doesn't incite harm to others.

67 But we would like to hear more from you about what shared values mean to you. Some people who replied to the consultation process have suggested any 'decent society' has two main characteristics – tolerance and diversity. Others have told us that a set of unifying bonds in any such society will feature values of 'equality'; 'concern for other citizens'; 'social inclusion'; safety and protection; 'justice'; and 'active citizenship'.

68 Respondents also highlighted the need for basic rights along with shared values, linking integration and cohesion once more with wider questions of inequality and deprivation. But if we are to build healthy communities, responsibilities sit alongside those rights. This seems to come into sharper focus when people mention new arrivals in their communities: respondents have told us that new arrivals have a responsibility as part of the integration process to learn about accepted norms of behaviour, for example, including small things like disposing of litter and not fly-tipping. However, there was also recognition that these responsibilities are a matter for **all communities**, whether new or settled. Treating others courteously was something people thought was a basic individual responsibility, for example.

How can civic values respond to change?

69 From what we have heard so far, it is clear that we need to express more clearly what binds us together, and what values and skills are needed for us to live together. And our sense is that we should lead on the local – to directly associate shared values with the places in which people live and interact. Some respondents have argued that citizenship classes should be for both schools and the neighbourhoods in which they are situated for example, which would be one way of making place-based values come to life.

70 But in the current climate of demographic change, it's important to note that the local is often influenced by the global. And that although people strongly identify with the place in which they live, the diversities within those places are the results of processes of globalisation that have restructured our economy and our cultural horizons. There are transnational identities that sit above place. And there are global networks that influence particular places – as conflicts from abroad are played out locally.

71 These global networks are not just important for migrant communities. The support for global movements in civil society such as Greenpeace or Amnesty, the global links of the major faiths, or the support networks of high

profile sporting brands (such as Real Madrid or Manchester United) generate 'cultural traffic' that crosses the world. This sense of a connected globe restructures the way we think about the place in which we live and the way it is shaped by changing patterns of integration and cohesion.

72 We are coming to a view therefore that integration and cohesion will always be about place, but that it must also consider the global networks that will influence that place. This sense of how patterns of globalisation are locally realised, internationally linked and routed through particular places is sometimes known as a process of 'glocalisation'. A recognition of the manner in which the place-shaping function acknowledges these global networks reinforces the importance of the local settlement at the heart of processes of integration and cohesion emphasised throughout this interim statement. In part we are living at a time when issues of national identity and local identity remain important but the coming together of global processes in particular localities might be understood as a form of **'new glocalism'**. We are interested in this idea and want to give more thought to how experiences of other countries can reflect back on our own experience.

Key insights

National pride is important but it needs to be developed in a way that resonates with all communities. Before we talk about national identity, we need a common language.

Our sense from our consultation to date is that a focus on the local may well be what makes Britishness mean something to people at grassroots level. The Government can facilitate debate without being prescriptive, by setting out a framework of civic values and providing a common language for people to talk about identity.

We are coming to a view that integration and cohesion will always be about place. And that any discussion about identity needs to be taken forward at a local level as part of the efforts of local communities to build a sense of belonging.

Frank Hout, Commissioner, chairing a recent workplace seminar

What happens next: the Commission's work for the rest of its lifetime

73 We are now half way through our work, and will report in full by the end of June 2007. Our final report will take the themes set out in this interim statement, and will explore them further. In particular, we expect to be able to say much more about the role of local institutions, such as councils, faith communities and race equality councils, in building integration and cohesion; about how work to build integration and cohesion is particularly important to women and young people; and more about particular groups who are often ignored, such as Travellers.

74 In terms of our internal Commission meetings, we plan to have further discussions on:

- Political trust and community participation
- The challenges posed to communities by extremism
- Tackling negative attitudes, perceptions and behaviours (including racism)
- Local leadership and vision.

75 We may adjust this agenda in the light of feedback on this interim statement, but our feeling is that those are the remaining themes that need to be explored. When we discuss extremism, we will not be focussed on the "either/or" of tackling Islamist extremism or far right extremism – instead we will be considering the tensions that both types of extremism bring to communities and what communities can do about them.

76 We hope this document will trigger further debate, and would urge you to continue to contribute to our conversations. Where we have been offered meetings, we will endeavour to take up as many as possible. Where you have ideas for projects or organisations that we should speak to, we would be happy to hear from you. Our outreach will continue over February, March and April, before we settle down to finalise our recommendations and report during May 2007.

It's not too late to tell us what you think...

Our first consultation deadline was set for mid January so that we could ensure early inputs into our thinking. But if you have more thoughts and ideas in response to this document, please let us know via coic@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Annex A Our terms of reference

The Commission's terms of reference are:

- Examining the issues that raise tensions between different groups in different areas, and that lead to segregation and conflict
- Suggesting how local community and political leadership can push further against perceived barriers to integration and cohesion
- Looking at how local communities themselves can be empowered to tackle extremist ideologies
- Developing approaches that build local areas' own capacity to prevent problems, and ensure they have the structures in place to recover from periods of tension.

The Commission's work is grounded in an understanding of current and future patterns of diversity, but will focus on developing practical solutions for local communities based on the best existing practice.

Annex B Definitions of Community Cohesion

The current national definition (*Guidance on Community cohesion* (LGA 2002)) is that a cohesive community is one where:

- There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities
- The diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities and
- Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

As outlined above, our intention is not to spend the next four months devoting time to new wording – particularly as this definition of cohesion is already being used in local authorities and their partners, and any proposed changes in our final report would therefore have a

direct impact on delivery. But from what we hear so far, this definition has a number of shortcomings.

Principal of these is a level of confusion about how it relates to integration, and to words like multiculturalism and segregation. And, as we have outlined above, we feel that uncertainty around vocabulary is reflective of the fact that the debate around integration and cohesion has moved on without the practical tools for local authorities being updated in response.

Research conducted since this definition was formulated has also suggested it may need expanding. In particular, further analysis of Citizenship Survey (Crime and cohesive communities Home Office Online Report 19/06) identified five key factors linked to cohesion:

- ***Sense of community:*** whether people enjoy living in their neighbourhood and are proud of it, whether people look out for each other and pull together.
- ***Similar life opportunities:*** the extent to which people feel they are treated equally by a range of public services.
- ***Respecting diversity:*** whether people feel that ethnic differences are respected within their neighbourhood.
- ***Political trust:*** do people feel they can trust local politicians and councillors and do they feel that their views are represented?
- ***Sense of belonging:*** whether people identify with their local neighbourhood and know people in the local area.

In our final report, we will therefore want to say more about language and definitions and new research emerging around them, and would welcome any further inputs on this area.

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