

Building community cohesion in Britain

Lessons from iCoCo local reviews

BUILDING COMMUNITY COHESION IN BRITAIN
LESSONS FROM iCoCo LOCAL REVIEWS

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Kenneth Ohisa (businessman) quoted in the “Observer”, 18th January, 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this study, commissioned by EHRC, we draw on the 15 or so local reviews we have carried out between 2006 and 2008, identifying key themes and conclusions to help other local agencies learn from our experience in their efforts to build community cohesion at a local level.

Introduction

We discuss in the introductory section the legal context and the ways in which the Audit Commission and other inspectorates now hold local agencies to account on community cohesion. We review the range of definitions of community cohesion and highlight the ways in which individual local partnerships have developed their own statements to reflect their local circumstances. We also describe the measures used as indicators of community cohesion and bring together some lessons and responses to these issues – emphasising, as we do throughout the report, the importance of reflecting local circumstances in developing approaches to community cohesion; and to basing such approaches on local data and intelligence.

Findings

The section on our findings includes discussion of:

- changing populations – in particular the consequences of international migration;
- the common experience of “parallel lives” and sense of isolation and lack of contact or interaction between communities, the associated inequalities, and issues of communal politics, and the experience of white working class communities;
- the role of the voluntary, community and faith sectors;
- education in schools – including segregation, the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion, inter-community tensions, and underachievement;
- community safety and gangs and gang culture
- housing
- work
- intergenerational tensions and conflict
- the far right and extremism

Drawing out lessons and responses to our findings, we highlight examples of good practice, such as initiatives to increase understanding of and interaction with refugees and asylum seekers. We also illustrate the ways in which local partners can use locally available data as the basis for locality focused initiatives to build community cohesion – for example in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. We also draw attention to local politicians’ roles in tackling communal politics and to ways in which the statutory sector can support and build capacity in the voluntary, community and faith sectors.

In the context of education, we highlight examples of good practice such as school twinning, and projects to tackle bullying, racial stereotyping and racism, to resolve local conflict and tension. We also draw attention to initiatives aimed at tackling gangs and gang culture.

Lessons and recommendations

The final section draws out key themes reflected in the recommendations and proposals we have offered to the local authorities and their partners who have invited us to carry out reviews. These are:

- the importance of **vision and values**: community cohesion needs to be seen to be “owned by the local authority and its partners, not treated as an externally imposed “tick box” requirement; and it needs to respond to the needs of **all** communities in the area;
- the need for **leadership**: leaders in local authorities and their partners must demonstrate that community cohesion is fundamental to all their organisations’ activities, not the preserve of a small team; and the importance of providing training and **training and support** to ensure that all involved have the confidence and understanding to deliver;
- a **strategy**, probably at Local Strategic Partnership level, underpinned by clear plans for individual organisations, reflected in other strategies or initiatives such as the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Community Safety Strategy, according to local circumstances and priorities;
- the key role of **communications and engagement** – and the importance of openness and transparency in myth busting and challenging misinformation;
- **performance management** – and the need to brigade all available local data to give a clear picture of the needs and circumstances of each locality and to monitor the impact of interventions to build community cohesion, including the use of National Indicators;
- the key role and importance of **effective partnerships** in delivering community cohesion, including the voluntary, community and faith sectors.

Possible Impact of Recession

We were also asked by the EHRC to identify any lessons from our studies which may be of relevance in helping local agencies develop their responses to the recession. Practically all the studies reflected in this report were conducted before the impact of the current economic downturn. However, we identify in the final section some of the lessons from our work in less pressured times which may be of relevance in meeting the current challenges, or at least in anticipating possible risks, in areas such as:

- housing: one effect of the recession will be to place increasing pressures on social housing, with the consequential risk of creating new or additional sources of grievance amongst those who feel particularly deprived, or cheated of support.
- likely increases in crime levels/deprivation and the potentially disproportionate effect on deprived communities amongst which Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities tend to be concentrated;
- pressures on funding to voluntary, community and faith sectors at the same time as the needs of the communities they serve increase;
- maintaining effective partnerships at times of financial constraint;
- unemployment and its likely disproportionate effect on minority communities;
- the anecdotal evidence from some areas that economic migrants from Eastern Europe are leaving to return to their countries of origin. If this proves to be the case,

there may be some impact on local economies with consequences for community cohesion;

- increasing xenophobia and support of the far right as we have seen in recent industrial action protesting about the employment of “foreign” workers (albeit from within the EU) and the slogan: “British Jobs for British Workers”.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Since its establishment in 2005, a key part of the work of the Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo) has been its involvement at local level, carrying out reviews of community cohesion, looking at local issues concerning young people and extremism, and “mapping” local faith communities. Our reports often contain detailed policy recommendations and as such remain confidential to the local authorities or Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) who commissioned us in the first place. But there are many common issues, emerging themes and lessons to be learned, which may be equally applicable more widely, and these are the focus of this document.

We have been invited by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission to identify key themes from our local reviews (conducted for the most part between 2006 and 2008, as well as emerging findings from reviews currently underway) and to identify examples of good practice which contribute positively to the building of good relations in the local context.

Our reviews have been conducted in a variety of local authorities (primarily urban) across the country: 2 in the North West, 1 in the North East, 1 in Yorkshire and Humberside; 2 in the West Midlands, 4 London Authorities, 2 in the South East, and 1 in the South West of England.

1.1 About iCoCo and our methodology

The Institute was established in 2005 to provide a new approach to race and diversity and, in particular, to focus on the development of harmonious community relations. iCoCo is a unique partnership of academic, statutory, and non-governmental bodies, which combines the experience and expertise of four universities – namely Coventry, Warwick, DeMontfort and Leicester. Other key partners include Coventry and Leicester City Councils, Barrow Cadbury and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). In addition, the iCoCo team come from a wide range of backgrounds and professions.

iCoCo is committed to “improvement from within” – to working with local authorities by building on their current strengths. We therefore operate as a “critical friend”, constantly questioning and challenging, but also trying to find ways of supporting Councils in improving community cohesion by bringing good practice and expertise to the recommendations we make.

Our studies typically involve:

- a review of key policy documents and a comprehensive statistical profile compiled from relevant data sources, to establish the facts and assess the approach to promoting community cohesion taken by the Council and its partners;
- one to one interviews with key stakeholders, including front line practitioners, across a range of relevant organisations such as the Council, LSP, police, NHS, voluntary, community and faith sectors – to identify what they see as the key issues, how well current initiatives are working and key priorities for the future;

- the views of local people themselves, using focus groups with participants from community and faith groups, such as residents' associations, women and young people's organisations, FE and school students etc. This process provides a perspective from "ordinary residents" on the state of community relations in their localities and, more widely, their assessment of what is being done and what needs to be done in the future. The 15 plus studies we have done since 2006 have involved more than 1000 key stakeholders in one to one interviews more than 3000 individuals of all ages from a range of ethnic, faith, political and economic backgrounds who have participated in focus groups.

This combination of a qualitative with a quantitative assessment provides a richer, more rounded and balanced picture of local circumstances than can be obtained by reliance on more conventionally obtained data.

1.2 The context: audit, accountabilities and the law

The "business case" for community cohesion is increasingly recognised – for example in the context of economic growth and regeneration. The increasingly systematic approach to tension monitoring is reinforcing the importance of this field of activity at local level. And the principles of community cohesion are reflected in the criteria used by the Audit Commission, OFSTED and other inspectorates, as well as featuring in Local Area Agreements (LAAs). Around 90 local areas have identified 'community cohesion' as a performance target; and in many Multi Area Agreements.

In terms of legislation, the Race Relations Amendment Act of 2000 introduced a General Duty on public bodies to promote race equality and subsequent legislation has introduced similar duties in respect of gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age. And the Education and Inspections Act 2006 placed a duty on all maintained schools in England to promote community cohesion (with effect from September 2007), and on OFSTED to report on contributions made in this area (with effect from September 2008). The Equalities Act of 2006 also brought into being the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) with a responsibility to promote good relations. Many Local Authorities are combining Equalities, Diversity and cohesion at policy, management arrangements and staff levels.

1.3 Definitions

Most of the Councils we have been involved with have taken as a starting point the initial, **Local Government Association** (LGA) definition of Community Cohesion, formulated in 2002 as part of the national response to the disturbances in Burnley, Bradford and Oldham in 2001, namely

"A cohesive community is one where:

- There is common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
 - The diversity of people's different 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.'
- LGA (2002)"

As work and thinking about community cohesion and related issues has developed and as the circumstances in local areas have changed, there have also been new definitions. The **Commission for Integration and Cohesion** in 2007 defined an integrated and cohesive community as one with:

- “a defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and groups to a future local or national vision
- a strong sense of an individual’s local rights and responsibilities
- a strong sense that people with different backgrounds should experience similar life opportunities and access to services and treatment
- a strong sense of trust in institutions locally, and trust that they will act fairly when arbitrating between different interests and be subject to public scrutiny
- a strong recognition of the contribution of the newly arrived, and of those who have deep attachments to a particular place – focusing on what people have in common
- positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, schools and other institutions.”

Most recently, **Communities and Local Government** (in 2008) state that

“Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

Our vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on three foundations:

- People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities
- People knowing their rights and responsibilities
- People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly

And three ways of living together:

- A shared future and sense of belonging
- A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
- Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.’

At a local level, we found that many of the authorities we worked with had a level of understanding of community cohesion that tended to incorporate and often go beyond the official definition promulgated by CLG with commitments such as:

“Our vision is that everyone in the Borough [A] will be able to live peacefully and in harmony with their neighbours and their communities.”

“A more cohesive [B] is a place where:

- people from different backgrounds and ages “get on well” together;
- there are positive interactions between people of different backgrounds and ages;
- diversity is seen as a strength and not a barrier;
- people have a sense of “belonging” and that this is shared with others;
- people are aware of, understand and value differences and similarities;
- people from different backgrounds feel local resources and opportunities are fairly distributed.”

The Council and the City of [C] Local Strategic Partnership aspire to [C] becoming a City where:

- “There is equality of opportunity, where everyone can reach their full potential, access similar life opportunities and expect a good quality of life;

- Diversity is respected, valued and celebrated;
- People from different backgrounds feel they belong, and can develop strong and positive relationships within neighbourhoods, and in work, education and leisure;
- All people can participate in community life, be active citizens, and play a positive role in developing [C]'s vision for its future."

[D] defines a cohesive community as a community:

- "to which people are proud to say they belong;
- where people from different ethnic, religious and social backgrounds and with different incomes live side-by-side in peace and safety;
- which is not disfigured by racism or other forms of prejudice, and
- where people treat each other with courtesy and respect;
- where people support each other when they are in need, and where
- conflicts can be resolved rather than festering or growing;
- where people receive, and feel they receive, fair treatment from
- organisations providing services, facilities and employment opportunities; and
- people are able to contribute to decisions which affect their lives, and to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life of the community."

[D] is also committed to

- "work together to reduce inequalities with the aim of ensuring that everyone in the Borough enjoys a decent quality of life.'

[E] sets out five key priorities in its Community Cohesion Strategy – namely

- "building local pride and sense of belonging
- promoting knowledge and understanding between communities;
- engaging and supporting young people;
- addressing social tensions and conflict and responding to the threat from political and other forms of extremism; and
- mainstreaming community cohesion."

1.4 Preventing Violent Extremism and Community Cohesion

Much of the recent interest in community relations and community cohesion and funding for local initiatives, has been linked to the Government's focus on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) in the wake of the London Bombings in 2005.

In working in local areas where extremism has been seen as an issue, we realised the need to strike a note of caution about the risks of focusing (or appearing to focus) exclusively or excessively on this agenda, without regard to issues of wider community cohesion in the area. In general we have found that local authorities and their partners have been rightly reluctant to concentrate on PVE, rather than cohesion because of the risk of their Muslim communities feeling stereotyped and targeted as "terrorists", and non Muslim communities feeling that disproportionate resources have gone to Muslim Communities.

'Muslims feel labelled as the new racists – pushing shariah law and this is not right'
(Asian female in focus group discussion in [H])

In a number of places we have worked PVE funding has been divisive within Muslim communities with different Mosques and strands of opinion lining up behind those willing to take PVE funding and those not. To avoid further alienating opinion within Muslim Communities, many Local Authorities have taken a wide view of how PVE funding should be applied. Muslim leaders have also expressed concern that 'cowboy' voluntary sector organisations see PVE funding as a money making opportunity. Local Authority Officers have

also expressed concern on coming up with effective performance indicators and targets to monitor and hold PVE funded initiatives to account.

1.5 Measures of community cohesion and segregation

Community Cohesion

Most of the areas we have reviewed use local surveys of their residents and, to a greater or lesser extent, public perception measures of community cohesion drawn from Best Value Performance Indicator General User Surveys such as the percentage of their residents who:

- think that their area is a place where people of different social backgrounds get on well together (the headline Government measure);
- feel that they belong to their neighbourhood;
- agree that their area is a place where ethnic differences between people are respected;
- agree that people in the area treat one another with respect and consideration;
- are satisfied with their area as a place to live;
- agree that theirs is a close-knit neighbourhood where the majority of people share the same values;
- think at least some or many of their neighbours are to be trusted;
- are willing to help each other and contribute to social networks;
- are prepared to take part in formal volunteering activities;
- consider people being attacked because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion to be a problem in their area;
- think they can influence or participate in decisions affecting their local area; and/or
- think they can influence or participate in decisions affecting their local area by working together with other people;
- would like to be more involved in decisions affecting their local area;
- think their Council trustworthy;
- think the Council treats all types of people fairly; and
- think improving race relations an important factor in making an area a good place to live.

Similar measures are included in the National Indicators for Stronger and Safer Communities to be gathered in the Place Survey. A fuller picture can be revealed by comparing the views of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities with those of all residents.

When taken with local demographic information (as discussed below), such as housing patterns, employment and educational levels, crime levels, age, ethnicity, and levels of deprivation, it is possible to build a rich picture of the position in the local authority area as a whole and at locality level.

Segregation

Many of the areas we have worked in are diverse in both ethnic and faith terms. They are all, to a greater or lesser degree, experiencing change in their populations with the impact of “new” migrants – in particular economic migrants from EU countries and refugees and asylum seekers (as we discuss in more detail below) and in terms of population turnover and ‘churn’.¹ Much of the recent discussion and concern about diverse communities in localities, has been focused on “segregation” or the lack of integration into the wider community. This issue has

¹ See, for example, COHDMAP: iCoCo Toolkit for Estimating Population Change; and Estimating the Scale and Impacts of Migration at the Local Level, Institute of Community Cohesion for LGA, 2007

has been raised largely in relation to established BME groups, much less so in relation to new economic migrant communities. However, our focus has been much more on the insularity of communities, from whatever background and the clustering of groups in spatial or residential terms is not necessarily problematic. 'Insularity' refers not only to the separation in the housing market, but reinforced by separation in schools and in the labour market – in other words 'parallel lives'. This has been much more difficult to explore, with the only available measures on a common basis being in respect of spatial distribution through indices of isolation or dissimilarity. .

Applying measures of isolation or of dissimilarity can help provide a statistical basis to explore these often emotively laden terms. The **Isolation Ratio** is a measure of the degree to which different communities are spatially separated or "segregated" in residential terms. This ratio measures the probability of your neighbour being of BME origin if you are BME yourself, and the probability of your neighbour being BME if you are white. The most segregated parts of the country according to this measure are places such as Burnley, Oldham, Rochdale, Blackburn with Darwen, Pendle, Bradford, Bolton, and Kirklees; and the least segregated are the London Boroughs and the cities of Oxford and Cambridge. (These two cities do not have a particularly high overall BME percentage (c12%, whereas Hackney, Brent and Newham have 41%, 55%, and 61% respectively) but the low isolation index suggests that the groups are spread very uniformly across the two cities.)²

The **Index of Dissimilarity (ID)** measures the unevenness of distribution between social groups by showing the proportion of one group which would have to move in order for the distribution of the two groups across space to be the same. The index varies in value between 0 and 100 with values under 0.40 generally considered as low segregation, 0.40 – 0.59 moderately high, 0.60-0.69 high and 0.70+ very high. A Government Research Study, State of the English Cities, 2006³, sets out the ID scores (for 56 English local authority areas) showing segregation between White/Non-White communities; between White/Asian communities; and between White/Black communities based on data from the 2001 census. In overall terms, cities in the north and west have the highest levels of segregation and cities in the South and East have the lowest.

Some of the areas where we have conducted reviews experience very high segregation calculated on the basis described above. The ID figures echo those for the Isolation Ratio (IR) referred to above. Unsurprisingly, Cambridge appears at the lower end of the spectrum, scoring c 0.18 for each of the three measures, whereas the figures for Oxford are 0.18 for White/Non-White, 0.28 for White/ Asian and for White/Black.

State of the Cities also demonstrates the link between the size of ethnic minority population, the level of segregation, and deprivation: the higher the proportion of the Non-White population, the higher the mean ID score. And the study showed that

"In many cases, the Non-White population is more than twice as prevalent in the most deprived as in other neighbourhoods, most notably the case for large cities and larger towns in the north and west – the latter including places such as Carlisle, Darlington, Lancaster and Stafford. However, this is not the case in smaller towns and rural areas; nor in larger towns in the south and east such as Basildon, Guildford, Lincoln, Stevenage where the ethnic minority presence is in fact lower in the most deprived neighbourhoods."

"For both north west and south and east cities, higher segregation is associated with lower average earnings, high deprivation, fewer people in the professional and managerial classes,

² The Intercultural City: Making the Most of Diversity, Phil Wood, Charles Landry and Jude Bloomfield, Comedia, March 2006

³ "State of the English Cities: A Research Study", ODPM, March 2006, (Ch 5, para 5.8.1ff)

and more housing in the lowest council tax band. Higher segregation is also associated with fewer young people in further or higher education.”
(State of the Cities, ODPM, 2006)

The association of BME communities with deprivation against a range of variables is also starkly brought home by the Index of Multiple Deprivation⁴.

As will be shown below, this type of data is not necessarily predictive of or associated with perceptions or experience at local level. However, taken with local demographic data, intelligence and perception surveys, it provides local agencies with a diagnostic tool to help assess the extent to which communities within their jurisdiction are isolated from each other and what they and their partners might do to counter-act or challenge the situation (see also discussion below in sections 2.1 and 2.10).

1.6 Lessons and responses

Context

The raft of recent equalities legislation and the increasing recognition of the importance of community cohesion in Local Authorities' accountabilities presents risks and opportunities. The risks include a bureaucratic “tick box” approach, treating each requirement in isolation from the other. The opportunity is to harness the new powers and expectations, looking across the range of local authority and partners' activity, and to create virtuous circles, in which initiatives to deliver one commitment support also tackling another.

Definitions

Our experience shows the importance of local agencies shaping their own “vision” of community cohesion based on local circumstances. As we discuss below in section 2.1 community cohesion issues and priorities are highly localised.

Preventing Violent Extremism

Many local authorities have recognised the need to take all communities with them if efforts to tackle terrorism or extremism are to be effective. The Government appears also to be moderating its views in this regard. Indeed, “community cohesion” cannot be seen in isolation. As will be shown below, community cohesion should be seen as a fundamental element of activities across the board: a matter of winning people's hearts and minds, and in particular, tackling crime and poverty. Improving the standard of services to everyone is of key significance in addressing any underlying causes of inequality, disengagement and disaffection.

Measuring

The measures we describe are all of potential usefulness, but they also have their limitations. For example, the indices of isolation and dissimilarity are of limited use. They are also out of date, based as they are on 2001 census data. And they are generally only concerned with BME communities. Moreover, they are not necessarily an indication of community relations as some form of clustering may help to support communities and maintain heritage. However, there is a difference between supportive clustering and physical and social isolation. We need to be able to consider the insularity of any community and the extent to which spatial separation is compounded by separation in other spheres and where the opportunity for contact, knowledge and understanding of others is necessarily limited. This is why it is so important to bring the whole range demographic and perception measures to bear

⁴ Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007, Communities and Local Government

on a local area in building community cohesion. (See also discussion in Sections 2 and 3 below.)

SECTION 2: OUR FINDINGS

2.1 Background and context: impact of migration. Who are our communities?

Local agencies seeking to build community cohesion and to deliver services to meet the needs of their communities need to

- know who those communities are;
- understand their circumstances; and
- be able to communicate and engage effectively with them.

Changing populations: migration

The rapid increase in international migration over recent years has presented many challenges to local authorities and their partners, including those where we have carried out reviews. Changing populations and the arrival of people from communities hitherto not significantly represented in many parts of the country, such as economic migrants from Eastern Europeans and refugees and asylum seekers – eg Somalis, have placed pressures on public services and on schools in particular.

The lack of adequate data on population changes presents a particular challenge for local authorities and their partners and work to develop this has been pioneered by iCoCo⁵. There is a range of locally available administrative data which provides some proxy measures of the scale of migration in a local area, but it is rarely sufficiently robust to be used to counter the range of misinformation and rumour frequently associated with changes at community level. Whatever the facts, the size of the economic migrant, refugee and asylum seeker populations is commonly exaggerated by local people – White and BME – and is often the source of tensions in areas where they settle – usually the private rented sector in the inner city overlapping with traditional areas of BME settlement (see section 2.6 below).

School census data (PLASC) can provide a useful picture of changes in population over time, and is probably more illuminating of changes in the size of established BME communities than providing a reliable indication of recent international economic migration or the number of refugees and asylum seekers. It can be of help to local authorities – for example in planning future secondary education needs and more widely – by plotting cohorts going through primary school. But such data comes too late to help schools coping with the immediate demands and churn brought by unexpected new arrivals placing unplanned for demands at short notice. And we found the use of PLASC data to be patchy and often confined to Children's and Young People's Departments rather than being seen as an authority-wide resource.

Other data which can help build a picture of changing populations include registration for National Insurance Numbers (NINO) and the Workers' Registration Scheme (WRS) for A8 nationals. But these are of limited usefulness: NINO does not reflect dependents (eg children under 16) although WRS does, and both only indicate arrivals not departures. More recently we have heard anecdotal evidence in some areas that Eastern Europeans eg Poles are or are planning to return to Poland, whereas in other areas they are moving from their initial employment in construction (eg new build which has now ended) to set up their own businesses.

⁵ See, for example, COHDMAP: iCoCo Toolkit for Estimating Population Change; and Estimating the Scale and Impacts of Migration at the Local Level, Institute of Community Cohesion for LGA, 2007; and A Resource Guide on Local Migration Statistics, Anne E Green, David Owen, Duncan Adam, Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick, for LGA, November 2008

Data showing births by mother's country of birth can help predict demands for school places and local authorities and their partners may also be able to use proxy data such as from equality audits/impact assessments to help in the planning and delivering services.

We found in many of our reviews that the lack of consistent, accurate and readily available data significantly limits local authorities' and their partners' ability to deal effectively with population change and the impact of migration on existing communities. This is exacerbated by the link between Government funding for local authorities and estimates of population change. At present, such figures come from the ONS. This data is regarded by many local authorities as a significant underestimate of their actual populations and the extent to which they have increased as a consequence of international migration. So the additional costs of providing services to new migrant communities falls on existing local authority budgets.

Locality

As we discuss above (see section 1.5) in most parts of the country members of different communities, especially those of BME origin, tend to be clustered in certain residential areas. This was generally the case in the areas we have reviewed. Population change is also an issue in relation to the different rates of growth in White and BME communities. Expansion in the BME population is commonly exaggerated and has often led to tensions over what White communities sometimes see as encroachment into their territory.

Local demographic and other data will reflect these concentrations, which are often associated with inequalities: including economic activity and employment levels; educational attainment; deprivation in housing and health; poor environment; and high crime levels including anti-social behaviour, hate crime and youth gang activities; and thus highlight the likely issues and tensions likely to affect community cohesion.

And such analysis needs also to encompass the diversity within communities – for example differences of faith and/or ethno-cultural origin play a key role in determining particular communities needs and expectations and relations with other communities as we discuss in the following section. There will be variations between different parts of a local authority area: in community cohesion, as with other local agenda, one size will not necessarily fit all.

2.2 Parallel lives/insularity/isolation

A common and strong message from our focus groups, for example those involving members of Muslim communities and those living in areas where there were significant Muslim communities, was their experience of living separate lives from other communities in their area: a pervasive sense of “them and us”.

‘The previous BME communities are now part of the community but still treated as a special community i.e. they’re different’
(White female in focus group Local Authority [H])

‘We have our culture and they have their own and that’s how it is’
(Focus Group Bangladeshi Women Local Authority [H])

This sense of difference seemed to apply in many spheres of life: in schools and colleges, where students from different communities “stick together” outside class; in leisure and sport, in friendships and social networks. These patterns of separation tend often to reflect structural inequalities and lead to a lack of engagement, interaction, trust or understanding and are often associated with and exacerbated by perceptions of unfairness or disproportion in the allocation of resources to one community at the apparent expense of another. The boundaries between predominantly white working class areas and predominantly minority community areas were often the focus of particular tension and resentment reflecting the lack of information and understanding about each other's community. We heard White and Asian

communities “blaming” each other for developments such as the increase in drug misuse in the area. Such perceptions and behaviour constitute a frequent source of tension, misinformation, and hostility between communities.

The following description, drawn from one of our local reviews, is typical of the situation in many parts of the country, to a greater or lesser degree.

“What seemed problematic to us was that the geographical segregation of different communities appeared to align with mutual disinterest, lack of knowledge, negative perceptions and outright hostility – in some areas. Further, these characteristics seemed to permeate all aspects of life where people of different backgrounds would normally come together – schools, youth clubs, community centres, sporting activities, leisure, voluntary and community organisations and worship. In essence, each community seemed to be interested primarily in looking after itself and defending its own culture, religion and interests. There seemed to be little interest in common values or what different communities shared in common. This seemed to be accepted as the status quo. Few could see anything basically wrong with it or any pressing reason for change.”
(From Report on Local Authority [B])

Communal Politics

The sense of isolation and alienation was often reinforced by the perceived failure by local agencies to engage and involve people at community level. Too often local authorities and their partners seemed to rely on “community leaders” to represent the views of minority, or excluded communities and to provide a channel of communication. But we heard strongly from focus groups that such leaders do not “represent” all members of such communities. In particular women and young people felt excluded from the democratic process and frequently disengaged from what the Council and its partners (including those from the Voluntary, Community and Faith sectors) were trying to do (see section 2.3 below).

There are now many local authorities with significant numbers of Councillors from minority communities such as those of Asian origin. We found in several instances that such Councillors tended to be drawn from just one section of an ethno-national group and that they were perceived by the wider communities as concerned only with the interests of that group to the exclusion of others, as illustrated in the case study below. However, we heard that Council officials were also operating on a similar basis, and tended to stereotype councillors from minority communities as representatives of a minority interest.

Both majority and minority councillors can adopt leadership styles focussing on a single section of their constituents. However councillors from minority communities are under additional pressures in some instances, where there are traditional extended family/clan networks and allegiance systems, usually transposed from the cultural norms of the country of origin, which may dominate many south Asian leadership structures. One of the most influential of such systems (which we have encountered amongst Pakistani, Indian, Somali and some newer arrival communities) are the Birardari (Brotherhood) or Khandani (Ancestral clan) systems predominant amongst Pakistani and Indian Muslim traditions. These systems are highly sophisticated and play a key role in arranging marriages, organising joint commercial activities, selecting community and Mosque leadership and vitally, harnessing support for sponsorship of local councillors. In many ways the systems work to the benefit of the Muslim and wider communities – for example in discouraging young people from crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour, and dispute resolution. But, as we suggest above, the dominance of male elders is seen by many younger members of Muslim Communities and by many of the women who spoke to us as depriving them of a voice or opportunity to become involved in civic society.

The recent focus on tackling extremism and the attempts by many local authorities to engage Muslim communities more effectively has exposed the need for a greater understanding and appreciation of Muslim communities on the part of statutory and voluntary and faith sector

agencies. The work we have done “mapping” Muslim Communities for local authorities and their partners has provided them with details of the diversity of British Muslims reflected in differences of: theological affiliation, ethnic and or national origin/culture, class and generational issues; and a better understanding of the implications of that diversity on communities’ attitudes, expectations, and behaviour.⁶ One example, as the case study below illustrates, is the impact of national and international events at local level. Of course, this diversity is not unique to Muslim communities. The impact of migration and the fast changing nature of the population in many parts of the country has emphasised the importance of understanding and finding ways of meeting diverse needs, which means in turn finding ways of engaging with diverse communities at locality level.

The following examples highlight the sorts of issues confronting local agencies:

“Some recent, highly publicised, events, such as the approach to addressing homophobic bullying have underlined the sensitivity of these issues. The use of a particular illustrated American booklet in two primary schools to set the context of homosexual relationships caused offence and demonstrations from many Muslim parents (and others). Some felt that this was a deliberate attempt to provoke them into appearing homophobic in a context of general Islamophobia. The withdrawal of the booklet then offended members of the LGB community. One of the issues exposed was how far it was possible to claim that consultation with a particular individual or individuals constituted consultation with the Muslim or Somali community.

“There is recognition from some that there is no single Muslim or Somali (or indeed Christian) community; that structures relationships and histories are often complex; and that it is important to understand this better. The fact that Somalis from both sides in the civil war are now settling in [Local Authority [F]] adds a further level of complexity. However, the recognition that there is complexity without an understanding of it may merely serve to further undermine confidence of those trying to engage with BME communities. “

And

“In one local authority there were twelve elected councillors of Muslim heritage spread across two political parties. However all were of the same ethno national heritage and apparently aligned to the same Mosque (or were not observant) and/or were confirmed devotees of a local influential religious leader. However the majority of Mosques in the area were of different affiliations and predominantly administered by Muslims of a different ethno national heritage. The issues of representation and engagement were of a particularly sensitive nature due to a number of terrorist related arrests and a history of activity by radical groups. By identifying the various religious and ethno national based structures, the Council widened its engagement to include the full spectrum of Muslims living in the borough using channels beyond the traditional political structures.”
(Understanding and Appreciating Muslim Communities]

And

‘National and International events impact on tension. 9/11 had a major impact, as did the London bombings. The Bangladeshi young people were more noticeably together as a group at break times. There were physical incidents to and from school – very rare in school – some older young people congregating on the route to school. The police were involved. Tried to resolve individual incidents where possible. Some young people – both white and Bangladeshi – were permanently removed from the school. Some put on Vocational study courses, some to the Pupil Referral Unit. Two white young people who wrote racist songs on their computers were moved to other schools.’
(Report on Local Authority [C])

⁶ See, for example, Understanding and Appreciating Muslim Diversity: Towards better Engagement and Participation, Institute of Community Cohesion, April 2008.

White Working Class Communities

In many parts of the country, we found that white working class communities were experiencing significant isolation and deprivation. The needs and concerns of such communities have in many cases until recently tended to be overlooked by local agencies focusing on issues such as race and the consequences of migration. In some areas, this sense of neglect has provided opportunities for right-wing organisations such as the BNP to increase their support, as can be seen in voting patterns in recent local elections.

As we discuss below, white working class communities have been particularly affected by the reduction over recent years in the supply of social housing. The shift in priority to those in need (as opposed to length of time on the waiting list) and the consequent change in the type of people receiving social housing, generates a significant sense of grievance on the part of such communities, even though there is little evidence to support this grievance. The isolation experienced by such communities is exacerbated, we found, by a sense that they were being left behind, and outcompeted for jobs (as well as housing) by new migrants.

2.3 Voluntary, community and faith sectors

The Voluntary, community and faith sectors play a key role in building community cohesion.

“Research shows that communities with a strong and rich infrastructure are more resilient and better equipped to deal with internal problems. They also find it much easier to engage with the Government and others outside their community because they have a ready made network through which to work. Some Muslim communities lack this infrastructure or have community organisations that are dominated by a small group of leaders who are reluctant to share power or adapt institutions to the needs of the wider community.”⁷

In many cases, we heard in focus groups, that communities’ sense of isolation or perceptions of injustice in the allocation of resources generated a lack of trust and confidence in the local authority or other statutory partners. In such circumstances, and in such sensitive areas as tackling extremism, it is often easier for individuals associated with community based organisations to get to the “hard to reach” who are often most in need of support.

However, in some areas, the nature and composition of the local voluntary, community and faith sectors exacerbated, rather than addressed the insularity of individual communities in ways similar to the communal politics we describe above. We found in several instances, community leaders from the voluntary, community or faith sectors acting as “gate keepers” rather than “gate ways” between members of their communities or organisations and resources or contact with local statutory agencies. This effect can be reinforced where local arrangements for consulting minority communities are also organised around gate keepers, thus denying a voice to young people, women and new migrants.

And where local agencies seek to develop engagement strategies which reflect the broader diversity now emerging locally, new tensions can arise where umbrella organisations find it difficult to reflect this diversity and find their position threatened as a result.

Building capacity in the voluntary, community and faith sectors is a key challenge for local authorities and their statutory partners.

⁷ Bringing it Home: Community-based approaches to counter-terrorism, Rachel Briggs, Catherine Fieschi, Hannah Lownsborough, Demos, December 2006

2.4 Education: schools

Schools and the education sector more generally have a crucial role to play in tackling many of the problems and challenges associated with the isolation or segregation of communities in our society. In particular educational success reduces the risk of young people becoming involved in crime or anti-social behaviour, increases their prospects of productive employment and helps break down misperceptions and misunderstanding between different communities. We have seen some inspirational examples of what can be done in schools which have used the recently introduced Duty to Promote Community Cohesion to best advantage as we discuss below.

Segregation

Many of the schools and colleges in the areas we have studied are segregated to a greater or lesser extent and the evidence available to us at a local level suggested that this was generally worsening over recent years. This reflects in part residential segregation, but it reflects also parental choice, despite the fact that most people we spoke to in focus groups wanted their children to have a mixed education. Parental choice tended to push people to what they saw as the safe option, where children with similar backgrounds went and seeking schools that were relatively far from where they live even where there is a higher performing school nearby. Parents make similar decisions so that their child can attend a single sex school, or a faith school.

The admissions process itself may well contribute to “inappropriate” or problematic allocation of, for example, BME pupils to schools remote from where they live, in areas unaccustomed to such communities, or which have not had experience of operating in a racially diverse context. This can be because less well performing schools tend to have more unfilled vacancies and therefore end up with the pupils, such as new arrivals, who cannot get into fully subscribed schools nearer their homes. And new arrivals often arrive after the deadline for applications, or do not understand the process properly, so again, end up “at the back of the queue”.

The unplanned and unexpected arrival of children as a result of migration can present a range of challenges to a school – often they find themselves having to cater to the needs of children with little or no English and from an unfamiliar background. One adverse consequence of such changes to school populations is that the school becomes less attractive to some residents:

School X is on a Council estate towards the edge of the local authority area. At the end of 2005 the school had about 15% BME pupils, a mixture of Asian African Caribbean and dual heritage. Over the next two terms around 15-20 Somali families brought their children to the school. Many white parents reacted negatively, arguing that their children were being disadvantaged by large numbers of non English speakers. There was pressure from large parts of the white community to move away from the school. By Sept 2006, sixty white children had been removed from the school. Total numbers fell from 320 to 240 and the percentage of BME pupils rose to 45%. But many white families stayed.

School X is now (2008) a successful multiracial school in a still predominantly white area but the case illustrates how quickly circumstances can change and the importance of a rapid and effective response.

There is clearly scope for improved cross agency working to anticipate changes. The Somali families were rehoused on this particular estate because of the availability of family houses but as a recent report has noted ‘there was no anticipation of this or forewarning of other agencies’. (Report on Local Authority [F])

We heard strong anecdotal evidence of “white flight” in a number of areas, not only in response to changes in school populations but because of new arrivals; and in many cases, where areas were beginning to attract long standing ethnic minorities and there was a perception that the nature of the whole area would change. The changes in population over time in some parts of the country have led to a significant increase, for example, in the number of Muslim school children. Recent newspaper reports suggest that some Church of England schools in cities in the north of England now have a majority of Muslim pupils. As a result some Christian parents have decided to send their children to secular schools.⁸

Segregation in schools reduces the opportunity for young people to mix with their peers from other communities. And even where such contact occurs in the class or lecture room and in the context of formal school or college activities, we heard consistently from focus groups, interviews, research and enquiries that once left to themselves, young people “stick together” with others from their own communities (though this is generally more pronounced at secondary level than at college level). In some cases this social segregation is reinforced by their parents’ unwillingness for them to “mix” or to invite people from other communities into their homes.

“Races don’t mix in my school. We are four whites and rest are Asians – no matter what we do to mix, they will not let us.”
(White pupil from Local Authority [G])

“Asians on one side and whites and African Caribbean’s [sic] on the other, with only one or two individuals who had friends belonging to a different group.”
(Focus group of Muslim Boys from Local Authority [G])

“People stick in own communities and cultures and people don’t want to learn.”

“We split our children at primary school into Whites and Asians which is sad.”
(Focus groups in Local Authority [K])

“Children mix up until year 7, when they don’t. In school it is fine. The name calling starts outside school.”

“For protection our children are driven to and from schools. In schools it is very segregated.!”
(Focus groups in Local Authority [B])

“When there are problems, the white boys are used to their mums or dads coming into the school. With the Bangladeshi children, it may be their dads or more often their older brothers. This ups the ante. White boys then brought their older brothers – leading to tensions.”
(Report on Local Authority [C])

We also heard that, in many of the areas we studied, young people and children live much of their lives within very narrow geographical boundaries. School excursions and outings, not necessarily going very far from the school, represented for many the first time they had been so far from home. As we discuss in the following section this limitation is in part a function of fear and a concern for security, but it also reflects the narrowing effect of segregated or isolated communities.

Duty to promote Community Cohesion

As we mention above, schools have been subject to a duty to promote community cohesion since September 2007. Our work with schools and in local areas suggests that responses to this commitment have been patchy.

⁸ See “The Times”, 24 January, 2009.

In some places staff lack the skills, confidence and expertise to tackle this agenda. And in many cases, schools have chosen to focus on race rather than wider issues, with the possibly unintended consequence that schools in predominantly white areas take the view that the agenda does not apply to them.

Inter-community tensions in schools and colleges

Tensions between different ethnic groups of pupils in schools often reflected tensions in the wider community. We heard from young people about the importance of taking (and being seen to take) effective action against racial and related bullying. This is a difficult and sensitive issue as this extract from a recent review suggests.

There was a widespread believe that many teachers lacked the confidence to discipline black pupils for fear of charges of racism or provoking an angry reaction from parents. This confused children and young people who had expectations that those in authority would exercise firm control. Others suggested that basic cultural misunderstandings – such as the appropriateness of looking someone in authority in the eye when being addressed – could lead to problems. Certainly black pupils are disproportionately represented in fixed term exclusions.

There were also many reports of racial harassment and tension between groups within schools or on the way to school. These might be between African Caribbean and Somali pupils, Polish and BME children, and in some cases between Somalis from different tribes. Schools were not seen as handling these situations well and in some cases were accused of turning a blind eye.

‘There are Somali on Somali tensions which are tribal that children pick up on and play out in schools’
(Focus group with Somalis)

‘Teachers watch Somali pupils get beat up by blacks...’ (focus group with Somalis)

‘Some teachers are openly racist and this needs to be tackled’ (focus group in community)
(Draft report on Local Authority [F.]

Underachievement

We found that in many cases, schools with very high proportions of pupils from BME backgrounds performed less well in terms of numbers of GCSE passes at grades A-C than other schools in the area. This is likely to be associated less with the ethnic make up of the school than the relative deprivation experienced by students (which occurs disproportionately amongst minority communities. However there were exceptions to this such as in one West Midlands area where African Caribbean pupils were doing well compared to their national average, and compared to overall attainment level locally; and in all girls school in a London Borough, with a high proportion of Asian girls, which outperformed practically all the other schools in the borough, as well as the national average. It is also the case that children of Indian and Chinese heritage outperform others almost everywhere.

2.5 Community safety: Gangs and Gang Culture

Members of all communities across the country share concerns about crime, drugs, anti-social behaviour and gangs. However, especially amongst segregated communities, there was a tendency on the part of one community to “blame” another community for problems, or to see the problem as originating amongst members of the “other community” rather than coming together to address problems. We mention above the position of the police and the significance of neighbourhood policing: they clearly have a key role and interest in this context. In many areas we found that tackling hate crime was seen as an important element of an overall community cohesion strategy, as was tension monitoring.

Security was a key concern amongst many of the young people we met. The lives of such young people are circumscribed by fear, or by perceptions of 'no go' areas in their localities – which inhibit their willingness or ability to move in different circles and take full advantages of the opportunities available to them. Gangs and gang culture featured in discussion in the focus groups more strongly than we had expected. This is of concern not only in terms of criminal activity and propensity to violence, which may be overstated or owe more to bravado, but more generally in terms of creating peer pressure, ideas of victimhood, and racialised perceptions of others seen as the "competition".

In some areas, gangs will be focused more or less exclusively on territory; in others, they reflect racial, as much as territorial tensions. They can also be influenced by related criminal activity in neighbouring areas. We were told that one gang, with a largely Somali and other Muslim membership, was associated with violent and criminal behaviour such as stabbings and muggings, and was also responsible for graffiti and vandalism, was response to white gangs, which, in turn, were responsible for similar behaviour and extreme right graffiti. Members of at least one of the white gangs in the same area appear to take pride in being described as racist or Islamophobic.

Some of the claims may be exaggerated and part of the need for status and desire for bravado. But there has been a consistency in the sentiments expressed by young people we have met:

"If something happens to me I know I've got all these people to look after me."
(Member of Albanian Youth Group)

"not anti anybody unless anti-them."

"Most kids we know are in gangs".

Some of the gangs we heard about had a more or less explicit "Muslim" focus. We gained the impression from the young people we met that Islam commands a high degree of respect and is a key source of identity for the young – for both longstanding migrant groups and new arrivals, such as the Somalis. But this did not mean that those young people necessarily had a deep understanding of their religion and in some cases it appeared to be very limited. Indeed, some, young people appear to translate half understood ideas drawn from so-called radical Islamic or other extremist points of view, into a justification for violence, and anti-social behaviour. Rarely did the discussion in the focus groups indicate a real knowledge of extremist positions. Nevertheless, there was a particular status or even 'glamour' associated with extremist positions which was apparent in gangs of Muslim young people, and Sikh extremism plays a similar part for Sikh gangs, as does the Far Right for the White gangs.

And, although not directly linked to extremism, "gang culture" contributes to pressures on girls at least in some of the areas we have worked:

"Girls go around acting like boys nowadays. They want to prove themselves so they go out doing all the things that boys do but because they've got something to prove they take it to the extremes."
(Young black man in discussion: Local Authority [D])

2.6 Housing

Our reviews showed that residential segregation is a key element of the wider issue of isolation/tension between communities/geographical areas. It is to some extent, self fulfilling: we heard in many areas that where a single community is predominant on a particular estate, or in a particular area, for example, that area tends to be seen as a "no go" area by other communities.

Segregation is reinforced in local areas by the fact that different communities tend to follow different patterns of housing tenure. For example, “new” A8 migrants were most likely to live in private rented accommodation, with single young men often found in houses of multiple occupancy and experiencing over-crowding. The needs of a particular community (eg to accommodate large families) will determine where they can live. And in some areas, Asian communities appear to be disproportionately represented in the private housing sector and scarcely at all in the social housing sector. Owner occupation tends in general to be highest amongst communities of Asian origin.

As mentioned above lettings policies for social housing addressing “need” rather than “entitlement” – a perception that “asylum seekers” have been allocated accommodation in preference to long term residents - constituted a frequent source of grievance amongst white working class communities who have lived on the same estate, sometimes for generations.

We heard of similar concerns associated with an apparent lack of transparency about the basis of lettings procedures/systems, such as problems in one authority over the application of “Home Choice” under which a number of newly available houses on an estate all went to Somali families. When this was challenged by other (including white) residents, the Council’s response simply confirmed that the proper procedures had been followed (which, no doubt, they had). In this case there was clearly a lack of understanding on the part of other communities, who would also have liked to live on this estate, about how the “Home Choice” scheme worked and what the criteria were. In another authority we heard that even elected Members appeared not to understand or sympathise with the decision making process for housing allocations, even though it was fully compliant with legislative etc requirements. As we mention above, a lack of openness and clarity about the basis for lettings underpins such grievances, which in many areas tend to be exploited by Far Right.

2.7 Work

Employment

In many of the areas we have reviewed, the demographic data available revealed the differences between communities in terms of patterns of employment and labour participation, including a concentration of minority communities amongst the lowest income levels. Overall, Asian women have much lower labour participation rates than women from other communities. And in many areas, higher proportions of Asians are self employed or small employers than other communities. We also found that particular communities were often concentrated in certain occupations or employment fields. Thus the general segregation discussed elsewhere tends to be reinforced by people’s experience in the workplace, and, indeed, in their experience of unemployment.

Public Sector Workforce

We mention above the challenges for those working in schools and other public services in meeting the needs and expectations of increasingly diverse communities, especially in areas hitherto largely mono-cultural. Local agencies within the Statutory sector have made great efforts to increase the diversity of their workforces, which has generally improved. However, there is still more to be done and there remain lingering perceptions of bias and unfairness

‘Racism within the Council is now more sophisticated and difficult to see, but it is there’ (Male professional)
(Draft of report on Local Authority [F])

It is commonly the case in such areas (especially outside London and very large conurbations), that the local agencies themselves do not reflect the communities they serve – in terms of workforce (particularly at senior level) or in elected roles such as councillors,

school governors and similar roles. Many local authorities are seeking to increase the diversity of school governors, and information on their ethnic origin is in many cases patchy. We have heard anecdotal evidence that the proportion of BME governors is increasing.

As we suggest above, organisations in the voluntary, community and faith sectors often lack diversity as well.

2.8 Intergenerational tensions and conflict

In many areas of the country the focus of Community Cohesion Strategies has been on bringing together communities of different ethnic origin and on tackling issues which divide them. However, we heard in focus groups in some areas, from people from all communities, that for many intergenerational issues are what create divisions rather than race. Such concerns are often expressed by older people in terms of the insecurity associated with groups of young people “hanging about” on the streets. We heard that some Muslim women feel particularly insecure on the streets, when confronted by large groups of young people, and some reported being taunted or challenged about their dress.

Such attitudes can be self-fulfilling. After all, “hanging about” is what young people do, and we heard from many of the young people we met of the lack of places to go or of things to do. The vast majority of young people will not become involved with gangs, nor with anti-social behaviour, nor other criminal behaviour such as violent extremism. However, if they begin to feel insecure or “got at” for being on the street, the appeal of a gang or other association to provide protection and security can prove irresistible.

We have mentioned elsewhere (see section 2.2) the cultural tradition of deference to elders amongst communities of Asian origin: Sikh, Hindu and Muslim. Such traditions can cause tensions amongst young people, who feel excluded from participating in their communities – whether in the governance of the Mosque, or becoming involved in local politics – by community elders who dominate such arenas. We heard also of the tensions experienced by 3rd or 4th generation Asians, expected on the one hand to follow cultural traditions formed in their great grandparents’ country of origin; and exposed on the other to “western” culture and the habits and customs of their peers from other communities. Traditions which can provide security to one person, can prove stultifying and frustrating to another.

2.9 Far right/extremism

In some of the areas we have worked in the far right are active. As we have mentioned, their appeal has involved exploiting the grievances of communities such as those living on white working class estates who feel “left behind” or that they have “lost out” to “asylum seekers” or immigrants in terms of housing and other benefit. Much of the appeal of the far right is based on misinformation and in some cases untruths but their message is none the less potent for that.

Studies of electoral support for the far right suggest that parties such as the BNP do well in areas where white people live, rather than in areas with significant BME populations, and this was borne out in at least one of the areas we have worked. Moreover, “the BNP tends to get its support from areas that have experienced change nearby, rather than in their own immediate neighbourhoods and where people fear that their area, and indeed the country is ‘being taken over’ “.⁹

We found a link between economic deprivation and the level of support for the BNP, which confirms national findings that the far right tends to attract those with (relatively few) educational qualifications.

⁹ The BNP: The Roots of its Appeal, P John, H Margetts, D Rowland and S Weir, Democratic Audit, Human Rights Centre, University of Essex, 2006

We heard in focus groups that some young people from white working class estates are involved with “far right” gangs. This seemed to be more about reflecting their parents’ attitudes and views than any thought out support for a set of political principles. For many it appears to be a matter of bravado:

‘Young people say that they are racist and that they support the BNP because their parents do. The same people that are saying that all the coloureds should be sent home are the same ones who cheer for the black players at Sunderland. They just say racist stuff to look big.’
(Focus group in Local Authority [C])

2.10 Lessons and Responses

We set out below some examples of good practice and describe the responses in some areas to specific issues covered in the preceding section. For other issues, such as overcoming people’s experience of parallel lives, we found that more generic, overarching responses are called for and we discuss those in Section 3: Building Community Cohesion – Lessons and Recommendations.

Who are our communities?

Despite the challenges we describe above, many local partnerships have responded creatively and innovatively to the arrival in their areas of new communities as illustrated, for example, by the following two projects shortlisted for Awards for Bridging Cultures 2008¹⁰:

Refugee Action: Refugee Awareness Project

Refugee Action set up the Refugee Awareness Project (RAP) in July 2005 to bring the reality of life as a refugee to local people and increase understanding between newcomers and established residents. Volunteers from different nationalities (including refugees, asylum seekers and local British people) work side-by-side to deliver interactive talks and workshops about what life is like as a refugee to key groups in and around Liverpool, Nottingham and Bristol. Since 2005, 117 volunteers from over 30 nationalities have worked on the project, delivering 503 workshops and talks to 483 different groups of people. Using activities, discussion and first-hand accounts, the volunteers listen to local people’s concerns, explain why people flee to the UK and how the asylum process works, offer insights into what it’s like to settle in a new community and tackle myths that may be circulating locally. RAP brings refugees and non-refugees together both as project volunteers and by offering opportunities for host communities to meet refugees and hear their stories first-hand.

For more information:

www.refugee-action.org.uk/RAP nationalrap@refugee-action.org.uk

Chichester Festival Theatre

Building Bridges - Intercultural arts

Building Bridges aims to give young refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers in West Sussex practical skills to assist them in adapting to life in the UK. The programme provides a forum for the participants to express themselves and share their knowledge and experiences of their home, their journey, their culture and life in the UK. It begins with individuals, moves into developing shared experiences, and culminates with ‘forum theatre’ pieces. The workshops are made up of one third EU migrant workers, one third ‘world citizens’ (particularly refugees and young asylum seekers) and one third young local British people.

Workshops explore the complex situations that participants encounter and provide skills for adapting to life in the UK; for example, the group might role-play how to handle a racist incident. Building Bridges equips participants with socially useful skills, forges new friendships and increases confidence.

For more information: www.cft.org.uk sandra.mills@cft.org.uk

¹⁰ For more details see iCoCo website.

Similarly, projects such as “Escape to Safety” – a multi-media interactive exhibition in a 40 foot trailer - seek to increase young people’s understanding of and empathy with asylum seekers and refugees. In some regions the exhibition has been accompanied with teacher training and workshops in schools.¹¹ There are also many other local initiatives across the country with similar aims and objectives.

We discuss in Section 3 the need at national level for more up to date and accurate data to underpin estimates of population change.

Within an overarching strategy local authorities and their partners need to be aware of and build on what is going on at neighbourhood, estate, or even street level in developing their approaches to building community cohesion. We have found in several parts of the country that Neighbourhood Policing and the introduction of Police Community Support Officers has proved very effective in creating links and acquiring intelligence at this level, so that community cohesion can be built from bottom up. But in some areas, this intelligence did not appear to reach other partners working in the same areas.

One example of how local agencies have used local data to build a picture of a particular locality as a basis for developing and delivering appropriate interventions is:

Greater Manchester Against Crime (GMAC) is an example of inter-agency partnership aimed at reducing crime by promoting effective partnership working, improving the use of information available across partnerships and better targeting of resources towards local problems. GMAC enhances its crime analysis with the addition of data obtained from partners, to reflect potential drivers of crime and underlying causal factors. This has increased the understanding of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in the area with a “Vulnerable Localities Index” comprising indicators relating to recorded crime, deprivation, and demographic information¹². These statistics allow the calculation of an overall **vulnerable localities index score** for every census output area. Any area scoring 200 or above on this index classifies it as at “high risk”. Analytical capacity was enhanced with the introduction of the Mosaic system, a marketing tool developed for profiling households, which is being used increasingly by local authorities and their partners. This work has shown that vulnerability to breakdown and tension does not necessarily encompass community tension around race and ethnicity. Other tensions can emerge in communities in breakdown such as inter-generational issues which proved to be a feature in [some parts of the Greater Manchester Area].

A particular feature of this initiative, which was under development in 2007, is the degree of openness applied to much of the data which is shared with all partners, including those from the voluntary, community and faith sectors, helping them increase their knowledge of the communities they serve or represent.

Parallel lives

A particular challenge for political leaders and to those working in the voluntary, community and faith sectors is identifying and tackling the perception of **communal politics** as described in section 2.2. Ideally this sort of agenda is best dealt with on a cross-party basis.

Councillors need to be seen to be elected to represent the interests of everyone who lives in their ward, not just those of the same community. And Councillors should be encouraged to take a key role in supporting and working with those living in their ward, involving all members of the community and making sure their voices are heard.

¹¹ For more details, see iCoCo website: examples of good practice.

¹² The 6 measures are: 1. burglary dwelling incidence rate per 1000 households p.a. 2. criminal damage to a dwelling incidence rate per 1000 households p. a.; 3. Income deprivation index value, based on households dependent on: income support, income based job seekers’ allowance, certain working families tax credit and disabled person’s tax credit, and National Asylum Service Support; 4. Employment deprivation index value, based on claimants of unemployment, incapacity benefit, severe disability allowance, and New Deal participants; 5. % of population with qualifications below level 2 (5+ GCSEs graded A-C; and 6. % of population aged 15-24 years inclusive.

As we mention elsewhere myths and misinformation help foster community tension and conflict. Councillors are well placed to help challenge misinformation and to put right ill informed rumours circulating in their areas.

As well as addressing the myths associated with segregation and isolation, local partnerships need also to tackle the realities of the underlying inequalities – such as in employment and educational attainment.

Voluntary, community and faith sectors

We found that those areas making the most effective progress with community cohesion were characterised by strong voluntary, community and faith sectors, fully engaged with local partnerships. In such areas, statutory partners recognised the importance of building cohesion “from the bottom up” and the importance of the voluntary, community and faith sectors in this activity. Such interventions are even more effective where they (played a pivotal role as) part of a strategic approach with local partnerships providing co-ordination and support, where necessary and appropriate.

Local agencies need to provide support and encouragement to their local voluntary, community and faith sectors. Many voluntary, community and faith sector organisations need development and capacity building, especially those providing services to or representing the interests of a single ethnic or national group.

Increasingly as Government guidance emphasises, statutory agencies should build into their funding criteria a requirement that activities span and involve members of different communities. This does not need to be to the loss of personal or community identities but to the gain of a greater sense of belonging to a particular geographical area. However, funding agencies need to recognise that in some circumstances, many groups – and in particular voluntary organizations addressing the needs of new and emerging communities - are likely to need assistance and a period of transition from emphasis on providing services to a single group to meeting the needs of all in their local area.

In some areas, voluntary, community and faith sector organizations have focused more or less exclusively on “representing” a particular group or interest. As partnerships develop, including such organizations, their role will also need to shift to working with other partners to achieve change.

Education

A key challenge in many areas is to tackle segregation in schools – both in terms of the balance of school populations and in terms of the ways in which students interact. **Building Schools for the Future** provides in many areas a unique opportunity to tackle segregation and local agencies need to ensure that principles of community cohesion underpin local plans; and that all local communities are fully consulted and involved in the process of developing new schools.

In some of the places we have worked, local agencies have found ways of managing the integration of migrant children into the mainstream school system. For example, an OFSTED report about Local Authority [A] found that:

“[xx project] manages the great challenge of preparing pupils, many of whom have no previous experience of formal education, to get off to a successful start at school. It emphasises the development of pupils’ language, life and social skills. It excels in the care, support and guidance that it offers and this helps pupils to become very confident and considerate with a positive outlook on life. Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils show that they enjoy their time at the PRU by their good attendance. Staff members are strongly committed to the welfare and safety of pupils and work very effectively with other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support that they need. Robust policies to protect the children and to guard their health and safety are in place.

Achievement is good with no significant differences between groups. Teaching is good overall. Teachers and induction support assistants develop very good relationships with their pupils. As a consequence, behaviour is excellent. Pupils work very well and are strongly motivated to succeed. This is why they make good gains in their brief time at the PRU. The curriculum is good and suited to the needs of the pupils. It prepares them well for entry into mainstream school.”

Some schools are also taking action to counter the negative effects of segregation and to ensure that they give their pupils a real understanding of the diverse communities in their area. For example, the introduction of extended schools and initiatives such as school twinning provide opportunities:

Case Study: Kirklees Primary School Twinning Programme

The aim of the programme is to build bridges between Primary Schools dominated by White and BME pupils, bringing pupils of different ethnic backgrounds together for joint activities.

A particular strength of the programme is the extensive and thorough planning and preparation including careful “matching” of pupils.

Both teachers and pupils spoke highly of the programme, even where they were concerned about the time and resources involved.

It was found that the programme worked best where it was part of a range of activities to promote interaction between pupils and parents of different backgrounds in the wider local community. These activities also worked well where schools had developed a close working relationship with the Youth Service and Community Support Services. (Young People and Extremism)¹³

Where schools have responded to the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion proactively they have found it has made a real difference, with often inspirational results. Examples include:

REDUCING TENSIONS BETWEEN NEIGHBOURING SCHOOLS

Bridge Junior School in Leicester has a substantial majority of Muslim children. It shares a boundary fence with Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School in a relatively deprived area of the City. Some years ago the two head teachers became aware of tensions surfacing between some groups of children revealing evidence of ignorance and negative attitudes between the two faith communities. They worked together to address these through a concerted strategy of opportunities for collaborative learning. A Saturday morning club for children from both schools to share leisure and learning time together was opened and joint school trips and picnics were arranged. A touring African arts group (Mighty Zulu Nation) was commissioned to run joint workshops for the two schools leading to a successful joint performance and DVD for parents and the wider communities celebrating music and dance from different cultural heritages. Students from both schools were recruited to produce a regular magazine celebrating joint activities and the two schools collaborated over writing and staging a powerful musical show called ‘Story In A Suitcase’ in which children from different backgrounds retraced their families’ reasons for moving to Leicester. This work led to the production of a local television documentary in which children expressed their changing views about getting to know people from different communities. Negative incidents between the two schools have ceased and the children’s responses in interviews indicate positive attitudes towards diversity and cultural exchange. Significant success factors underpinning this strategy include opening up opportunities to explore identity and attitudes through creative arts and providing motivating stimulus activities to encourage friendship and personal reflection in safe surroundings.

And

TACKLING LIMITED CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

Pershore High School is a Technology Specialist College and Training School of 1210 students aged 12 – 18 serving a Midlands market town a large rural catchment area. Extensive

¹³ Young People and Extremism: some reflections from our local studies, iCoCo, 2007

attitudinal surveys (including students, youth community users and parents) revealed limited knowledge of cultural diversity and 'entrenched attitudes' possibly associated with limited parental and student aspirations and 'world view'. The Head Teacher initiated a range of approaches around the theme of 'Winning Hearts and Minds in Pershore', guiding staff to consider attitudinal change and increased awareness as high priorities. These included addressing family aspirations through public events such as an 'Education Fayre', a traveller education project and expanding the role of the school as a Training School which offers adult and community programmes. The school developed international links in Europe, India and Zambia (gaining funding from EU Comenius Programme and British Council) with exchange programmes used to develop all learners' global awareness. Relationships with partner primary schools and their communities were boosted through a student-administered survey called 'Wishes and Worries' in which students soon to transfer to the High School were asked to write their personal hopes and fears (global or local) on a special post-card and these were used to increase learners' awareness of issues, build up a picture of young people's world views and demonstrate care and attention to the needs of new arrivals to the school. Support and some funding for these initiatives was gained through close partnership with the Local Authority Extended Services Team. The Head Teacher is a tutor on the SSAT 'Specialist Schools and Their Communities' programme for school leader development.¹⁴

Some schools, for example in the London area, have found that the close involvement of a police liaison officer in the life of the school has helped tackle bullying and harassment. In other areas schools have worked with groups from the voluntary, community or faith sector developing interventions to tackle such issues. For example

The Peacemaker project in Oldham involves after school activities (usually one evening per week) bringing together young people from segregated secondary schools to work together to overcome prejudice, promote citizenship and develop a shared sense of identity. The Young People take the learning back to their schools and communities to challenge prejudice. Each intervention is developed to reflect the situation and Key Stage in an individual school. (iCoCo good practice website)

There are similar projects in Burnley (Breaking Barriers)¹⁵ and Tower Hamlets (RESOLVE)¹⁶ which train and empower young people to act as mediators, advocates and role models in helping to resolve local conflict and tensions and help with getting in touch with hard to reach groups. REWIND (based in the West Midlands) supports peer initiatives challenging racial stereotyping and attitudes, drawing out what people have in common rather than what divides them.¹⁷

But we recognise that to respond effectively to these issues those involved will often need **training, development and support**. This applies equally to tackling some of the more challenging behaviour associated with inter-racial tension such as bullying, racial stereotyping and abuse.

Gangs and gang culture

Many of those working in statutory or voluntary agencies "on the street" tackling gang culture will also pick up evidence of the activity of extremist groups seeking to recruit in the area. And although different factors influence the small number of young people who become involved in violent extremism as compared to those which lead to drug misuse and other criminal or anti-social behaviour, there are similarities in the interventions intended to address or challenge disengagement and alienation. This reinforces the importance of close co-operation between the various agencies working in this area and effective "joining up"

¹⁴ Other case studies can be found on:

http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/Communitycohesion/Community_cohesion_case_studies/

¹⁵ See www.conflictresolutionnetwork.org.uk

¹⁶ See www.neighbourhood.gov.uk

¹⁷ See www.rewind.org.uk

planning and delivery of services to this challenging group as illustrated by the example from Waltham Forest below. Another London Borough [Local Authority L] has responded to the increasing problem of gangs in its area by undertaking an in depth investigation in an attempt to map and gain a comprehensive understanding of local gangs.

Case Study: “Defendin’ da Hood” – Waltham Forest

This initiative, led by SafetyNet (the Waltham Forest Crime Reduction Partnership) sought to reach those young people actively involved in, or on the periphery of, local gang culture to reduce incidents of gang-related violence and create alternative pathways to improve their life chances.

More specifically, the Council wanted those young people to understand that they might consider it appropriate to defend their “hoods” against other young people using violence but if they did this, they also needed to understand that the Council and its partners would target them, as they, too, would seek to defend their “hood” – the borough.

The project has provided a mechanism for engaging young people, has led to a reduction in crime (by 40% around the time of the first event) and has been awarded a Race ActionNet Award.

It has helped the Council and its partners to engage with disaffected young people in a way that meant genuine involvement for them. It also meant that the Council had to demonstrate that they were really listening to the young people and that their views made a difference. It involves events where young people have enjoyed entertainment and music but always having to discuss a serious topic first, with the Council and its partners committed to listening to what they say.

Topics dealt with include: helping young Asian people build better communication links with their elders (following the London Bombings in July 05); teenage pregnancy and gun crime. (Young People and Extremism)

Housing

A lack of transparency and openness seems to underpin many of the problems associated with community cohesion and housing. It is important, in the context of approaches such as choice based lettings, which can help overcome residential segregation when used effectively, to take account of and involve all communities to minimise risk of misperceptions and misunderstandings.

Work

It is clear from the work we have done at local level that public service organisations whose workforce reflects the community they serve find it much easier to engage across that community than those which don't. Local authority and partner organisations leaders need to give priority to the continuing challenge of increasing the diversity of their workforces – particularly at senior level. In some areas, groups such as school governors, magistrates and other holders of public office tend also to be drawn disproportionately from the majority community. It is important to support initiatives to encourage those least likely to participate in “public life” and the democratic process – such as young people and women from Muslim communities – to become involved in such roles. As we mention elsewhere [*cross refer*] in some places this is equally important for the voluntary, community and faith sectors as it is for the statutory sector.

Intergenerational tensions and conflict

An understanding of the issues affecting communities such as Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, including the basis of the intergenerational tensions described above, will help local agencies:

for example in involving young people, tackling anti-social behaviour and associated issues, and in developing engagement strategies. We discuss this in more detail in the following section.

SECTION 3: BUILDING COMMUNITY COHESION – LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, we have found an increasing awareness and commitment to the cohesion agenda and it is clear that local authorities and their partners are now better able to develop cohesion strategies and plans.

We found that their success was to a large extent linked to how far community cohesion strategies and plans were driven and supported by corporate leadership – and whether they had been linked to mainstream activity. In some instances, cohesion was still something that was done by a small group within the Chief Executives team, rather than owned across the Council and its partners and seen as part of the day job.

We set out below the key themes reflected in the recommendations and proposals we have offered to the local authorities and their partners who have sought our advice. The main challenge for those concerned with building and developing more cohesive communities is to overcome the negative effects of the segregation so commonly occurring, which we describe above. The precise way in which local authorities and their partners will do this, and the particular actions they will need to take, will of course depend on their local circumstances and priorities. And we have learned that much will depend on what prompted their concern about community cohesion in the first place.

Those local authorities and partners working in areas with long settled diverse communities, concerned to avoid the experience of the disturbances in northern towns of 2001 or subsequent tensions are likely to differ from those areas where violent extremism is the factor prompting a response. And yet another situation will apply in areas facing, often for the first time, changes in population as a result of international migration, including the arrivals of asylum seekers and refugees.

One simple lesson applies whatever the starting point: approaches (which are, or which are perceived to be) focused on one particular community or group risk leading to or exacerbating tensions and antipathy. Whatever approach is adopted towards whatever perceived problem of community cohesion, it **must** involve and take account of the concerns and interests of **all** communities living and working in the area.

3.1 Vision, Leadership and Strategy

Vision and Values

Local Authorities and their partners need to articulate their vision for community cohesion with its supporting values clearly in a way that can be easily understood by all stakeholders: the public and their political representatives and those working in agencies involved in its delivery at the front line and in more strategic leadership roles.

Community Cohesion needs to

- be seen to be “owned” by the local authority and its partners, not treated as an externally imposed additional “tick box” requirement; and
- respond to the concerns of **all** communities in the area.

Initiatives developed in respects of a distinct group, such as new arrivals for example, need to be presented in a way which emphasises the benefit to all communities.

Leadership

Leaders in local authorities and their Partners have to demonstrate that Community Cohesion is fundamental to all the activities of their organisations and avoid the agenda being seen as the exclusive province of a small specialist team. The key role of such specialist teams should be to support and co-ordinate activity, and identify where problems may be arising and get the appropriate individuals or bodies to take the necessary action.

The challenge is to make community cohesion integral to the day to day activities of the organisation and its partners, rather than something which requires additional effort (and resources) to deliver.

We recognise that many working in local authorities and partner organisations lack the confidence or knowledge about community cohesion. They will not be able to meet the expectations suggested above without **training and support**. Staff at the front line and others working with diverse communities need what is often described as cultural competence or awareness. They need to feel confident in understanding different cultures and traditions, including knowing when and how to challenge behaviour or attitudes which may be normal in some places, but which are unacceptable in this country. This includes tackling racial or racist bullying regardless of the ethnic origin of the perpetrator or the victim.

Strategy

The overall strategy for community cohesion, which is likely to be focused at the level of Local Strategic Partnership or equivalent, needs to be underpinned by clear plans and strategies in each individual partner organisation. And it needs to be clear to the wider public as well as all involved in delivering the plans how they fit together to meet the overall strategic objective.

In many cases, partnerships with the most sophisticated approach to community cohesion will use other “vehicles” as a means of delivering community cohesion – such as the Sustainable Communities Strategy, and the Community Safety Strategy – and/or the Local Area Agreement. The key point is that cohesion needs to be seen as fundamental to the overall strategy, not as an “add on”.

Within their overall strategy, partnerships will need to **prioritise** their activity to build community cohesion depending on local needs and circumstances. In determining their priorities, partnerships need to be clear that they have taken into account the expectations and circumstances of all communities in the area and to be able to explain clearly and openly why and how they have decided to use the available resources in a particular way – if possible showing how their action benefits the wider community (see also discussion below about **communications**)

Effective co-ordination and performance management are essential to the effective delivery of a community cohesion strategy (see below).

Communications/Engagement

Those working in local authorities and partner organisations need to have a real understanding of what community cohesion means for their area, which goes beyond a formal and remote definition. They need to be able to share and explain the vision to residents and others involved. In some of the places we have worked a clear understanding and vision at leadership level did not appear to have penetrated to those working at the front line, nor to local residents.

This reflects also the importance of **openness and transparency** and a willingness and capability to **challenge myths and misinformation**. Many local authorities such as Leicester, and, amongst the areas we have worked Local Authorities [B] and [H] and their partners work closely with their local media on “myth busting” .

Mapping local communities and using demographic and other relevant data to provide as clear a picture as possible of the complexity and diversity of the local population will support engagement based on an understanding and appreciation of the different cultures and traditions of minority communities. Effective engagement will often involve finding more imaginative and wider ways of involving and engaging communities directly rather than through traditional “community leaders”. Relying on “town hall” based meetings as a means of communicating with people who rarely leave their immediate vicinity is not going to work. Alternative means of engagement will depend on the individual circumstances, but could include: going to where the people are, and using mechanisms with which they are comfortable (eg web-based systems to reach and seek the views of young people) such as those we encountered in Local Authorities [E] and in [C].

Many partnerships underpin their community cohesion strategies with campaigns or other initiatives to reinforce a sense of belonging amongst all communities. Such activities can include specific events to celebrate an occasion of significance to the locality, or advertising and “branding” exercises.

Bringing communities together

Central Lancashire PCT’s award winning ‘Barbershop’ is a community magazine. It markets positive mental health to men living in areas of deprivation. It has a multi-cultural focus, addressing issues of faith, culture, race and mental health and wellbeing. It promotes understanding and cooperation between different communities. Produced in an urban style, it features articles, personal accounts, interviews and unique comic-book case studies of real life experiences of mental health. Barbershop is more than just a magazine. It is a community empowerment package, including training, peer mentoring, publications, sporting events and a viable local business.

Contact: tony.roberts@centrallancashire.nhs.uk
(Better Together: Institute of Community Cohesion, February 2009)

The creation of common space can also be an effective way of bringing communities together.

Performance Management

We have described above the range of data available to local authorities and their partners in the context of building community cohesion. If this data, including at locality level is to be of any use in supporting the delivery of community cohesion, local authorities and their partners need to ensure that such data does not remain the preserve of the originating organisational silo. PLASC data, for example, can provide a rich picture of the current and likely future school populations but it often appears to remain exclusively within the domain of Children’s and Young People’s Services.

The scope for cross fertilisation of data will increase as local authorities and partners develop their approaches to delivering the recently introduced/strengthened duties to promote good relations and equalities – on the basis of race, gender, disability, faith, sexual orientation and age. We have encouraged local authorities and their partners to use this data as part of their community cohesion assessment process.

Local Area Agreements and the new National Indicators provide an important means of underpinning and expressing local commitment to building community cohesion. Some 90 local authorities have chosen the principal indicator of community cohesion - the percentage of residents who say they get on well with those from other backgrounds – and many more are using this measure as a means of judging their own success. The new indicators also include the local sense of belonging and the extent of cross cultural interaction. The first Place Survey results will be available in April 2009.

Local agencies do not have any data which will help them accurately to estimate population change in the light of migration, as we discuss above. And not all use what proxy data there is as effectively as they might. We believe that there is a national need for more detailed work to be done on this issue in order to improve

- data sources,
- the way data is collected by different agencies, and
- the way it is then interpreted and used.

3.2 Partnership

Our work at local level has demonstrated forcibly the importance of effectively “joining up” different activities/policy streams for the delivery of community cohesion. We have seen some outstanding examples of how local agencies have created effective, accountable partnerships, linking different strategies and policy streams – for example in Local Authorities [A] and [B].

However, a typical challenge as mentioned elsewhere, is a discrepancy between what is written which often contains a very impressive and strong commitment to community cohesion, and what actually happens in practice and the extent to which officials and other stakeholders “at the sharp end” take account of, or are even aware of, these underpinning plans and principles. In part this is a matter of leadership, and also training, support and communication, making sure on all counts that all members of the relevant partnerships are involved.

Partnership between the police and other local agencies (such as education services) is of particular significance as we illustrate above. When agencies, including the police, work together, rather than in isolation from each other, they tend to find improvements in performance across the board.

3.3 Addressing the effects of Recession

We were also asked by the EHRC to identify any lessons from our studies which may be of relevance in helping local agencies develop their responses to the recession. Practically all the studies reflected in this report were conducted before the impact of the current economic downturn. However, we suggest that the lessons from our work in less pressured times may be of relevance in meeting the current challenges, or at least in anticipating possible risks, in areas such as:

- housing: one effect of the recession will be to place increasing pressures on social housing, with the consequential risk of creating new or additional sources of grievance amongst those who feel particularly deprived, or cheated of support. Housing Market Renewal programmes were seen as a significant vehicle for potential change – for example in tackling segregation in housing - in several of our reviews. It is not clear what the effect of the recession will be on such initiatives;
- likely increases in crime levels/deprivation and the potentially disproportionate effect on deprived communities amongst which Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities tend to be concentrated;
- pressures on funding to voluntary, community and faith sectors at the same time as the needs of the communities they serve increase. Statutory agencies and those involved in managing the allocation of scarce resources will need to take particular care to avoid where possible the risk of perceptions of unfairness/bias towards one community at the expense of another by being as open and transparent as possible;
- maintaining effective partnerships at times of financial constraint
- unemployment: BME communities already tend to experience disproportionately higher levels of unemployment/worklessness and to be relatively unskilled. And there are particularly low labour participation rates amongst Asian women. This means that increasing levels of unemployment nationally are likely to have a particularly damaging effect on areas with significant BME populations which, in turn, is likely to have a negative impact on community cohesion;

- the anecdotal evidence from some areas that economic migrants from Eastern Europe are leaving to return to their countries of origin. If this proves to be the case, there may be some impact on local economies with consequences for community cohesion;
- increasing xenophobia and support of the far right as we have seen in recent industrial action protesting about the employment of “foreign” workers (albeit from within the EU) and the slogan: “British Jobs for British Workers”.

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