# Building cohesive communities

## An LGA guide

# Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this new guidance from the Local Government Association (LGA) on community cohesion.

In the decade since our last guidance on this issue was published, the world – and closer to home, many of our communities – has changed significantly. While attention during much of this period has tended to focus on migration, or the threat from different forms of extremism, Dame Louise Casey DBE CB's 2016 review of integration and opportunity exposed a broader range of cohesion challenges and inequality of opportunity among and within different parts of our country. Many of these issues have since been acknowledged in the Government's 2018 Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper.

Quite rightly the Strategy recognises the importance of local authorities' role in fostering cohesion. The purpose of this guidance note is to support councils as they work on the frontline of this challenge, at the heart of their local places and communities.

No one can impose cohesion on a community, but councils want to do all that they can to create the conditions in which local communities can flourish. We have a strong track record of responding to community cohesion challenges, whether it is the arrival of new communities, acts of terrorism or tensions linked to serious crime incidents. Critically, the knowledge of local councillors about their areas provides a firm foundation for understanding problems and offering clear leadership in addressing them.

Cohesive communities are about more than just preventing or addressing unacceptable behaviour and hate crime.

For communities to flourish, there must be – and be seen to be – shared access to jobs and to services; a belief that all sections of the community have an equal stake in its success and its future, with no single part of the community perceived as undermining the fortunes of another; and a shared belief in a set of common values.

These are not always easy conditions to create. The issues that undermine cohesiveness can be deep rooted and systemic, and councils do not control all the levers that can help address them. This guide does not by any stretch claim to have all the answers, but as we continue to make the case for the resources and powers we need to drive forward the cohesion agenda at a local level, we hope it will be a useful starting point for councils in beginning to work through our own local challenges. Our online resources and case studies will be updated as more evidence and understanding emerges. Alongside this, we are continuing to support discussion and network events for officers working in this field, and exploring what additional leadership support we can provide for councillors.

By providing an overview of the key issues to think about, and evidence from different councils up and down the country, we aim through the guidance to provide a broad steer for councils as they continue their work to promote community cohesion in their local places. I hope you find it useful.

**Councillor Simon Blackburn**
Chair, LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board

# Contents

# Background and overview

## A renewed focus on community cohesion

In July 2015, the then Prime Minister commissioned Dame Louise Casey to undertake a review looking at how government can ensure people learn English; how employment and opportunities can be boosted, especially for women; and how state agencies can work with isolated communities to properly promote integration and opportunity. The review formed the core part of the fourth pillar of the Government's Counter Extremism strategy; to build more cohesive communities.

The Casey Review was subsequently published in December 2016, six months after the vote to leave the European Union highlighted significant concerns about the future direction of the country and, for many voters, the level of inward migration to the UK.

The review outlined a number of challenges and obstacles to integration and opportunity in the UK, and urged both government and local councils to seek to address these. In the report, migration was identified by the Casey Review as the most significant factor in the growth of our population in recent years. Most significantly from a local perspective, Casey found that 'many more people in the United Kingdom are now experiencing high migration flows and the impact of migration in their communities – in schools, housing and other services. As the population's diversity has increased people from minority ethnic backgrounds have become more widely dispersed across the country.'

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Social Integration criticised the fact that there is no overarching national policy framework for the integration of immigrants, suggesting integration had been left to chance by successive governments and recommending in its final report on immigrant integration that government create a comprehensive and proactive strategy on this. It concurred with the Casey Review's statement that 'for generations we have welcomed immigrants to the UK but left them to find their own way in society while leaving host communities to accommodate them and the growing diversity of our nation.'

The marginalisation of women and girls in some communities is also a critical area of focus, and a particular issue raised during the Casey Review. It was noted for instance that female employment rates lag considerably behind men; that women are underrepresented at board level and in public and political life; and that women are concentrated in occupations or sectors with less scope for financial reward. Women remain at greater risk of domestic abuse and sexual violence and face issues which are particularly acute in certain communities, such as Islamophobic hate crime, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).

But cohesion is not simply about migration, ethnic minorities or specific communities. The Casey report highlighted socio-economic exclusion as a sign of integration failure and warned that for poorer White British households in some areas, problems of educational attainment are growing.

The polarisation of political debate, particularly in regard to the issue of Brexit, also risks undermining broader societal cohesion.

All communities have a role in trying to address these challenges and in building a more cohesive society. The nature of cohesion challenges will inevitably vary from place to place, depending on local populations and circumstances. However, as with other policy issues and challenges, all areas will be able to learn from the best practice and thinking on cohesion issues that this document aims to highlight.

## The Integrated Communities Strategy

The Government's response to the Casey Review was published in March 2018, in the form of the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper/Green Paper). The Integrated Communities Strategy, which applies to England only, set out a number of proposals to address the issues highlighted in the Casey Review, and outlines a vision for integrated communities where:

- everyone is confident and proud of their identity and heritage, and able to take advantage of the opportunities that Britain offers

- people, whatever their background, live, work, learn and socialise together based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities

- many religions, cultures and opinions are celebrated, underpinned by a shared set of British values that champion tolerance, freedom and equality of opportunity

- everyone has a part to play in upholding those values – both those who are already living here and those who want to make it their home.

This vision reflects an earlier definition of cohesion set out in the original LGA guidance on community cohesion, and we therefore predominantly use the term cohesion throughout this guide.

The Integrated Communities Strategy covers a range of themes: strengthening leadership; supporting new migrants and resident communities; education and young people; boosting English language; places and community; increasing economic opportunity; rights and freedoms; and measuring success. It is supported by an area based programme working with five 'integration areas' (Blackburn with Darwen, Bradford, Walsall, Peterborough and Waltham Forest) to test out new ideas and approaches to integration. In February 2019, the Government responded to the consultation on the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper, and published an action plan setting out how it proposes to move forward with the cohesion and integration agenda.

## Councils' role in promoting community cohesion

As leaders of local places, councils and councillors have a hugely important role in promoting community cohesion. There is excellent work taking place up and down the country, albeit sometimes obscured by a focus on more visible and newsworthy community cohesion challenges, and much to be gained from sharing this good practice across the whole of local government.

But there are also major challenges for councils in promoting cohesion. The Casey Review recognised that socio-economic progress is one of the key indicators of successful integration, yet councils alone cannot create the range and number of job opportunities needed to help tackle socio-economic exclusion. Similarly, on housing and education, two areas absolutely key to promoting integration and cohesion, councils have seen their capacity to fully shape local provision chipped away by successive governments.

Devolution may help reduce some of these constraints in some places, and the recent scrapping of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing cap is welcome, but it will remain the case that in such a heavily centralised system of government, councils will be limited in what they can do on issues that are crucial determinants of cohesion. The LGA's response to the Casey Review, as well as our response to the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper, reiterated our call for faster and deeper devolution of powers over key areas to local government, and we will continue to press national government for the tools councils need for genuine and sustained change.

In recognition of the constraints facing councils in key areas, the major focus of the Casey Review was on the leadership role that councils must play in their areas. The Integrated Communities Strategy also flags the importance of strong leadership, setting out an ambition for local government to work with national government and local partners to tackle the barriers to integration, with leaders at all levels tackling segregation as they design and deliver services. On one level, this means councils working to shape a vision for the local area; ensuring that the vision recognises and involves the different groups within the area and actively seeks to build them into a cohesive community, and playing a community leadership role. But Casey also argued strongly that for councillors, this leadership role meant embodying and upholding a core set of British values and not shying away from challenging issues and conversations where these are threatened or even ignored.

These has been some frustration that cohesion and integration conversations should often be linked back to the challenge to counteract the isolation of specific communities and the threat of radicalisation and extremism, given that cohesion should be inherently positive and an enabler for everyone to reach their potential and contribute.

Building cohesive communities and shaping the environments in which our communities can flourish lie at the core of councils' day to day business and cuts across a range of different policy areas. This is reflected in the broad range of services and council tools covered in this guide; cohesion is not an issue that rests simply with teams who have a specific remit around extremism, or with political leaders.

However, it is clear that cohesive communities will be more resilient to extremism and radicalisation. As noted, building cohesive communities is one of the four strands of the current counter-extremism strategy and the Government's recently refreshed Contest counter-terrorism strategy sets out an association between support for terrorism and rejection of an integrated society, suggesting that communities who do not or cannot participate in wider society are more likely to be vulnerable to radicalisation. At the individual level, those who are, or who feel, isolated from their communities may be more vulnerable to harmful influences which may lead them to extremism and radicalisation, other forms of exploitation, or involvement in criminal activity.

Although not the focus of this guidance, countering extremism and preventing radicalisation remain an ongoing and urgent challenge, as evidenced by the series of terrorist attacks in Manchester and London during 2017. The LGA has developed a range of resources in response, including leadership essentials courses for elected members on counter extremism and Prevent, details of which can be found on our website, and guidance and case studies to support councils in their work. The Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism, chaired by Leeds and Luton councils is also developing resources which will be available via the online knowledge hub tool, providing a forum for councils working on the agenda to share information and best practice. We will also contribute to the work of the Commission for Countering Extremism as it develops.

## How this guide is structured

As noted above, cohesion issues are linked with much of councils' core business. This guide looks at some of the tools and key service areas that can support local cohesion work, bringing together some of the theoretical approaches highlighted in recent work with good practice and ideas collected from councils across the country. Although most of the document is focused on the proactive work that councils can do, it also includes a section on responding to specific cohesion challenges or incidents.

This document is intended as a starting point. Each one of our member councils is best placed to understand the nature of any cohesion issues in their own local area and councils' and their partners' work in this area is developing all the time. We will continue to update the case study resource on our website as there is more experience to build on and will look to learn from the five integration area pilots launched alongside the Strategy. Our website also provides links to other resources that councils may find useful.

# Local leadership

## Overview

As outlined above, local leadership is perhaps the single most important way in which councils can seek to shape cohesion in their area. No other organisation has both the democratic mandate and reach across services impacting on so many different aspects of peoples' lives, or even comes close to doing so. Councils should therefore be at the forefront of working with partners and communities to promote local cohesion; and all the work that councils do in different service areas to support this should be underpinned by strong and visible leadership.

This guidance explores three different elements to councils' leadership role, encompassing place, community and political leadership. These are roles that clearly extend beyond councils' executive councillors to all local councillors.

## Council and councillors as place leaders

Councils' most obvious leadership role in terms of community cohesion is as leaders of place, with a democratic mandate to represent their residents. On the one hand, this is about shaping an area that people feel part of and included in through the development of services and creation of opportunities that promote cohesion and aspiration. As importantly however, it is also about being leaders of communities; about shaping and supporting a local identity and vision, so that whatever an individual's faith, ethnicity, socio-economic background or neighbourhood, a key commonality is that people identify with their local area – as represented and reflected

by the local council. In times of stress, concern or conflict, this means taking a very visible leadership role so that everyone – residents and staff alike – is clear that the council sees cohesion as an important issue, and knows what the council's view is.

Place leadership can only be developed locally – by the people who live there, the people that represent them and the organisations that deliver and shape local services. As leaders of local places, councillors are best placed to understand their local areas, the local challenges and any specific cohesion issues linked to this; and subsequently to feed this into the overall vision for the local area. They often act as support and advocates for their constituents and in doing so can empower residents to contribute. The key tools for reflecting place leadership – discussed more in subsequent sections of this document – are councils' vision and strategy documents, and their capacity to act as a convenor of local partners and communities.

## Community leadership

Councillors' direct community leadership role, in their capacity as local ward representatives, is also absolutely critical: councillors can and do fulfil the role of community leaders. In some communities, this may be alongside other figures within the community, whether from faith groups or elsewhere – the Integrated Communities Strategy highlights, for instance, Government funding for community organisers to take on the role of local leaders.[1]

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1   The Community Organisers Expansion Programme, funded by the Department for Digital, Media, Sport and Culture, aims to increase the number of trained Community Organisers by 3,500 by March 2020. Pg 45, Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper.

In other communities, there may be fewer obvious other figures who take on the role of community leaders.

Clearly, it will help to support the community leadership role if councillors are reflective of the communities they serve, and the overall council represents the diversity of the different communities represented. The LGA's Be a Councillor campaign has developed a number of resources that councils can draw on to help promote the role of councillors and encourage representation among the different communities in their areas.

As community leaders, local councillors have a role to play in building cohesive communities at ward level, for example by convening local forums that bring different groups together and ensuring that the views of their communities are understood and represented in councils' wider work. To assist members in their community leadership role, councils should think about how neighbourhood or area based teams can provide support and intelligence to improve local understanding of issues. Where there are challenges or tensions, this community leadership role may involve conflict resolution or mediation, and the need for councillors to show political leadership in tackling difficult issues.

## Rotherham Neighbourhood Strategy 2018-25

Rotherham council has based its neighbourhood strategy around individual wards, each of which has a neighbourhood officer and budget of £23,000. Ward councillors are tasked with working with their communities to develop a plan including how to spend this money, and must report back to Full Council. The early indications are that the scheme has been very successful, with freedom for councillors to respond to issues in their wards. This has led to a real diversity of issues being tackled in the community plans and budgets – from road safety, to litter, to male suicide – and good engagement from communities.

## Political leadership

Alongside place leadership, councillors must also provide political leadership, by leading by example and having the courage to tackle difficult issues that arise in relation to cohesion and other matters. In her review, Dame Louise Casey argued that politicians have not always done this, and that "too many leaders in public and faith institutions and in communities have allowed diversity and difference to become separatism and segregation that has divided communities." More recently, the Integrated Communities Strategy includes an aspiration for "leaders in all sectors to have the confidence to champion our shared values and challenge policies, practices and behaviours which stand in the way of integration".

Focusing on local authorities in particular, Casey commented that "difficult issues are ignored because political leaders are focussing on what they think their communities want to hear, rather than what they believe is right, for fear of losing the support of a particular community" and concluded that "we should expect all in public office to uphold the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs for those without faith."

Whether this criticism is accepted or not, most people would accept the clear thrust of this message: that local politicians have a responsibility to embody and promote British values, our cultural norms, rights and responsibilities; and that demonstrating tolerance and acceptance of other cultures should not mean downplaying these values or accepting practices that contravene British law. Above all, it means not shying away from difficult conversations or messages where practices in local communities threaten to or actually deny individuals their basic rights or break the law.

There is undoubtedly a role for councils in leading local conversations about what are acceptable standards and practices in modern Britain. Framed properly and appropriately, clear leadership about the rights and responsibilities that come with living in this country does not suggest that people of different faiths and backgrounds are unwelcome, or that people already here cannot have multiple identities; instead it can help set out how different identities and customs must fit within an overall framework of what is acceptable and legal under UK law.

But leading this successfully requires councillors of all parties to be aware of the extent to which language and their choices of words can influence communities and their perceptions. This is increasingly the case on social media, where a number of councillors have used language or made remarks that have been criticised. At a time when political debate in the UK and elsewhere is becoming more polarised, it is hugely important that councillors lead by example.

At the corporate level, councils should therefore provide guidance and training on this issue for their members, particularly newly elected councillors, with a clear message that tough or difficult messages need to be addressed respectfully and responsibly; that councillors need to balance political partisanship with civic leadership and inclusiveness; and about the importance of listening and understanding residents' concerns on these issues.

Tackling sensitive subjects is not easy; some of the issues Casey identified can be difficult and sensitive issues to address. However, work by councils to tackle female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage or so called 'honour-based' abuse – subjects that could be seen as both culturally sensitive and uncomfortable for councils and councillors to focus on – is a good example of what can be achieved when institutions have the courage to start addressing an issue.

## Leeds' forced marriage and honour based abuse pledge of intention

Leeds City Council is working with local partners to establish Leeds as a beacon city for tackling 'honour-based' abuse and forced marriage. The council, police, police and crime commissioner and health partners have signed up to a pledge to work collectively to tackle these issues through a coordinated city-wide response, under the direction of a multi-agency steering group.

Working closely with Karma Nirvana, a human rights charity based in Leeds which supports victims of 'honour-based' abuse and forced marriage, the pledge includes initiatives to promote ways of safeguarding children and adults at risk, increase public awareness, influence social change, develop effective support and responses for victims, and develop workforce capacity and capability. The work saw calls to local support services increase by 40 per cent in a year.

Political leadership also means being willing to take action where behaviours or practices among elected councillors do not meet acceptable standards or comply with the same norms and values – so that councillors are seen to exemplify the standards they should be promoting. This is not simply a role for councillors and local councils; both local and national political parties have a critical role to play here in ensuring that unacceptable behaviours are addressed and that their efforts to seek political advantage do not inadvertently undermine cohesion. The LGA encourages its member councillors to raise such concerns with their parties where this may be the case.

# Available support

The LGA offers a comprehensive range of programmes to help support councillors with their leadership skills, as well as support from our regional member peers and principal advisers. From day programmes that focus on specific areas such as effective scrutiny, risk management or leading culture change through to modular residential programmes like the flagship Leadership Academy, there is something available for every councillor looking to develop their leadership further.

A full range of what is on offer can be found at www.local.gov.uk/our-support/our-improvement-offer. In particular, councillors may wish to draw on our:

- Leadership essentials course on cohesion and integration
- Councillor workbook on community leadership
- Councillor workbook on facilitation and conflict resolution
- Community leadership training modules.

In addition, as a politically-led organisation, the LGA also offers councillors of individual parties and independent councillors a wealth of experience and support from their respective political group office. Each group office has a team that has wide knowledge across their respective party and is another, unique resource available to councillors. For more information please go to www.local.gov.uk/about/governance-leadership-committees-and-members/political-composition/political-groups

# Key tools

There are a number of tools that councils can use to underpin their work on cohesion. Council strategies; effective use of data; equalities work; partnership working and commissioning; engagement and communications; and good governance and scrutiny all have a role to play in supporting councils' work on the cohesion agenda. This section looks at each in turn.

## Vision and strategy

A council's vision or strategy documents are the clearest ways in which it can signal its place leadership, on cohesion as well as a range of other issues. The vision for a local area can provide an important way of bringing the community together, both through the process of developing it and by creating something that everyone in the community can support and identify with. The council's corporate plan can set out the steps it is taking in order to deliver its vision.

The Integrated Communities Strategy calls on local government to "take a 'whole council' approach to integration, developing a local vision with partners, businesses, the voluntary and community sector and communities, and mainstreaming integration objectives across policy and service delivery." As place leaders, councils are in a good position to lead the process of developing a local vision, working with local partners and communities to do so (further guidance on partnerships and engagement is set out later in this section). The most effective vision will be one that is developed with local people and partnerships, and rooted in ideas and values which local people understand and support.

Councils may take different approaches as to whether or not they develop a standalone community cohesion vision and strategy, or incorporate them within the council's overall approach. There is no right or wrong answer, and given the importance of economic opportunity, housing and aspiration in the cohesion agenda, issues closely linked to cohesion should be central to an overall vision either way.

Whether separate or not, the main challenge will be to ensure that active consideration of cohesion issues is fully reflected in the corporate plan and therefore effectively mainstreamed through the entire work of the council.

The vision or strategy for community cohesion might cover:

- the aspiration for local places, in terms of cohesiveness, opportunity and prosperity
- how cohesion is understood, measured and tracked
- shared values
- the rights, responsibilities and obligations of residents
- relationships and engagement between different parts of the local community
- civic participation
- support for and integration of newcomers to the community
- tackling specific challenges, around deprivation or cohesion
- the role of the council in supporting the agenda
- the role and involvement of the local community

- specific support for vulnerable or unrepresented groups (this will vary from area to area)

- working with partners.

As noted, the development of a local vision is in itself an opportunity to bring different parts of the community together to help shape the work. Several councils have commented that, in areas where there have been cohesion issues, bringing different groups together has been extremely helpful in identifying that different parts of the community have common concerns – over housing, education, the environment they live in and jobs – thereby emphasising what groups have in common rather than how they differ. A wide range of groups should be consulted, reflecting different ethnic, gender, cultural, faith, generational, disability and socio-economic groups.

## Building Stronger Communities – Rotherham's corporate strategy on community cohesion

Following the difficult impact on community cohesion of child sexual exploitation cases and ongoing far right marches in the town, Rotherham Council has developed a strong corporate strategy on cohesion, 'Building stronger communities.'

The strategy sets out how the council will deliver its vision of a place that "values decency and dignity…where opportunity is extended to everyone." It defines a stronger community simply as "people living and working in harmony, with a shared sense of community spirit – having respect for each other as citizens and respect for Rotherham as a place."

The strategy highlights a number of key themes, including:

- a strong civic community and pride of place, with trust in local institutions based on their commitment to acting fairly and honestly and with transparency and accountability

- proactive work to bring people together

- shared values and an understanding of peoples' rights and responsibilities towards each other, including challenging extremism and those who seek to weaken or divide the community

- the need to expand opportunity and economic security, with people from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment.

The strategy sets out the work the council has already done in support of these themes, as well as how the strategic 'Rotherham Together Partnership' will help deliver the building stronger communities agenda. A new stronger communities forum for Rotherham has been established to feed in views from community representatives and faith organisations and provide a safe environment for different community voices and opinions, to help pick up any issues and tensions. The council has also established a stronger communities grant fund to support community-led action.

Alongside this the council is developing a programme of activity to respond to specific challenges associated with migration and settlement patterns, including: service integration, rogue landlords, English language support, cohesion and data and evidence gathering.

While the council is establishing dedicated officer support to lead on the delivery of the Building Stronger Communities vision and plan, cohesion will also be a key focus within the overall corporate plan, with service plans expected to have an overt focus on fostering stronger communities. The agenda is being led by the leader of the council, who is also chair of the Rotherham Together Partnership, and overseen by the council's assistant chief executive.

## Community cohesion strategy for Birmingham

Birmingham City Council has recently coordinated city-wide work to develop a new cohesion strategy for the city. The strategy was developed following a wide consultation, including web based feedback, targeted work with small groups, discussions with business and visits to community centres. The strategy is founded on eight guiding principles:

- making cohesion a part of everyday policy and practice for all partners

- connecting people and places to share ideas and innovation

- every child should have the best start in life no matter what their background

- everyone should have a strong sense and understanding of their rights and responsibilities

- the need to progress equality in all spheres of social and economic life

- promoting inclusive growth that benefits everyone

- empowered and engaged neighbourhoods

- using sports, arts and cultural events to drive cohesion.

The strategy recognises the leadership and commitment that all partners – in communities, the public sector, business, voluntary and community sector and faith organisations – must provide to help deliver the strategy.

## Data

Being able to assess levels of cohesion and integration in a local area is critical to understanding, promoting and tracking cohesion. As with any other policy area, this requires local places to identify a set of appropriate metrics, establish a baseline and track future progress against this.

To date, there hasn't been a single agreed set of metrics used for the purpose of measuring cohesion. The Casey Review called for central and local government to develop a list of indicators that could indicate a potential breakdown in integration, perhaps including incidences of hate crime or deficiencies in English language, and for councils to collect this regularly. The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Social Integration urged the Government to consider adapting existing data sources and introducing new ones to help better understand immigrant integration.

The Integrated Communities Strategy attempts to heed some of these calls, setting out an aim to develop a set of meaningful measures to monitor progress in reaching the Strategy's outcome. These are being tested with the integration areas to ensure that the measures are right and help to support positive change locally. An external evaluator is working with all five integration areas, which will include conducting a survey asking residents a number of questions about both their perceptions of cohesion in their local areas as well as their own social capital.

In the interim the LGA's research team has worked with the integration team at Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to develop a cohesion and integration report using the LGA's LG Inform tool. LG Inform provides councils with up-to-date published data about their local area and the comparative performance of their council or fire and rescue authority. LG Inform can be used to map relevant contextual data, including demographic and socio-economic information.

The new cohesion and integration LG Inform report, which was released in February 2019, is available to all authorities and tracks four key indicators:

- English language proficiency
- economic inactivity
- residential segregation (index of dissimilarity), and
- migration levels.

The report will benchmark individual local authority statistics against a group of CIPFA 'near neighbour' authorities.

Local authorities can also utilise the significant amount of data that they already hold that is relevant to understanding cohesion, and the risks to it, in their areas. While some of this may relate to very specific measures such as instances of hate crime, much more of it will be general data about the nature and size of the local population covering a range of themes that are integral to cohesion, for example, population and diversity, deprivation levels, English language proficiency, educational attainment, school segregation and labour market data, income and welfare statistics, economic indicators, housing etc across a range of areas. Information on equalities, civic participation and public trust in institutions are also useful proxies, although the amounts of information available at local level vary. A good example is the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which has pulled together a range of data together on its website.

## The Greater London Assembly

The Greater London Assembly (GLA) launched its Strategy for Social Integration in March 2018. This included a number of measures around relationships, participation and equality, for example:

- proportion of people who say their friends are all of a similar race, similar income level and similar education to them
- proportion of people who agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on
- proportion of people who do not have a spouse or partner, family member or friend to rely on a lot if they have a serious problem
- proportion who agree that people in their neighbourhood can be trusted
- levels of civic participation
- rates of employment between groups, and educational attainment/skills
- proportion of adults who agree they feel they belong to their neighbourhood
- proportion of adults who agree that London is a good place to live.

Many councils currently use local residents' surveys to seek to build up a picture of local cohesion trends. The LGA has developed a guide for undertaking surveys of local residents, alongside a model questionnaire which includes a question on the extent to which people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together. We have also published guidance on understanding the views of residents.

Councils which follow the guidance are able to benchmark their statistics against those of other participating authorities, and also the national picture using data collected via the LGA's regular polling on resident satisfaction. The most recent national polling data is available on the LGA website.

## Luton Council

Luton Council regularly surveys more than 1,000 local residents, asking a core set of questions including:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?

The council has recently begun to ask the question in two segments, with residents giving a view in relation to their immediate local areas, as well as in relation to Luton as a whole, generating ward level data sets for the question.

Councils can draw on a series of external data sources to help better understand their local populations. The Integration Hub provides a wealth of data on residential patterns and school data mapped at local authority level. Some local authorities have also begun using the OriginsInfo tool, a segmentation system which helps local authorities to understand the population of their local areas based on consumer classification information, providing a much more up-to-date analysis then census data. Presentations about the tool and how it can be used by councils are available on the LGA website.

Finally, the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford has produced a series of short regional profiles on the characteristics of foreign-born populations by region. These show the sectors in which EU and non-EU workers are employed, the main nationalities living in each region, and the local authorities with higher and lower shares of migrants.

### Race disparity audit

A useful tool that councils can draw on to support their cohesion work is the Government's Ethnicity Facts and Figures website, launched in October 2017 alongside a report summarising the first release of data from the Race Disparity Audit.

The audit is designed to help understand differences between different ethnic groups, and identify services where disparities are diminishing – and those where work is needed to tackle disparities.

The audit provides an overview of disparities in how people of different ethnicities are treated across public services, then breaks this down into the areas of: community; education; labour market participation and income; housing; crime and policing; criminal justice system; health, and the public sector workforce. The report is based on national level data held by the Government, but can be used as a guide by councils and supplemented with their own local level data and insight.

### Monitoring tensions

As well as understanding views and trends in local cohesion at a general level, many councils have also put in place measures to monitor cohesion related tension, akin to an early warning system. The Institute of Community Cohesion has previously published guidance on this, setting out the suggested steps councils can go through to establish tension monitoring reporting.

## Dudley Council

Dudley Council developed its own reporting tool to measure community tensions. It defines community tension as a "situation arising from acts or events that cause people to feel negative toward one another and/or services provided, putting at risk public order or threatening the peace and stability of local communities", and asks anyone who has witnessed something that could be construed as contributing to community tension to report it by submitting an online form giving the account of the problem and its root cause. This mechanism allows the council to receive information about incidents that are not necessarily reported to the police and enables the council to enhance its understanding of community tensions and potential risks of extremism and radicalisation.

# Equalities work

The Equality Act 2010 challenges organisations to understand how protected characteristics – defined as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion/belief, sex, and sexual orientation – impact the experiences of local communities, both individually and collectively.

The Act introduced the public sector equality duty, under which councils are required to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In England, local authorities are required to identify and publish one or more specific and measurable objective(s) to support these requirements.

In summary, the duty creates a requirement for councils to review how their policies and approaches support individuals and communities whose protected characteristics may have led them to be discriminated against or subject to a more general inequality of opportunity. Councils can therefore use their equalities work to seek to address some of the differences in experiences and outcomes for different groups that may be undermining local cohesion, and equalities work will therefore be an important part of a council's approach to cohesion. The Integrated Communities Strategy goes further, calling on public authorities to set an equality objective outlining specific activity to promote integration.

To support councils to review and improve their performance for people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, and to deliver on the public sector equality duty, the LGA has developed the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG), a self-assessment tool that enables councils to benchmark their performance on:

- knowing your communities

- leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

- involving your communities

- responsive services and customer care

- a skilled and committed workforce.

Alongside the generic equality framework, the LGA has also developed specific equality frameworks for social housing and the fire and rescue service.

While there is both a legal and moral duty for councils to ensure that effective equalities work supports community cohesion, there is also a need to be mindful of challenges that can arise in this area and think about how to mitigate them. If cohesion in practice means thinking at the community or societal level, equalities work is focused on outcomes for individuals or individual groups and there may sometimes be tensions and trade-offs between the two – particularly when austerity has reduced resources and it can be challenging for councils to target resources in a way that is seen as fair. To address this, councils need to ensure that their work is robustly evidence based and that they are open and transparent in both delivering and explaining their work.

Similarly, councils will recognise that inequality of opportunity and socio-economic disadvantage are not always linked to groups with protected characteristics. The Casey Review highlighted concerns about poorer White British households falling behind in educational attainment, with potential long-term implications for employment and advancement.

As is set out elsewhere in this document, cohesion strategies will certainly need to reflect these issues, but this particular aspect of integration and cohesion will not be addressed through equalities work alone – reflecting that this work is a vital component but only part of local government's response to cohesion issues.

# Partnership working

**Overview**

Working with partners – other public sector organisations, the voluntary and community sector and private sector – is absolutely critical to building community cohesion; councils cannot expect to foster cohesion without the active support and involvement of these groups. Trust, understanding and partnership working develop over time, and aren't always easy, particularly in a period of austerity and when considering sensitive issues such as cohesion. Councils cannot control the responsiveness and effectiveness of local partners, although they can show leadership by continuing to pursue regular engagement and ensuring they are offering genuine dialogue, openness and involvement to local partners. One officer working on cohesion at a council that has over time developed very strong working relationships with local partners including businesses, the police and faith groups, enabling it to have tough and honest conversations with them, commented that this doesn't happen overnight, and that councillors and officers had put in the 'hard yards' to get there.

**Partnership framework and approach**

The shape of local partnership working varies from place to place, with some councils having effectively retained local strategic partnerships and others having replaced them. Typically, local partnership structures may involve the police, health services, housing associations, businesses, schools, colleges and further education establishments, the voluntary sector, community groups and faith groups. Some of these partnerships will be overarching, and used for the development of local plans and strategies; others such as community safety partnerships, local safeguarding boards, health and wellbeing boards or Prevent partnerships will be more targeted. These formal, strategic partnership working arrangements will be supplemented by more locally-based partnership working such as ward forums and similar groups.

The key point for each area is to think about how cohesion can be considered across the partnership structures that are already in place, or whether to develop new ones. As local place leaders with the broadest overall remit, councils are well placed to take the lead on discussions about how cohesion issues are incorporated into local partnership frameworks and strategic approaches.

> **Bradford Stronger Communities Partnership**
>
> The Bradford Stronger Communities Partnership brings together partners to drive and oversee the city's Stronger Communities Strategy. Supported by Bradford Council, it has an independent chair, the Bishop of Bradford.

All public services have a role to play in creating cohesive and resilient communities – whether through the provision of education or housing, ensuring the health of our communities, or supporting people into work and employment. However, this contribution may not necessarily be recognised in that context. Again, councils can take a leading role in helping local partners (along with the whole of the council) to understand and explicitly recognise their role in supporting cohesion.

As with other cross-cutting local issues, areas should think about how existing mechanisms for sharing information and intelligence across different agencies could be used to better understand local cohesion challenges and tensions and more effectively address them. Similarly, local partners should think about using different organisations to engage with harder to reach communities – schools can provide a basis for engaging with local communities, while the fire service is a

trusted brand that some people may feel more comfortable engaging with than other public services. Partners should therefore think creatively about how they are involving different organisations in work to strengthen local cohesion.

## Partnership working to resolve tensions in Shirebrook – Bolsover District Council

In spring 2015, Shirebrook found itself in the news for negative reasons. Resentment at the growing number of migrant workers recruited by Sports Direct, and the pressures that put on the existing community, resulted in demonstrations that hit the headlines.

Bolsover has a history of Polish immigration when Polish pilots stayed on after World War II and brought up families here who are now fully integrated. But the lower wages that new immigrants were prepared to accept, and the number of immigrants arriving, put increasing pressure on services like housing, health and education as well as public order. Less responsible landlords were quick to take advantage of this new market and the council had to take action on overcrowding and safety issues. As with so many other areas, the council found that it can be the daily irritations that become important and cause most tension, such as public drinking or illegal bonfires. Therefore, apart from the major economic problems, there were cultural clashes that had to be resolved.

All these difficulties covered a very diverse range of issues, so it was clear that the council needed to bring together a wide range of services and groups to tackle them. Bolsover has a history of strong partnership working with a high level partnership team in the authority. Using this experience, Shirebrook Forward NG20 was formed to tackle these issues head on.

Independently chaired, this group brings together professionals from the police, health and education and the various

council departments like housing and environmental health, along with the town council and other representatives from both the local community and voluntary groups. The aim is to improve conditions for all Shirebrook's residents and progress has been made against this objective.

One of the first problems to be resolved was addressed with the cooperation of the Polish Consul in Manchester. The Consul was receiving requests from destitute people for repatriation who were unsuitable for employment here and had given their passports as security for free travel. Eastern European gangs had brought these vulnerable people across as part of a lucrative identity theft scam. Derbyshire Police were then able to co-operate with Polish authorities in clearing this up.

The NG20 partnership has seen many improvements. A Polish speaking worker has been employed to liaise with the community and help them communicate better with local services. Language classes have been set up. Cross cultural arts and sports events have taken place. Relationships have improved with Sports Direct who helped with information and facilities and are now running their own language classes. Many of these activities have supported local residents and it is important that the whole community should benefit from the improvements.

The council has been awarded funding under the Controlling Migration Fund (CMF). The successful proposal 'Building Resilience' has seven strands:

- community resilience
- market square enlivenment
- migrant community access
- improve access and quality of private sector housing
- social norms and UK Laws
- additional GP resources
- healthy workforce programme.

There are several initiatives that will cross-cut with the CMF award alongside the district and town council in terms of economic regeneration, which is a real boost for the area.

Shirebrook Forward NG20 will oversee the work of the programme with an operational group ensuring delivery against each of the key strands. Use of the CMF grant will be maximised by collaborating with other funding sources, activities and the wider community, including the One Public Estate initiative, district council and town council regeneration plans. Section 106 monies raised through the planning process will be used to help with local GP provision.

The council feels that it has established a successful method of addressing the issues its communities face, and will continue to work with its key partners and the local community to promote cohesion and integration. This is a strategic approach managed by an expert partnership team so that even as patterns of migration change they will be able to respond effectively to fresh challenges.

## The importance of the voluntary and community sector[2]

The voluntary and community sector (VCS), or third sector, covers a wide spectrum of different organisations and groups that are key partners in working to build community cohesion. It includes national and local charities, tenants' and residents' organisations, faith organisations and community groups and can also include not-for-profit organisations such as housing associations, social enterprises and cooperatives. Some areas have active faith groups such as churches, mosques and temples, which may offer valuable welfare assistance and can be harnessed as champions for community cohesion.

2   More information is available from the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (www.ncvo.org.uk), the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (www.navca.org.uk) and Social Enterprise UK (www.socialenterprise.org.uk).

Voluntary and community organisations vary in size and capacity, from highly professionalised national bodies acting at the strategic level to small informal associations at neighbourhood level. How voluntary and community bodies are able to contribute to the local cohesion agenda will depend to a large extent on their role and experience but in general engaging with these groups will support a bottom-up approach to building community cohesion as well as supporting effective delivery of cohesion focused services.

Smaller community organisations operating at the local level can in particular play an integral part in community development. A key strength is their sensitivity to local issues and culture, and knowledge of their specific areas: organisations working at the neighbourhood level can offer a unique insight into the perceptions of local people about their community and an opportunity to involve people from groups who are otherwise hard to reach.

The VCS has a number of roles to play in supporting cohesion. They will typically be represented in local partnership structures such as health and wellbeing boards and other local strategic partnerships, and will be a vital partner in developing the local cohesion and integration strategy or approach. Many councils are also increasingly moving to a model of co-production with communities and the VCS in terms of identifying outcomes and designing services. In a cohesion context, this is seen as a very valuable development – but there are two particular challenges to be mindful of: firstly, the need for councils to share power in a meaningful way and respect the outputs that co-production generates, and secondly, the time it can take to develop.

The VCS may also play a role in the delivery of services that support cohesion. In the past, most councils gave grants to local VCS organisations, either to cover their core costs or to contribute to a particular aspect of their work. This model has developed in recent years, with councils often directly commissioning VCS organisations to deliver specific outcomes or services.

Some councils have created new VCS organisations to directly deliver services previously delivered by the council, such as youth services, libraries and children's centres. Given their evolving role, many VCS organisations employ significant numbers of local people or offer a route into employment through volunteering programmes.

In 2018, the Government published its civil society strategy, Building a future that works for everyone. Civil society in this context refers to individuals and organisations when they act with the primary purpose of creating social value, independent of state control. By social value we mean enriched lives and a fairer society for all. The strategy explores empowerment of citizens and communities, and makes a commitment to broaden the range of funding options for community initiatives, including the revival of grant-making. It also launched a new Innovation in Democracy programme to pilot participatory democracy approaches, whereby people are supported to directly take part in the decision-making that affects their communities.

Government is also interested in furthering opportunities for deliberative democracy at a local level, meaning giving greater power to local communities to discuss and make decisions about key issues that affect them, whereby the discussion and decisions have direct influence. This provides opportunities for community cohesion through dialogue, empowerment and ownership of decisions.

**Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)**
Like broader local partnership arrangements, local structures for working with the voluntary and community sector vary; some councils have retained a local version of the former 'Compact' on relations between government and voluntary/community sector, while others have not. Either way, as key first steps in working with the local voluntary and community sector in their areas, councils will need to understand what groups exist; make an assessment of local voluntary and community sector capacity; and determine

how the sector can contribute at a strategic level as well as through the delivery of localised support. Most councils will already have a level of understanding about VCS capacity in their areas, but this may not have been considered in the specific context of cohesion.

Voluntary and community groups may represent different areas, or different constituent groups within those areas, perhaps based on gender, age, nationality or faith. To engage with these groups effectively and sensitively, councils may need to develop a basic, institutional understanding of the particular characteristics of the communities they represent.

As highlighted elsewhere in this guidance, councils should ensure they establish how far an individual or specific group's remit goes in relation to the community as a whole, and seek to establish additional contacts where groups or parts of communities remain unrepresented. Councils need to be clear that people claiming to speak on behalf of a community are genuinely representative of the community, in terms of age, gender and background – something that may increasingly not be the case if councils are engaging with community elders in areas where the population they apparently represent is much younger. Councils and councillors will need to use their judgement on these issues and ensure they are listening to a range of voices.

Local ward councillors should aim to understand the broad range of VCS partners in their area and engage appropriately: building strong relationships with the sector can be a significant part of every councillor's role.

Councils should also think about how their structures can support local groups, many of which may have a precarious existence that is dependent on irregular funding and volunteers. While there are considerably fewer council funding opportunities available than previously, and a need to ensure funding is allocated robustly, councils should avoid creating unnecessary bureaucracy (such as

excessive application forms) in their dealings with and support for local bodies: it will be important that capacity or other (eg language) barriers do not prevent good organisations from receiving funding. Councils can also think about how they may be able to provide in-kind support for voluntary organisations having a positive impact on their communities, potentially providing facilities support, capacity building and assisting them with applications for funding.

The LGA has developed a range of resources and case studies intended to support councils on what we have termed 'community action'; that is engaging their communities in the design and delivery of services. The VCS has a crucial role to play in this, and the section on governance provides specific guidance on the issues councils should consider when working with the VCS.

## Commissioning

Commissioning is the process of ensuring that outcomes identified in a council's needs analysis are delivered through the right service and the right models of delivery, whether that is the public, private, voluntary or other sectors, or through social enterprises.

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires public authorities to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public services contracts procured as part of the commissioning cycle; there is a statutory duty for councils to consider how they achieve social value in all contracts for services over £160,000. It is widely acknowledged that among public authorities, councils are leading on the implementation of the Act.

Councils are already used to thinking about how the commissioning process can support broader objectives beyond the specific detail of a contract, for example around supporting the ageing population. There is also scope to think about how the services councils commission are linked to and can support better cohesion.
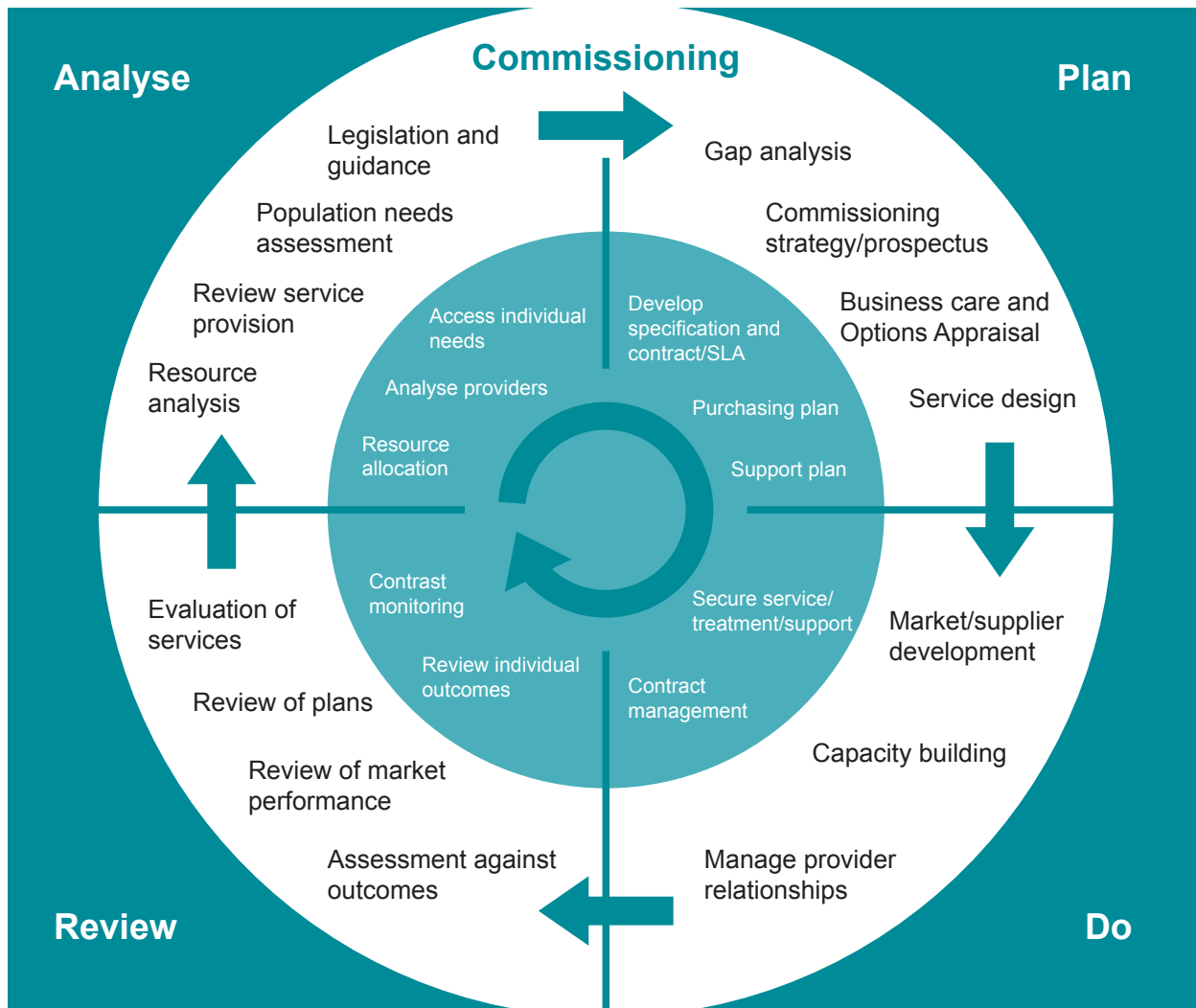
The Integrated Communities Green Paper goes further, suggesting that both national and local government have awarded grants and contracts to meet the particular needs of specific groups without requiring that the services or groups are linked with the wider community, which may have exacerbated segregation.

While there may be very good reasons for developing specialised services which focus on certain local groups, it will also be sensible to consider broader cohesion implications at an early stage to ensure that opportunities to promote cohesion through the nature of a grant or contract are considered. A further issue to consider is undertaking due diligence in the commissioning process to ensure that funding is not awarded to groups with links to extremists.

The contracts and grants that councils issue to support projects with specific cohesion objectives are typically small-scale or low-value compared to other council contracts, but there is an opportunity to focus on how cohesion outcomes can be built-in to much larger council contracts that do not have cohesion as a specific focus. With social and economic well-being integral to community cohesion, there is arguably a duty to do so.

**Considering cohesion throughout the commissioning cycle**
Councils can incorporate cohesion outcomes into the commissioning process by applying a standard set of commissioning questions to the specific issue of cohesion. This can be done throughout the different stages of the commissioning cycle: analyse, plan, do and review:

**Commissioning**

**Analyse**
- Legislation and guidance
- Population needs assessment
- Review service provision
- Resource analysis

**Plan**
- Gap analysis
- Commissioning strategy/prospectus
- Business care and Options Appraisal
- Service design

**Do**
- Market/supplier development
- Capacity building
- Manage provider relationships

**Review**
- Evaluation of services
- Review of plans
- Review of market performance
- Assessment against outcomes

Inner circle:
- Access individual needs
- Analyse providers
- Resource allocation
- Contrast monitoring
- Review individual outcomes
- Develop specification and contract/SLA
- Purchasing plan
- Support plan
- Secure service/treatment/support
- Contract management

## Analyse
- Does the needs analysis for goods and services reflect the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances and any specific cohesion challenges?

- What is our vision for community cohesion in the local area? How will this be delivered?

- How can the service help us to improve our community cohesion outcomes?

- What services do we provide already that could be commissioned in a different way to help improve community cohesion?

## Plan
- Are our communities included in defining the development of services and creation of opportunities that promote cohesion and aspiration?

- Gap analysis – how close are we to the vision and strategy we set out and how can the service we want to commission move us closer to it?

## Do
- How are community cohesion outcomes identified in our market development and market shaping programmes?

- Have we realised all the community cohesion benefits we identified through the commissioning cycle?

- Are our communities represented in the council's work/delivery of this service?

## Review
- What outcomes did we achieve and what has been the impact of what we have done?

- Are our communities more cohesive? What has been the effect on socio-economic development?

- What do we need to learn for next time?

## Norfolk youth services commissioning

Following a significant reduction in funding and a new government vision for youth services, in 2011 Norfolk County Council completely revised its approach to youth services. Whereas a previous £4 million budget had supported youth workers in multi-disciplinary teams across the county, the council used the remaining budget (of around £900,000) to create Youth Advisory Boards (YABs) operating in seven local areas as a vehicle for commissioning local services. The aim was to build on the county's vibrant voluntary sector and bring together agencies with an interest in this area, while also putting young people are the heart of decision making.

Each Board comprises young people, members and officers from the relevant district and county, representatives from education, health, police and children's services, and the business and voluntary and community sector. Boards have a small budget, and identify a plan and set of priorities for their areas, creating a structure around young people's involvement in local commissioning decisions.

A key part of the work has been to train 'Young Commissioners' for each area, enabling young people to inform decision-making and shape local services.

Evaluation of the programme suggests that it has proved effective for the young people and communities that are being reached.

Critical to the success of YABs has been the voice of young people in articulating their views on what is important to them, what gaps exist, how they want services to be provided and assessing and reporting on the quality of delivery.

A 2016 review of the programme by a county council task and finish group maintained the commitment to supporting YABs, despite further budget challenges. However, councillors were also clear that they wanted the programme to go further, with YABs more clearly led and chaired by young people, rather than simply being involved in them.

The group identified a continued expectation that an analysis of young people's needs is used to highlight local priorities, taking account of gaps as well as strengths within the local area. YAB funding is allocated to address some or all of these priorities through an open process of Young Commissioners inviting and evaluating project proposals, with the support of the YAB's youth and community workers and adults on the YAB. The Young Commissioners are also providing support to other departments and agencies, such as public health, assisting with their commissioning decisions and the evaluation of the impact of those services.

### Additional resources

The LGA and others have developed a number of generic tools to support councils to strengthen their commissioning processes, which may be useful in considering how to incorporate cohesion considerations.

The LGA and Cabinet Office helped to develop and support the delivery of the Commissioning Academy for council officers, now run by the Public Service Transformation Academy: the LGA continues to run the Commissioning Academy for elected members. This provides support to councillors in their role as commissioners including how to provide ward-level resident insight into the council's commissioning cycle and how to carry out effective overview and scrutiny of council commissioning decisions.

In conjunction with NHS Clinical Commissioners, we published Integrated Commissioning for Better Outcomes to support local health and care economies to strengthen their integrated commissioning.

Finally, the Social Value Portal, a tool that allows organisations to measure and manage the contribution that their organisation and supply chain makes to society, has a number of case studies about social value and procurement.

# Effective community engagement

Effective engagement by councils and within communities themselves is critical in supporting cohesion. Where there are concerns about community cohesion, councils and councillors need to be able to communicate effectively with local residents in a way that is open, honest and makes sense to them, provides appropriate platforms that encourage them to give their views, and in a way that engenders trust and ensures residents feel like their voices are being heard.

Anecdotal evidence around the election of a number of British National Party councillors in the 2000s suggested that many residents felt that their voices were not being heard and were experiencing a breakdown in trust with local councils. Consequently, much of the effort that followed the election results was about ensuring that sentiment was addressed and reversed. As well as focusing on who councils were talking to, this meant thinking about how they were talking to them. A number of councils subsequently explored the use of 'values modes' of communication to help them understand the way in which they were talking to different people, rather than simply using a one size fits all model for speaking to parts of the community that may be very different. The development of social media since this time has increased the opportunities for creative approaches in the way that councils engage with different people, as well as for how people engage with each other.

The LGA has supported a significant piece of research into effective engagement that builds on some of this early learning. The newly updated, New Conversations resource provides tips specifically geared to the role of cabinet members and committee chairs; councillors; senior management, and officers planning and delivering services. The tool provides a step-by-step guide on strengthening engagement techniques and includes a specific section on engagement and cohesion.

## Who are you engaging with?

To support community cohesion, councils must be engaging with all the different groups in their community to understand their lived experiences, concerns and aspirations. Engagement should target different gender, generational, ethnic, faith, sexuality, disability and socio-economic groups, as well as focus on different areas and wards within the local borough. This engagement should be active and ongoing, and tailored to the needs of different groups in terms of location, medium and tone.

One of the key questions for councils in dealing with community cohesion is who to engage with within different communities. The importance of this is twofold – firstly, to ensure that the council is getting representative input from its different communities, from people who genuinely can and do reflect the views of the whole community; and secondly, to ensure that those people are well placed to take back and communicate information and messages from the council, which may be the difference between achieving, or not achieving, the trust of the community.

In some communities, there are individuals who are perceived to be community leaders or elders – often in the faith community, or with a traditional status in the community. Councils have often engaged with these people as representatives of their communities, and it may still be right to do so. However, some councils are also now questioning whether engagement routed through these pathways is always effective, and are actively seeking to communicate directly with a much broader group of people within communities to ensure they hear a wider set of generational, gender or other perspectives than might be achieved from perceived leaders or elders alone.

Elsewhere, it may be harder to identify who community leaders are, given the decreasing significance of for example the church or trade unions, or to determine whether the loudest voices are necessarily the most representative. The Integrated Communities Strategy describes a need to engage with others not necessarily in positions of

authority, noting that "some of the people who influence others by example and bring about change would not identify themselves as leaders." This may be people active in other organisations, such as the voluntary and community sector, housing or tenancy associations, local businesses and schools, which can offer an alternative route into local networks and influence.

The 'trust in the community' section of the LGA's engagement guidance includes a specific section on engaging with hard to reach communities.

### How are you engaging?

As important as who you engage with is how you engage with them. As set out above, values modes communication techniques suggest that behaviours can be changed by communicating with people in a way that is appropriate to them. The model segments groups into three categories with distinct characteristics and motivations:

- settlers – who tend to be older, socially conservative and security conscious

- prospectors – who are motivated by success, status and recognition and tend to be younger and more optimistic

- pioneers – whose views are governed by values of collectivism and fairness.

Understanding which category individuals and groups fall into can help shape messages according to the views and priorities of each group and help councils to understand different perspectives.

Alongside shaping messages appropriately, councils should also consider the right medium for engagement, whether written, face-to-face, online or social media approaches. The learning from councils that have used the values mode is that, for some parts of the community, traditional written communication is ineffective; face to-face communication, and peer-to-peer communication, may be more beneficial, including with the most disaffected or concerned residents.

### What are you engaging on?

Effective corporate engagement techniques by councils will involve ongoing engagement with different groups of residents on a wide variety of issues. To specifically help foster cohesion, councils need to talk openly about a range of subjects, including potentially difficult and challenging issues – some of which communities may be more or less willing to talk about than others. This is not necessarily easy and needs to be undertaken honestly and sensitively, in a way that reflects the political leadership role outlined earlier – with the role of councillors in helping to lead some of these potentially difficult discussions particularly important. To be able to engage effectively on the right issues, councils need to be close enough to their communities that they are in touch with the prevailing mood, be willing to engage in dialogue as well as listen to concerns, and ensure they are aware of specific issues or any escalating tensions.

## Who is Your Neighbour? (WIYN)

WIYN is a community dialogue project in South Yorkshire that holds conversations where people can speak frankly about things like immigration, cultural differences and about people 'who are not like us'.

Most conversations held by WIYN are 'intra-community dialogue', conversations where people can talk together within their own community. Facilitators give space for people to be heard – to speak honestly about their own experience, whether good or difficult, and about their fears, worries or hopes. The assumption is that most people are sincere, even if some things that are said could be difficult to hear.

These are real conversations in which people speak with each other and hear each other. They are facilitated in a way that encourages reflection and questioning. The aim of the sessions is not to change minds to a particular viewpoint, but rather that people will become more interested in others and would like to find out more. A good outcome from a conversation is that participants and facilitators will be

more curious and questioning and will have learned from the conversation. Intra-community dialogue can lead to a wish for inter-community dialogue, conversations with the people who are being talked about, and the project facilitates these.

WIYN was set up in 2010 and initially worked in white communities where there are not large minority populations and where there was the most anxiety about immigration and change. The project has continued to work in those areas but, as it has developed, it also works in more culturally mixed urban areas where there are divisive narratives of 'them and us' between different groups.

One example of a potentially challenging issue is how resources are divided and allocated to individuals and families. This issue is particularly pertinent in a period of austerity, with significantly reduced resources available to local places, increasing the risk that different parts of the community are, or believe themselves to be, competing for finite resources and opportunities. This issue is clearly not easy, but councils need to be open and transparent about the process for allocating local resources, including being pro-active about myth-busting inaccurate perceptions of how resources are allocated (for example, the allocation of social housing to new residents or migrants), or alternatively being willing to publicly explain their approaches and discuss them openly with sections of the community that may not be supportive.

Perhaps most importantly, councils need to be engaging with and talking to residents about cohesion issues. The nature of this discussion will be shaped by local circumstances, attitudes and concerns. However, the experience of the referendum campaign has shown that cohesion challenges aren't limited to areas that have diverse communities; firstly, because there are significant divisions between people who had differing views on the future of the country, and also because some councils report significant fear of migration in areas that are generally mono-cultural.

Engaging with and understanding some of these concerns, and the issues that can underpin them – such as inequality of opportunity – is an important role for councils, and an important part of bridging some of the divisions exposed by the referendum.

**Effective engagement between communities**
Effective engagement also includes strengthening engagement between different parts of the local community, as well as between the council and residents.

A number of councils have reported that bringing communities together to engage on the issues they have opinions on has helped different groups to understand what they have in common rather than what their differences are. Even in areas where there are cohesion challenges, for most local residents this is typically concerns about health services, housing, schools, litter and other issues. Using engagement processes to promote contact and identify common concerns between communities can help to promote this understanding.

On a more social level, councils regularly host borough events intended to bring different parts of the community together and should consider how area-wide events and initiatives can help to encourage this contact. The charity The Challenge is seeking to promote new ways to bring people of different backgrounds together, as bonds forged through more traditional institutions such as churches, trade unions and pubs decline. It played a founding role in the National Citizenship Programme, a volunteering programme for young people that promotes social interaction between people of different backgrounds. The charity believes that promoting contact and bonds between people at periods of transition in their lives – such as being a teenager, or starting a family – can help to promote contact and cohesiveness.

## Believing in Bradford

Believing in Bradford is an initiative originally set up by the Bishop of Bradford and the city's Lord Mayor. The Believing in Bradford Ambassadors are a group of people from all walks of life who care passionately about Bradford and want to actively make it a better place. Their aims are to build bridges between communities and empower people by giving them the necessary skills and confidence to play an active role as leaders in both their local communities and the city as a whole. They take part in many of the civic activities throughout the year supporting the Lord Mayor.

# Communications strategy

Effective communications – in terms of a more traditional media approach – can greatly support councils' community cohesion activities and should be integrated with the wider engagement strategy. This can provide opportunities to promote positive stories of communities working together, and can be a powerful tool in publicly combatting negative or inaccurate reporting. Investing time and resources in developing messages that articulate how a council is promoting community cohesion, what action is being taken to address issues affecting cohesion, and developing channels that enable a diverse range of stakeholders to access messages, can all help to enhance councils' wider community cohesion work and demonstrate a commitment to engaging as wide a range of audiences as possible. Conversely, failure to integrate an effective communications strategy into community cohesion work can damage public trust, exacerbate or create tensions and exclude important stakeholders.

Community cohesion communications should reflect broader principles of good communication. This includes a need for messages to reflect corporate priorities and strategy, have a clarity of purpose, reflect the organisation's values, be based on evidence

and insight (particularly in relation to how communities receive information and more importantly, would prefer to). They should also be evaluated and owned by everyone across the organisation.

When communicating community cohesion messages it is important to ensure, as far as possible, a balance between proactive and reactive communications. While media interest may be higher in times of crisis or community tension, it is vital that community cohesion messages are embedded into the organisation's proactive messaging. This will ensure that community cohesion is framed as a key component of a council's day-to-day activity and wider ambition for the area, rather than a topic that becomes a focus in times of challenge. It is however vital that organisations communicate transparently and with sensitivity in times of community tension and proactively seek opportunities to communicate with all affected stakeholder groups in times of a community cohesion crisis. This may include face-to-face messaging, media liaison, digital updates or through council publications.

Effective messages must also be complemented by a broad channel mix, focused on helping councils to reach the widest audience possible. Traditional channels such as local newspapers can be an effective method for reaching audiences, but with circulations dwindling it is important for councils to have a clear understanding of the local media landscape to ascertain whether a focus on traditional channels is the most effective way of sharing messages.

Where there is a need to communicate messages to a specific part of the community, councils may wish to consider engaging directly with specialist community newspapers (at a local, regional or national level), or community specific television or radio stations. Online community groups, networks, e-bulletins and social media platforms can also be effective channels for targeting community cohesion messages, as well as promoting messages to a broad cross section of the local community.

A thorough understanding of audiences' communication preferences will help to identify which avenues are most appropriate for cascading messages and engaging residents.

With many council employees also residents, an effective approach to internal communication can also help to support community cohesion messages. Promoting positive community messages to employees, ensuring that publicity materials and messages reflect the full diversity of an organisation and local area and are communicated in plain English can help employees recognise the council's commitment to community cohesion and act as ambassadors within their own communities. Ensuring that employees are aware of the full range of community cohesion activities that the council is engaged in can also help to spread awareness across the local population.

## Anti-rumour strategy

Beginning in Barcelona in 2010, this work was aimed at countering rumours linked to immigration and particular groups, which fed negative stereotypes and prejudices, and reinforced hostile attitudes towards cultural diversity and certain people.

The council implemented a strategy to address rumours related to cultural diversity, combining a series of strategies including the creation of an 'anti-rumour citizen network', a public relations campaign, the creation of anti-rumour agents and a variety of educational activities.

The approach has been adopted by a number of other cities, including in Limerick where it comprises three stages:

- research – identifying the most common myths and misconceptions on aspects of migration and generating reliable and factual information to counter these in a local context

- communication – presenting the facts in a creative and accessible way to inform the public and provide evidence-based answers to common misconceptions

- training – inviting a wide range of local stakeholders to attend workshops and training sessions, to develop their understanding of migrant rights, statistics, and cultures; facilitation skills; and access to free resources which can be used for their own anti-rumour initiatives.

Original Spanish project
www.antirumores.com/eng/resources.html

Limerick project
http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/c4i/limerick

## Governance and scrutiny

Governance and scrutiny are key tools in ensuring councils are on the front foot in promoting local cohesion.

Councils are more likely to make headway in their cohesion work if there is clear and visible leadership and collective ownership of the cohesion agenda. The formal structures councils put in place to achieve this will vary, but whatever these are, there should be recognition at both officer and councillor level that cohesion is everybody's responsibility. In Luton, all of the council's portfolio holders have community cohesion as part of their responsibilities.

Councils can also support the cohesion agenda by taking a proactive approach to assessing cohesion issues in their areas and their responses to them. As an example, the Integrated Communities Strategy included a call on local government (and others) to commit to reviewing a number of policies and services to assess whether they exacerbate segregation or if they could be developed to drive integration instead.

Reviewing issues and responses may be led by scrutiny committees or by wider groups of councillors. Examples include Westminster's cross-party Community Cohesion Commission; Luton's 2003 scrutiny review 'Sticking Together' and the 2011 follow up Commission on Community Cohesion; and the Greater Manchester Authority's review of preventing extremism and promoting social cohesion.

Similar work, broader in scope but closely interlinked with cohesion, are the projects that several councils have led to look at issues including inclusive growth and local place shaping, as set out later in this document. The Wigan Deal is an innovative approach to exploring the relationship between councils and residents which includes a specific section on communities.

Scrutiny can provide an effective tool for councils to assess their approaches to cohesion. The Centre for Public Scrutiny has noted that "in terms of political engagement, scrutiny can also make sure that local government is not just an echo-chamber for like-minded politicians, executives and managers, and can allow for underrepresented or powerless voices to be heard", and cites Lincoln Council's review of poverty as an example of good practice. The Centre has also been working with the LGA to develop guidance on scrutinising councils' work on counter-extremism and Prevent which, although focused on a specific community cohesion issue, will provide a useful guide to the approaches that scrutiny committees could take when looking at cohesion more widely. Suggested approaches include:

- reviewing council documents to consider how effectively cohesion issues are incorporated in the delivery of council plans, strategies and services

- providing critical support and challenge to the role of the executive with regards to cohesion work as necessary

- reviewing the training and support available to councillors in undertaking cohesion and community leadership roles

- assessing and monitoring the council's partnerships and relationships with local groups and how these impact on cohesion

- scrutinising specific cohesion action plans and work streams, and

- considering how cohesion issues can be mainstreamed into ongoing overview and scrutiny work, rather than viewed as a discrete topic.

# The role of different service areas

Cohesion is a strategic and cross-cutting issue that requires input from the whole council. While community cohesion may be led by one service area or policy function, all service areas have a role to play in supporting it. Regulatory and environmental services and community safety teams can help ensure communities live by accepted standards of behaviour and address the nuisance factors that so often cause tensions; cultural services provide opportunities to bring communities together; while education and children's services, housing and economic development are all clearly vital to creating the sense of security, aspiration, opportunity and social mobility that is fundamental to integrated and cohesive communities.

## Connected Communities Programme – Overview

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham's connected communities programme demonstrates the extent to which cohesion cuts across many different areas of councils' work. In 2018, the council secured £1.4 million from the Controlling Migration Fund to deliver a collaborative programme of work to improve cohesion in the borough. The programme involves eleven different elements, bringing together six council departments, eight third sector partners, and a research consultancy. The work is delivered in three, core strands:

Storytelling and Listening: By engaging with faith communities, young people, and those whose voices are often at the margins, Connected Communities makes space for new conversations and mutual understanding between residents who have different stories to tell.

This strand contains a 'Community Amplifiers' project, which sees citizen researchers taking the lead on identifying community solutions to cohesion challenges. It also sees young people trained as commissioners, to go on and curate their own artistic interventions about cohesion.

Safeguarding and Reducing Exploitation: inequality is a well-known driver of poor cohesion. Elements of this strand focus on reducing inequalities in practice, by increasing people's security and protecting their rights in the labour market and the private rental sector.

Insight, Learning and Service Transformation: to make effective interventions which improve cohesion, a strong quantitative, and qualitative understanding of communities, their needs, and their values is required. This strand uses a range of insights, including detailed analysis of the way values shape interactions, to inform change in and beyond the council to improve cohesion.

As noted above, the ability for councils to influence key issues such as social and economic exclusion and poor life chances is partially constrained by the lack of levers available to them in key service areas such as education, local growth and housing. Councils cannot do all that they want to in these areas, and the LGA's response to the Casey Review and to the Integrated Communities Strategy reiterate our calls for faster and deeper progress on devolution to enable local councils to address these challenges more effectively. However this section sets out some of the ways councils can think about cohesion in different service areas given their current powers.

# Early years, schools, young people and family services

Early years provision, schools and wider services for young people are hugely important in promoting cohesion. Views and beliefs are shaped at an early age (the values modes approach suggests younger generations are more open than their older counterparts) and early experiences and formal education can help to influence them. Alongside this, early years provision, school communities and youth services in many places bring different parts of a local community together; in doing so, this can provide an opportunity for children and parents to engage with different groups and for councils to engage with communities who may be hard to reach. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, schools should be rigorous gateways to opportunity and aspiration for children in all of our communities. The importance of social mobility in underpinning cohesion has been repeatedly emphasised, but cannot be achieved without the opportunity of a good education for every child. Therefore the role that councils have in providing good schools is vital.

There are however a number of barriers to ensuring these services help promote cohesion. The Casey report highlighted concerns about mono-cultural schools in segregated areas leading to children growing up not fully understanding the nature of the wider country they live in; the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper also notes that in some areas, the distribution of ethnic minority pupils in schools does not reflect the population residing in the wider area. Elsewhere, concerns have been raised about schools being arranged around a single religion, notwithstanding that many faith schools are very diverse.

Another issue for councils is the reduced control they have over local schooling as a result of the growth of academies and free schools, including the specific challenge of being responsible for providing school places but not the overall provision of them, and the freedom academies and free schools have

to set their own catchments and admissions policies. Of perhaps most concern from a safeguarding perspective is the increase in illegal schools provision and associated rise in home schooling, the risks this can pose – in a minority of cases – to individual children and overall cohesion work, and the limited powers councils have to tackle them. Underpinning all of these is the ongoing challenge created by austerity, which has led to significant cuts to funding for youth services and funding shortfalls for new policies in early years provision.

**Health visiting**

Points of transition in life have been identified as offering opportunities to boost integration and develop new networks, and starting a family or the beginning of formal childcare are good examples of this. Council commissioned health visiting services can play an invaluable role in helping families to understand what services are available in their local communities and enabling them to access support, whether from health services, children and family services or local community groups and networks.

Health visitors work closely with midwives, general practice, children's centre staff and other pre-school facilities to identify expectant families and encourage new parents to access services. Supporting families to integrate into their communities through accessing services is therefore an important additional outcome of the wider objectives of the health visitor service. As a traditionally universal service with responsibility for delivering five visits, health visitors may be better placed to access some groups and families than other council or health services, in particular because they are the only universal service that includes visits at home. They are therefore able to promote access to community activities and cohesion, responding to the individual needs of each family and personalising the advice and opportunities which they offer families. Additionally, health visitors will have knowledge and cultural understanding about the services that local communities want, which can be used to influence the development of local services.

## Institute of Health Visiting

The Institute of Health Visiting's Ready Steady Mums programme is a volunteer-led community exercise movement for mums that supports maternal health, wellbeing and community cohesion in the areas where they are run. Local mums are encouraged to become group leaders responsible for establishing 'Socialcise' walking groups, which meet weekly to get active together outdoors. The programme helps to build community capacity by empowering mothers to take a lead and support other local mothers and families.

### Early years

The duty for councils to secure provision of 30 hours free childcare per week for local three-and four-year-old children of working parents, along with 15 hours free childcare for disadvantaged two-year-olds, may help to support better cohesion outcomes. Evidence shows that early mixing and formal childcare is good for children's development and can help to improve later attainment, although the LGA has concerns that funding may not be sufficient to maintain quality.

The Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper outlines plans to create more high-quality early education places for disadvantaged children, and increase take-up of quality provision in challenging areas and by less advantaged families. Levels of take-up may vary between different groups – some communities are less willing to leave children in the care of people outside the family before school age, while the free hours entitlement is less for children in families where one parent isn't working. However, councils have a responsibility to encourage local people to take up the offer, and should think about how they can promote it across the whole of their communities so that all children can benefit from what is available.

Good nurseries will seek to get parents involved in their settings, and involving parents in pre-school activities can help promote integration – as with schools, councils should think about how to encourage providers to create opportunities for parents to come together.

At the other extreme, under the funding formula for free hours provision, councils can withhold money from a nursery if they feel it:

• is not actively promoting fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; or

• is promoting as fact views or theories which are contrary to established scientific or historical evidence and explanation.

This will require councils to be clear about the nature of the providers that funding is being allocated to, even though they do not have a formal regulatory role in relation to them.

Children's centres are also an opportunity to bring communities together through the provision of specific services, although the number of centres has reduced in recent years and questions have been raised about whether take-up of services always reflects local communities. The LGA has published a series of case studies looking at different models of delivering children's centre services, which draw out various options and identify best practice.

## St Edmund's Nursery, Bradford

The British Academy's case studies on the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers highlights the work of St Edmund's Nursery school and children's centre in Bradford.

Situated in one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, the school has worked closely with the local Roma community to support and engage Roma children in early years education and the integration of Roma families into the neighbourhood. Key features of the school's successful approach have been to:

• employ staff from central, eastern European and Roma backgrounds

• understand Roma parents' experiences of education and discrimination in their home countries

- provide opportunities to engage parents in additional activities in the school, including parenting classes, English as a second language (ESOL) provision and a Dad's support club.

## Schools

Schools have a hugely important role in promoting cohesion through shaping the values and behaviour of their pupils, as well as by providing a good education. Ensuring that their curriculum and topic-based learning promote the values of tolerance, respect for diversity, knowledge and understanding of different faiths, as well as an understanding of British values; tackling bullying or racial harassment; and providing opportunities for children to mix with others from different backgrounds (whether from within their own school or different schools) are all steps that all schools should already be taking which will support this agenda.

Councils' direct role in local education provision has reduced in recent years with the advent of free schools and academies under the responsibility of Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) and the Department for Education (DfE). The LGA has repeatedly raised concerns that councils have legal responsibility for school places in their local areas but are unable to directly commission the building of new schools or fully shape local provision and admissions. It is also a huge concern that councils have no power to become involved in failing academies and free schools despite questions over the capacity of RSCs and the DfE to oversee this, and that the admissions policies of many academies and free schools may not reflect local communities or promote cohesion. While we note that the Integrated Communities Strategy action plan sets out strengthened expectations for how new free schools will promote integration, the LGA will continue to lobby for change on these issues.

Despite these current limitations, there are a number of ways in which councils can work with both maintained and other schools to help promote community cohesion.

First and foremost, councils can do this by continuing their efforts to ensure that all maintained schools are good or outstanding, whichever community they serve. Aspiration and a good education are vital ingredients in helping young people to get on in life, by ensuring they reach their potential and can move into work or further education. Evidence suggests that councils are doing a good job on this, with 91 per cent of council maintained schools rated as either good or outstanding compared to 85 per cent of academies and 84 per cent of free schools.

Also directly related to cohesion and integration are schools' admissions policies.

A report on school segregation by the integration charity The Challenge, iCoCO foundation and School Dash, called on councils, faith authorities, academy chains and individual schools to review their practice in this area, and for school governors to be required to publish details of their intake, comparing trends over time and taking responsibility for them. While councils cannot control what academies and free schools do in this regard, they can certainly consider the extent to which admissions criteria for their own schools reflect local areas and help promote cohesion and integration through the fair use of banding or catchment areas. The Integrated Communities Strategy recognises these issues, and includes a plan to work with admission authorities in the five integration areas to support increased diversity in intake and develop a range of model admissions arrangements.

Alongside their continuing role working with maintained schools, councils retain an important convening and supporting role for all their local schools, regardless of their management. Many councils have developed training and curriculum resources that support cohesion. At a more strategic level, councils can provide a forum for head teachers and different schools to come together to discuss and share learning on issues linked to cohesion and youth services.

The **London Borough of Tower Hamlets** co-designed a creative communities project with local schools to develop lesson plans enabling teachers to talk about cohesion, integration and equalities. The programme also supported school pupils to work with their community to deliver projects they had identified themselves which could help develop integration.

The **London Borough of Waltham Forest** has also worked with local schools and colleges to counter extremism and promote cohesion. Alongside a curriculum resource on British values which was offered voluntarily to all schools, the council also developed a Digital Resilience resource for secondary school children and staff designed to safeguard young people from potentially harmful information or views online.

Since 2014, more than 17,000 key stage 3-5 pupils have taken part in the programme, which is designed to safeguard young people from potentially harmful information or views found online. Digital resilience was developed in partnership with local schools and includes lesson plans, peer education schemes and teacher training and has been used in all secondary schools. The course can be tailored depending on what each schools wants, but a typical programme would include a series of lessons covering issues such as how violent extremism is defined, values and culture in Britain, exploring the influences that social media has on people's lives, how to spot propaganda and considering issues such as the importance of authenticating online resources.

The **London Borough of Barking and Dagenham** has worked with VotesforSchools to launch a programme across all local schools and create a whole-borough school network. The council believes the package will help enable their schools to engage in something that can break down barriers and provide opportunities to build united school communities. Fifty schools in the borough are now using this resource weekly.

The model provides a regular safe space to discuss and participate in a weekly vote on political and social issues, encouraging young people to share opinions and listen to others, engage in community action, think critically and face challenge, and learn about cultural norms.

Each week results will show leaders what young people in the borough think about issues that matter in the community, and allows them to compare local data with regional and national. This means they have insight into the issues young people feel most passionately about and how their views may differ from other areas of the country, enabling them to target their approach with their children and young people, and get maximum 'buy in' from them in uniting their community.

VotesforSchools takes the national vote across schools and shares it with decision makers, charities, celebrities and influential people. Students across the UK know they have a voice and that their contribution to playing a full part in both their local and national communities is valued.

## The European Commission

The **European Commission's website on integration** provides examples of projects intended to promote integration. Denmark's RAP:I:STAN project uses hip-hop and storytelling to bring together Danish young people with refugees and asylum seekers.

The project helps young refugees to tell their stories and Danish primary school pupils to learn about asylum. Working with primary schools, the project is based on three workshops which focus on:

- understanding asylum and the implications of refugee status by a RAP:I:STAN team (two refugees and two rap coaches)

- discussion about how Denmark is perceived by refugees and creative solutions to community issues – by the school's own teacher on the basis of material provided by the project team

- coaching on writing skills and music techniques, specifically on how to create rap-music and lyrics on personal life experiences and challenges that refugees face.

In many areas, schools are at the heart of their community. For councils and other local stakeholders, they may offer a way of engaging with harder to reach or more isolated groups and parents whose children are attending local schools. Councils can think about how they can use the school environment and community to reach out to parents and different parts of the community.

## Using schools to engage wider family networks

The Parents' Integration through Partnership project in London worked with a group of partner primary schools in Haringey and Lambeth to support the language learning and integration of non-EU mothers of children. The aim of the project was to improve the mothers' language skills; increase their involvement and participation in their children's school and build links with the school, other parents and wider community, and develop their abilities and confidence to support their child's learning at home.

### Out of school education settings

The LGA has previously raised significant concerns around out of school education settings. The Casey Review highlighted Ofsted concerns about "the wellbeing of children in segregated, supplementary and unregistered, illegal faith schools – where pupils are not getting opportunities to mix with children from different backgrounds or gain from a properly rounded education, where squalid and unsafe conditions exist and where staff have not been vetted to work with children…some people might be using the right to home education and its relatively lax regime to place their children in unregistered and illegal schools."

While the majority of parents who home educate their children do a good job, there are a minority of children for whom this is not the case. Further, there remains a need to ensure home schooling is not being abused by people who wish to promote views that are at odds with British values, and who by doing so pose both a safeguarding risk to individual children and a risk to society as a whole.

There are challenges for councils in tackling the increasing numbers of illegal schools when they have a duty but no powers to check the nature of the home education a child is receiving. Within the current framework, councils should look to develop as much local intelligence as possible about local home and supplementary schooling, and work closely with DfE and Ofsted in their local areas. We believe however that placing a legal duty on parents to register home-schooled children with their local authority would help councils to monitor how children are being educated and prevent children from disappearing from the oversight of services designed to keep them safe: the Children's Commissioner has also called for a compulsory home education register. Similarly we believe that councils should have the funded powers to enter homes or to see children to establish whether they are receiving a suitable education and to meet council duties to safeguard and promote child welfare.

We are concerned that the proposals set out in the Green Paper, and in a subsequent report by the DfE following an earlier call for evidence on out of school education settings, will not be sufficient. The current approach is focused on: developing further evidence and best practice to inform a national approach; the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper proposals on developing guidance on multi-agency working on this issue; a voluntary safeguarding code of practice for out of school settings, and more guidance for parents on making informed choices. Government has also made a commitment to work with Ofsted to take action against schools operating illegally and to amend the requirement about which educational institutions need to register with Government.

Safeguarding concerns about the cohesion risks of some out of school education have more recently been accompanied by concern about the link between children who are out of mainstream education and involvement in 'county lines' drugs running. The LGA will continue to lobby on these important issues.

**Young people/youth services**

With councils subject to a statutory duty, but no powers and limited budgets to support it, there are clearly challenges for councils in thinking about how youth services can help support cohesion. The LGA recognises the difficulties councils are facing in running or replacing a service hit hard by austerity, and has developed a new vision for council involvement in local youth services. These services clearly have an important role to play through bringing young people together, helping to instil a sense of investment in the local area, providing a gateway to accessing further support, and, in the cases of some vulnerable individuals, potentially diverting them from undermining cohesion and integration through becoming involved in extremism or crime. Councils play a key role in preventing young people from entering the youth justice system, and supporting them away from crime should they become involved. Their work through Youth Offending Teams has led to an 85 per cent drop in the number of young people entering the youth justice system in the last decade.

An important first step for councils in this area, linked to their work with the voluntary and community sector, will be to understand and map existing local provision and help ensure this is coordinated and meeting the needs of young people locally.

The National Citizen Service (NCS) is specifically intended to promote integration and cohesion, by bringing groups of young people together during school holidays to undertake voluntary projects. The NCS is under a statutory duty to increase the numbers of young people going through the programme, and will be working with the five integration areas to develop local plans to increase take-up of the service.

## Kirklees Council

Kirklees Council partnered with the National Citizen Service (NCS) following discussions about mutual aspirations for the role of NCS in the district around community cohesion, increasing participation and social mobility, improving employability skills and aspirations, active citizenship and efforts to renew democracy and the role of elected members for the 21st Century.

Kirklees has helped to facilitate discussions with partners about how they can engage, support and challenge young people to commit to social action and active citizenship, including how more vulnerable young people can get involved.

Specific successes for the partnership include:

- providing logistical and resource support to local delivery partners

- identifying new social action partners and projects

- engaging a wide range of stakeholders to strategically and operationally develop NCS for the future

- engaging colleagues working directly with more vulnerable young people to plan future participation

- recruiting 'Dragon's Den' participants from across the council

- providing NCS briefings to elected members

- encouraging senior officer and elected members to become 'NCS champions'

- commissioning research to explore young people's views on NCS.

It is hoped that long-term ambitions will extend beyond the immediate innovation programme and the council will continue to develop its partnership with NCS to:

- maximise the positive contributions, skills and experience of young people through their participation

- provide activities directly linked to community issues and democratic engagement

- encourage young people to contribute positively within the district after completion

- increase participation on NCS, with a target of 60 per cent of all eligible young people participating by 2020

- integrate the NCS programme into council and partner key strategies and support the delivery of shared outcomes.

While the NCS is a good programme which can be a positive experience for those who take part, the LGA believes this should be part of a much wider youth service offering to support children and young people, and that government should devolve a slice of the funding to councils so they can begin to scale back the cuts to council youth services and provide targeted support to a much wider group of young people locally all year round.

**Support for families**
Most councils will have some provision for families either through children's centres or through separate services eg through the voluntary sector. Often these services can improve resilience and coping in terms of family functioning, improved parenting, skill development and reducing vulnerabilities. They are highly valued by their users and it is important that these services are accessible to all the communities that require them. Assurance should be provided via data showing that the take-up of services reflects the communities in the area and that these services actively promote cohesion. These services can also provide invaluable opportunities for engagement on a range of issues for local leaders.

## Hackney Pembury Children's Community

The Pembury Children's Community is a partnership led by the London Borough of Hackney and Peabody Housing Association, aimed at improving the lives of the 1,000 children and young people and their families living on and around Hackney's Pembury estate.

The Children's Community brings together key local stakeholders including residents, community groups and service providers, working in three ways:

- with individuals, to build confidence and personal capacity

- with the community, so they are better able to support each other

- with services, to ensure that support is accessible, effective, and levelled at long-term sustainable improvements.

Working with residents, the council has developed a vision for Pembury in 2025 as:

- a neighbourhood where people are proud to live

- a community where people from all backgrounds come together, where everyone matters and there are opportunities for all

- a place where young people are encouraged, inspired and empowered to get the best out of life.

# Public health

Public Health England (PHE) has developed guidance on the concept of community-centred approaches to health and wellbeing, which links closely to community cohesion issues. The approach is based on the premise that positive health outcomes can only be achieved by addressing the factors that protect and create health and wellbeing. PHE notes that many of these factors are at a community level, including community life, social connections and having a voice in local decisions. The guidance states: "involving and empowering local communities, and particularly disadvantaged groups, is central to local and national strategies in England for both promoting health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities.

Participatory approaches can directly address marginalisation and powerlessness that underpin inequities and can therefore be more effective than professional-led services in reducing inequities."

This statement could equally apply to community cohesion as well as health inequalities; similarly the community-level factors identified by PHE are determinants of wider integration into communities. There is therefore a significant overlap between community-centred approaches to health and work on cohesion, including in the community assets that can contribute to both agendas, identified by PHE as:

- skills, knowledge and involvement of local people

- friendship, neighbourliness and cohesion

- local groups, community and voluntary associations

- physical, environmental and economic resources

- physical assets owned by the public, private and third sector.

PHE cite the following activities as underpinning community-centred approaches:

- using non-clinical methods

- using participatory approaches, such as community involvement in design, delivery and evaluation

- reducing barriers to engagement

- utilising and building on local community assets

- collaborating with those most at risk of poor health

- changing the conditions that drive poor health

- addressing community level factors such as social networks, social capital and empowerment

- increasing people's control over their health.

Alongside the resources and case studies included in PHE's guidance on community-centred approaches to health improvement, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence has developed a community engagement quality standard which councils can draw on in commissioning community approaches.

## Aylesbury

PHE's guidance includes a case study of community-centred health improvement in Aylesbury. The programme applied a community-centred approach in deprived communities within Aylesbury and Buckinghamshire. This involved targeting health promotion initiatives for those in disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, mainly focused on people on low incomes, black and ethnic minority groups, older people, children and young people, people with emotional wellbeing issues and people living in isolated circumstances, to promote health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities.

The programme provided a Healthy Living Centre within target communities in Aylesbury, a maternity programme for black and ethnic minority women, a range of health improvement activities for groups of different ages, dementia activities, and was underpinned by a range of community development and engagement approaches, including volunteering.

### Loneliness

Over recent years, concerns about loneliness and its impact have grown. Loneliness is a problem for people of all ages; the largest group experiencing loneliness are older people, but people aged 16-24 are most likely to report feeling lonely. The LGA has published guidance for councils on combating loneliness and assessing your council's activity in this area.

While there are clear links between isolation and loneliness, there is a distinction between the two; it is possible for people to be isolated but not lonely and vice-versa. However, the harm loneliness can cause, both physically

and mentally, can be devastating and is increasingly recognised as a serious public health concern, with studies suggesting it can be as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Key risk factors for loneliness include being in later old age (over 80 years), on a low income, in poor physical or mental health, and living alone or in isolated rural areas or deprived urban communities. The population that is socially isolated, and therefore at risk of loneliness, is considerable.

Not only does loneliness have a significant impact on individuals, there is also very strong evidence that loneliness can increase the pressure on a wide range of council and health services. Tackling loneliness is, therefore, relevant to a number of important agendas for local authorities, in particular public health.

Councils have used a range of initiatives to tackle loneliness include line dancing classes, man sheds, choirs, communal lunches, pop-up social events in pubs and networks of community connectors – such as café owners and waiting staff – who can refer people to available support.

At a strategic level, councils may consider 'addressing loneliness' as an outcome measure of council strategies – including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS).

### Sevenoaks District Council

Sevenoaks District Council has gifted £40,000 to fund a new 'Pop-Up Pop-Ins' project in which weekly events are held at village halls and pubs to help people feeling lonely. The events provide people with a place to go for advice and information, as well as the chance to have a tea or coffee while meeting new people. They offer free exercise taster sessions and advice on nutrition, falls prevention, healthy lifestyles and local volunteering opportunities, while giving access to the council's services and referrals for funding for home adaptations/improvements to address mobility issues.

### Norfolk County Council

Norfolk County Council has stepped up its 'In Good Company' campaign and announced £2.4 million of new funding to tackle loneliness. Three organisations, including the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, will use the funding to develop new ways to address the health and wellbeing of people affected by loneliness and social isolation over the next three years. The move is part of the Council's strategy to support residents to maintain their independence and resilience for as long as possible.

### Tower Hamlets Homes

Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) set up an insight programme aimed at tackling loneliness and social isolation through the development of targeted interventions for tenants in need, recognising the impact that social isolation can have on physical and mental health. THH developed a programme of audits to develop interventions with partners and every six weeks staff call identified tenants to see how they are.

## Inclusive growth, skills and employment

### Overview
Economic inclusion, opportunity and aspiration are all critical in helping to ensure cohesive and sustainable communities. The Casey Review was emphatic about the role that socio-economic disadvantage and exclusion play in undermining integration, highlighting firstly the correlation between the increased segregation of some communities, poor English language skills and poor labour market outcomes; and also warning that the 'persistent disadvantage experienced by young black men in employment and the falling behind of poorer white British communities in some areas needs to be addressed if we are to prevent cracks

and divisions in society from growing.' The isolation of women in some communities from employment opportunities, and therefore from wider integration into society, was a further key message in the review.

Councils and mayoral combined authorities want to be part of the effort to coordinate partners locally to improve social mobility and deliver inclusive growth. They are already doing a great deal to address social and economic inequalities both across and within regions, recognising how important this is to community cohesion. Improving skills and increasing employment is an important way of achieving that.

While our employment rate is high, many people are locked out of or are constrained by the labour market. There are several reasons for this. Evidence suggests some groups face significant disadvantage in the jobs market when compared to the national average including ethnic minorities, people with health conditions and disabilities, and the lowest qualified; nine million people lack literacy and numeracy skills, with many more lacking digital skills. Sixteen per cent of England's workforce, or 5.5 million people, want a job or more hours, while one in 10 workers are in insecure work. Meanwhile only half of all unemployed people claim out of work benefits meaning that they receive no job search support from Jobcentre Plus, the national agency responsible for getting people into work.

Worryingly, there are more acute challenges ahead. Research for the LGA suggests that by 2024, a growing skills gap will result in four million too few high skilled people to fill demand and eight million too many intermediate and low skilled people than there are jobs. Failure to increase our skills levels is bad for individuals, employers and the local and national economy. A further concern is that where a person lives will impact on the jobs and training available to them. The proportion of residents with low qualifications ranges from one in three in parts of the West Midlands to one in 17 in parts of London.

This lack of inclusive growth – defined as enabling as many people as possible to contribute and benefit from economic growth – affects children, families and entire communities, and contributes to a sense of injustice or unfairness. It is also clear that children and young people growing up in low skilled, low income or unemployed households are less likely to achieve their own academic potential, secure employment and gain a sense of future financial security for themselves.

This perpetual cycle of disadvantage is not only damaging to individuals but also undermines efforts to create sustainable vibrant communities, longer-term growth and positive social outcomes – particularly, as the Casey Review identified, if combined with the segregation of communities. This cycle must be broken, so that economic prosperity reaches the most deprived residents and communities in a way that directly contributes not only to reducing poverty and inequalities but also to increasing cohesion.

A centralised employment and skills system simply cannot identify and address the unique economic and social challenges and opportunities within and between places, and the people that live within them. Skills and job search interventions need to be tailored to the needs of local communities and businesses: what works for major cities will be different to what is needed in suburbs, towns, rural areas and more mixed communities. However our employment and skills system is not set up to do that. In 2016/2017, £10.5 billion of employment and skills funding was spent by eight Whitehall departments or agencies across 20 different national schemes, with different criteria and eligibility. This makes provision uncoordinated and confusing, and therefore hard for people looking to find work or retrain to know where to start.

The LGA believes a devolved and integrated skills and employment system would be quicker at addressing the unique skills and jobs challenges in each area, would support targeting, retraining and upskilling support of the current workforce and ensure young people are trained for current and future jobs

Work Local is the LGA's positive proposal for change. Led by combined authorities and groups of councils, local areas should have the powers and funding to plan, commission and have oversight of a joined-up service bringing together advice and guidance, employment, skills, apprenticeship and business support for individuals and employers. This we believe is needed more than ever to identify and address our current and future skills and employment challenges and opportunities presented by Brexit and the ongoing productivity gap. While our Work Local vision is ambitious, the LGA Skills Taskforce is currently working with industry experts and sector representatives to consider how to collaborate to make the best use of existing provision by working more collaboratively nationally and locally.

A placed based approach to tackling these issues has also been put forward by several other organisations, including the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce's Inclusive Growth Commission. The Government is now recognising that place based approaches are needed to address these issues. Local Industrial Strategies (LIS) are expected to be developed by every Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) and in every Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area outside an MCA by 2020. Councils will need to work closely with their LEP partners within this process, and the LGA is working with the Government to develop a support offer to help facilitate this. It will be critical that inclusive growth is a key component of local strategies. Additionally, the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper also set out plans to enhance devolution to local leaders to drive productivity and earning power.

**Supporting local economic development and growth in the current framework**
Although councils do not have all the powers and levers over the skills and employment system, they are nevertheless already working with local businesses and partners to build strong, resilient economies so their residents can contribute and benefit from growth.

Key roles that councils play include:

- understanding the local economy, skills needs and gaps

- developing economic growth and development strategies which include skills and employment and European funding

- supporting growth and investment in new and existing businesses, including through business support services

- generating jobs through growth and regeneration interventions

- working with colleges and training providers to ensure that local people have the skills that they and local businesses need, and access to employment advice

- designing and delivering their own skills and labour market interventions to support residents who for one reason or another have not benefited from national interventions

- improving infrastructure, for example through improved transport or broadband provision

- enhancing the quality of life for their communities and making local areas more attractive to consumers and business investment.

To support the cohesion and integration agenda, councils should think about how all of these activities can support different parts of their communities, and how to target their interventions towards specific or hard to reach groups. In doing so, economic development and skills leads should work collaboratively with other parts of the council and their community networks to frame these programmes appropriately.

**Strategic approaches**

Councils have a strategic role in determining economic priorities and working towards economic growth and job creation across a wider spatial footing. A key vehicle for doing so is the 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) which all councils are members of and which play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and job creation. Where they exist, combined authorities are also crucial vehicles for pooling resources around issues such as economic development and transport to support growth across a wider area. As stated, the industrial strategy white paper announced that local industrial strategies will be developed locally by MCAs or LEPs, and agreed with Government by 2020

Councils can review their strategic approaches to economic development to consider how they can support cohesion and integration, and where cohesion issues may be relevant. For example, it may be necessary to think about how transport infrastructure could support the inclusion of less integrated neighbourhoods and communities into the wider economy, or the different skills and training needs of specific groups. Thinking about economic development from the perspective of cohesion and integration is unlikely to fundamentally change the solutions that councils and their partners need to put in place, but an explicit focus on the two may help to refine and target existing offers.

At a strategic level, several councils have undertaken inclusive growth commissions or scrutiny approaches, to explicitly address local concerns about inequitable growth and income disparities. This can be a way of developing clear ambitions and a strategic agenda on the economy and supporting issues in a public and inclusive way. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has produced a series of resources and proposals around inclusive growth, while the relaunched Social Mobility Commission is recognising the need for local action to improve social mobility.

**Understanding the local economy and workforce**

A key role for councils is to understand their local economy and local workforce (the working age population), in terms of economic activity, skills gaps and skills needs. Councils already use this type of data to help inform policy decisions and shape local training provision, as highlighted in the example from Essex below. However, mapped against other population data, this data will clarify the challenges that specific groups are experiencing.

## Essex Employment and Skills Board

The Employment and Skills Board established in 2013, covers Essex, Southend and Thurrock, and brings together employers, primary and secondary education, further and higher education and employer bodies. Through the federated LEP model, the Board, supported by Essex County Council, advise and make decisions on funding priorities across the area. Underpinning the Board is an annually refreshed Evidence Base, detailing the economic needs of the area, skill levels, vacancy and job profiles. Crucially, it provides local intelligence that informs policy decisions and enables providers to respond to what employers need.

As a direct result of the Evidence Base, two Essex colleges have secured LEP capital funds to purchase specialist equipment, and build two state-of-the-art training facilities – The STEM Innovation Centre in Braintree and the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Centre in Harlow. It demonstrates how local intelligence, driven by the local authority, in partnership with employers, can secure and improve opportunities for residents and support economic growth.

As part of its Youth Commission work, the Learning and Work Institute has developed a series of youth opportunity index maps which councils can draw on in their mapping work.

## Councils as local employers

Councils can also consider cohesion in terms of their role as a local employer: it is likely to assist local cohesion, and certainly engagement, if a council's officer base, as well as its councillors, reflect the local population. The Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper highlights the importance of increasing local government apprenticeships among ethnic minorities, committing to doing further work on this issue. The LGA is continuing to lobby government to make the apprenticeship levy more flexible for councils and combined authorities, to support their role as employers in their own right and, through their economic development functions, in supporting local businesses to navigate this policy.

The LGA's forthcoming workforce strategy for the local government sector is focused on supporting councils to look at the workforce issues involved in meeting different economic, demographic and political challenges over the next few years. A key strand of this is equalities. The LGA is committed to helping councils as employers to ensure fair and equal access to employment opportunities, and the development of our workforce and leaders and elected members to be more fully representative of the local community, because our residents are also our employees.

The LGA has recently published guidance on recruitment and inclusion in the fire service, and is providing a range of resources to support councils to promote and champion equality, diversity and inclusion as an employer, including:

- an annual workforce survey to report and benchmark diversity in leadership

- supporting councils to adopt agile and flexible working cultures to be inclusive of a range of people with different experiences and different needs to work with us in different ways and give councils greater access to a wider pool of talent through our Timewise Councils programme

- engaging with a range of government departments to run Return to Work programmes to encourage more women to come back to work in our range of professional roles

- building councils' resources to support the recruitment and retention of more people with disabilities and mental health problems – the LGA is a Disability Confident Leader, qualified to help councils to develop their working practices to recruit and manage more disabled people

- providing national pay negotiations and resources to support equal pay and help councils to change their gender pay gap figures.

## Supporting new and existing businesses

Developing the existing business base and increasing entrepreneurial activity are widely recognised as critical drivers of economic prosperity. It is estimated that around 6 per cent of the UK's small or medium sized businesses (SMEs) are minority ethnic group led, equating to around 295,000 SMEs[3]. Councils could therefore consider how their work with local SMEs may link into their work to promote the integration of all parts of their community into the local economy.

Enterprising and innovative businesses and entrepreneurs increase productivity by improving their processes and bringing new products and services to the market. Councils have played a significant role in recent years in providing various forms of business support. Despite fewer resources being available to support this, councils work with their LEPs in providing business support through the 38 Growth Hubs, which communicate with businesses to understand the local business environment and co-ordinate the provision of those services that are available. They can provide help on:

- employment and training – including employing and retaining staff, apprenticeships

- starting-up – business planning, budgeting, company formation and registration, sales and marketing

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3    DBIS: Small Business Survey 2012: Estimates for Women-led, Minority Ethnic Group (MEG) led and Social Enterprises in the UK

- growing – sales, exporting, planning expansion, productivity

- finance – planning and advice, alternative sources, loans and grants.

Councils can directly support businesses through providing information and regulatory advice, ensuring services are responsive to businesses and encouraging business growth through their planning policies and regulatory support, whilst also engaging with business leaders at a senior level.

**Skills and employment support**
Councils have a unique ability to bring partners together around place. This is critical across the employment and skills agenda, given the majority of resources spent locally are managed and commissioned nationally by Whitehall or their agencies. Again, councils should give consideration to the cross-over between their existing skills and employment work and wider council work to support local cohesion, and how the two can be effectively joined up.

To ensure all resources are used to support their residents and communities at the right time and in the right way, councils build strategic partnerships with key stakeholders including: the Department for Work and Pensions; Job Centre Plus; prime providers; the Education and Skills Funding Agency; further education sector and other skills providers; voluntary and community sector; Careers and Enterprise Company; the National Careers Service and the National Apprenticeship Service. The Industrial Strategy White Paper sets out plans to establish Skills Advisory Panels to inform the analysis into local industrial strategies: this role will be fulfilled by well-established employment and skills boards.

Through their employment and skills strategies, councils aim to coordinate the efforts of all partners by: setting objectives to tackle unemployment and social exclusion; action to generate jobs; improving skills; and aligning national and local interventions to address local priorities and growth the local economy.

A key issue from a cohesion perspective will be to identify and address barriers to employment in some communities. The Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper commits to providing additional funding to Jobcentre Plus in the five integration areas to help identify communities where people are furthest from the job market and to engage those communities to support people into work.

National programmes tend to have limited sustained impact on skills and employment outcomes in deprived areas and among groups that face particular barriers. For this reason councils often design and deliver their own training and employment schemes, alongside others including the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and housing providers – it will be important that the approach in the five integration areas replicates this locally led approach. Buy in from national partners and the local business, voluntary and community sector, 14-19 partnerships and housing providers is essential. A key challenge is bringing all of the following together:

- acting as an exemplar local employer by attracting apprentices including from vulnerable and/or disadvantaged backgrounds

- working with Jobcentre Plus to seek co-commissioning of the Flexible Support Fund

- understanding the skills profile of residents and the current and future skills businesses need, knowledge of vacancies and supply-side challenges, and addressing skills mismatches

- mapping provision to improving employability skills – particularly basic English and numeracy and English as a second language (ESOL) provision (see later section)

- promoting traineeships and apprenticeships as pathways to careers, and engaging further education and adult education providers so that curriculums are informed by the current and future needs of the local labour market and

young people and adults are supported into clear pathways to improved educational attainment

- improving links with universities to open up opportunities to access

- delivering targeted community learning to neighbourhoods

- working with businesses to inform a curriculum relevant to the labour market

- for those furthest from employment, working with relevant agencies to bring together money management, housing, childcare, employment and skills advice

- building voluntary and community sector capacity to ensure better engagement with those communities that do not access statutory services.

The employment and skills section of the LGA's website includes a number of case studies and reports on councils work in this area.

Councils linked responsibilities include:

- relevant statutory responsibilities (vulnerable children or those with additional needs/who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), looked after children or care leavers)

- as social landlords and/or knowledge of local social landlords where they are currently running provision for workless tenants

- support for parents (particularly lone parents) through the Family Information Service, childcare support, and other relevant services

- making connections through current troubled families, universal support delivered locally (USDL) and housing benefit roles.

# Housing, planning and local areas

Homes are a fundamental part of people's sense of wellbeing, identity and security, and the houses and neighbourhoods people live in are a critical component of cohesive communities. Cohesion concerns and challenges relating to housing and neighbourhood design stretch from strategic planning around large-scale regeneration projects, to responding to very local issues such as anti-social behaviour and nuisance.

Housing is an area where councils' capacity to fully shape local provision has reduced significantly over the last 40 years. However some recent developments, such as the scrapping of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing cap by the Government following long-standing calls from the LGA, have been a positive step. While we will continue to argue for further changes, such as ensuring the Right To Buy Scheme (RtB) is sustainable for all and to enable councils to keep all receipt from RtB sales to invest in new housing, there are a number of measures councils can take to support provision in their local areas.

**Strategic approach and planning**
As noted elsewhere in this guidance, there is a need for all service areas to review how they can contribute to community cohesion. As part of their strategic approach to housing and development, councils should consider how housing and planning can support community cohesion, and the implications of this for specific areas of their housing work.

Cohesion may be supported through housing work that councils are already focused on, such as seeking to balance demand with supply through the availability of affordable housing; improving the quality of poor housing stock and tackling rogue landlords; using planning and design tools to help ensure areas are and feel, safe and secure; and ensuring that neighbourhoods are connected to employment opportunities through transport and that other supporting infrastructure and services are in place to support communities.

But there are other issues that they can consider, for example in relation to new developments or regeneration projects, which are much more specific to promoting cohesion rather than just improving or expanding housing supply. For example, councils can think about how the design and build of the neighbourhoods where people live can promote integration and contact between communities, rather than highlight differences between them; and ensure that there are a range of appropriate supported, adapted and specialist housing provision so that all residents can play a full part in local life.

In its 'Integration City' report, The Challenge highlighted a number of recommendations to help support integration and cohesion in housing projects:

- Enhancing mixed tenure developments through **pepper-potting** (ie sprinkling) social homes amongst privately-owned housing, rather than creating separate blocks or areas.

- Creating a **'tenure-blind' approach** through reducing architectural distinctions between properties of different tenure types.

- Enabling people to move between different properties in the same development as they age and their housing needs change by **constructing properties of a range of types and sizes**.

- Including **shared entrances, utilities and facilities** for different tenure groups rather than segregated entrances or lifts, to facilitate interaction between different groups.

- Building **integrated play areas** in mixed tenure developments to create opportunities for contact between children, and their parents, from different backgrounds.

- **Designing in opportunities for contact and interaction**, through front gardens, spaces for social activities, (eg community halls or cafes), walkways and flexibly-designed community gardens that support a range of different activities.

- **Building-in amenities** such as local shops.

A consistent theme of the recommendations is reducing visible differences between tenure types, to help remove the perceptions and barriers that may build up between people living in them.

Engagement with local communities about how to develop and grow local neighbourhoods is also a key part of councils' strategic to housing development, including those that aim to foster cohesion. LGA guidance on Supporting housing and growth highlights the importance of co-producing plans with local people and working with residents and developers before planning applications are made.

**Local areas**
The What Works Centre for Wellbeing undertook a review of evidence on projects and programmes intended to boost social relations or community wellbeing by making changes to community places and spaces. This found that community social relations and wellbeing could be boosted by a range of approaches to community infrastructure, defined as public places and bumping places designed for people to meet; places where people meet informally or use as meeting places, and services that can facilitate access for people to meet. It reviewed a range of different types of interventions including events, neighbourhood design, alternative use of spaces (for example, street closures) and urban regeneration.

The review found promising evidence that:

- Community hubs can: promote social cohesion by bringing together different social or generational groups; increase social capital and build trust and interaction between community members; and increase people's knowledge or skills.

- Community hubs also increase wider social networks.

- Changes to neighbourhood design can positively affect sense of belonging and pride in a community.

- Green and blue space interventions that provide the opportunity to participate in activities or gatherings can improve social interactions; increase social networks social interactions and bonding and bridging social capital; increase physical activity and healthy eating; and improve community members' skills and knowledge.

- Interventions that provide a focal point, or targeted group activity, may help to: promote social cohesion between different groups; and overcome barriers that may prevent some people (in marginalised groups) from taking part. (source: What Works Centre for Wellbeing)

## Housing provision

Access to good quality, affordable housing is an important aspect of fostering cohesive neighbourhoods. Living in poor quality or temporary housing can put great strain on individuals and families, and can disproportionality affect certain groups such as recent migrants and asylum seekers. A lack of affordable local housing provision can contribute to people's sense of 'being left behind' or unfairness – particularly in areas where there are clear wealth inequalities in single neighbourhoods. Older residents may also feel increasingly socially excluded when their children cannot afford local housing near them and need to move away.

Pressures on limited housing resources can lead to overcrowding and particular issues with Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs), impacting on relations between different groups. In addition, increases in temporary housing, homelessness, rapid growth in commuter towns or the presence of second homers in some rural or holiday communities can impact on community tensions, create increased churn in neighbourhoods, reduce opportunities for people to get to know their neighbours, and put additional pressures on council services.

## Social housing

Councils have a key role in delivering more affordable housing and helping to build new homes. It is likely that council housebuilding will expand significantly in the coming years, providing homes that have been designed to reflect local circumstances and needs – and which can address some of the wider cohesion challenges facing the local area. Council housebuilding can help to address housing requirements not being met by other providers (eg developing properties that meet the needs of homeless households); support investment in local neighbourhoods; set high quality design stands; and add value through providing jobs and training for local people and supporting local small and medium enterprises in the supply chain.

LGA guidance on Innovation in council housebuilding highlights the importance of collaboration and joint working within councils, with communities and with partners (including other councils). The report includes a number of recommendations to councils when considering this approach:

- develop a strategic framework that sets out the role and function of council housebuilding to address local issues

- ensure there is political commitment

- emphasise the added value of council housebuilding

- ensure that there is a full understanding of funding opportunities

- promote the exemplar role of council housebuilding in encouraging other developers to 'up their game' in terms of quality

- collaborate with housing associations and developers to address issues such as skills gaps

- work with adjoining councils and, where appropriate, combined authorities over joint initiatives, such as sharing expertise and funding.

Beyond building new homes, councils' role as providers of social housing covers a range of issues which might affect cohesion. This includes ensuring residences are safe and decent; taking swift action to help social tenants feel safe in their homes; and responding quickly to complaints. A broader cohesion issue concerning the stigma about social housing and tenants was recognised in the Government's 2018 Green Paper on 'A new deal for social housing', which set out a desire to address this through the application of good design principles (regardless of tenure), and looked at the development of mixed tenure estates developments with fewer differences between different types of housing.

Councils' work to engage with their social housing tenants can also help to support cohesion. The LGA's 2019 report on Engaging and empowering tenants in social housing found that creative engagement helped reinforce the place of council housing and its tenants at the heart of communities.

## Hull City Council

Hull City Council set up its Housing Academy to give customers a broad insight into how the housing service in Hull functions and to empower residents with the confidence, knowledge and skills to directly participate in decisions affecting them. The council's 'Key to our Future' strategy sets out key principles for tenant involvement, and was developed in partnership with local residents. As a result, tenants work in partnership at the council across a range of services.

**Supporting the private rented sector**
Increasing numbers of people live in privately rented accommodation, yet by definition it is not easy for councils to control the quality of properties available to rent in this sector. While most private tenants are happy with the quality of their accommodation, private rented homes tend to perform less well against established measures of housing quality than owner-occupied homes or social housing.

The impact of poor quality private housing can extend beyond individual tenants, undermining communities and cohesion where it becomes linked to wider nuisance issues.

Councils have statutory powers available to councils to help improve standards and address issues. Some houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) are subject to mandatory licensing requirements to ensure they meet certain standards and are properly maintained, and a number of councils have also sought to use selective licensing schemes to improve the standard of private rental properties more broadly.

While these discretionary schemes will not be appropriate for every area, these can have significant benefits for both landlords and tenants, for instance by improving property conditions or helping to address persistent anti-social behaviour. The scheme allows councils to make it compulsory for every private rented property in a specified area to have a licence, and in each licensed property the landlord must meet standards for property management, and the landlord must provide evidence to the council that they are a "fit and proper person" to hold a licence. The LGA has consistently called for more flexibility for areas to introduce these schemes across all areas without the need to apply to the Secretary of State to do so.

- London Borough of Waltham Forest – this borough-wide landlord licensing scheme has seen a reduction in anti-social behaviour and better engagement with landlords. The council has issued more than 23,000 licences, carried out 86 prosecutions and has issued 25 civil penalties using the new powers introduced by the Housing and Planning Act 2016

- Salford City Council became the first in Britain to introduce a landlord licensing scheme 10 years ago. A total of 93 landlords and seven managing agents, out of more than 2,000 operating in the city, have been prosecuted.

- Liverpool City Council – more than 41,000 homes have been licensed. There have now been around 80 successful prosecutions, 1,139 cautions issued and 79 formal written warnings. Another 800 cases are currently being considered for formal enforcement action.

- Nottingham City Council had a licensing scheme for more than 30,000 privately rented homes approved by the Government in early 2018. It is estimated that 21 per cent of Nottingham's private rented properties are likely to have hazards such as exposed wiring, a dangerous boiler, cold bedrooms, a leaking roof, mould on walls or ceilings and vermin infestation.

- Woking Borough Council launched a licensing scheme for landlords for an area of the borough where 44 per cent of properties are privately rented accommodation. In many cases, the accommodation breaches safety standards and is well below what is acceptable for people to live in.

- Birmingham City Council's InReach housing project for the private rental sector saw the building of 92 privately rented apartments through a wholly owned council company. The drivers for this included a strong demand for high quality private rented homes in the city centre and an inadequate supply, driving up standards of quality and design as well as returning any income generated to the council to be reinvested in mainstream services over the long-term.

The Margate Task Force case study later in this document outlines how councils can use regulatory and environmental services to help address housing-related issues around litter or noise nuisance.

**Temporary accommodation and homelessness**

Homelessness and social exclusion are intrinsically linked. As housing costs rise above incomes, the number of households approaching councils as homeless has grown. The use of temporary accommodation for homeless households has been rising consistently since the economic crisis. With limited affordable housing options adding to the issues, councils are increasingly using expensive and less desirable forms of emergency temporary accommodation such as bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) and moving families out of area, which is unsustainable, disruptive, and can impact on wider communities. Similarly, street homelessness and rough sleeping not only harm the individuals concerned, but can have a negative impact on local places and undermine the cohesiveness of communities.

Alongside efforts to increase the availability of housing stock, councils are doing some good work to secure temporary accommodation or help to prevent the need for it. The LGA's guidance on Housing our Homeless Households includes a number of case studies on how councils have worked with landlords, built temporary accommodation and engaged with other councils where they are placing people out of their own areas.

Some areas of work where councils may find they have scope to do more include:

- working with households at risk of homelessness at an earlier stage to prevent homelessness and to address the other issues like debt which may reduce resilience

- providing effective resettlement and tenancy sustainment services to homeless households placed in the private rented sector)

- working with other authorities to maximise the market power of councils to procure accommodation at a reasonable price

- converting buildings to temporary

accommodation and developing new build hostels and local housing allowance rent private rental sector accommodation

- investigating innovative construction techniques such as re-deployable modular housing

- working creatively with partners inside and outside the local authority.

# Culture and sports services

Amongst some of the hugely challenging and entrenched issues linked to cohesion, creating opportunities for people of different backgrounds to come together through sports and cultural services and events is one of the more straightforward actions councils can take. Clearly, individual events cannot address issues such as equality of opportunity or social mobility. However, as part of a planned programme of activities, they can help to improve social interaction, and have an extremely important role in promoting contact, integration, respect and understanding between people of different backgrounds. Culture and sports services can therefore be a powerful tool for engaging all sections of the community, breaking down barriers that may exist between them and helping to dispel myths and negative stereotypes.

## Oxford City Counci

Oxford City Council recognised the value of sport and leisure in supporting community cohesion – cutting across social divides and improving health. The council takes a local leadership role, pulling together local providers into a coherent offer to maximise value for local residents.

In 2009, a charitable leisure trust won a contract to operate and manage Oxford's sport and leisure facilities, including three leisure centres, an outdoor pool and an ice rink.

The council's sport and physical activity team is made up of six officers (one externally funded) who deliver programmes, projects and events to help Oxford's residents become more active and lead healthier lives. Much of this work is aimed at target groups such as younger and older people, those from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, disabled people and residents of deprived neighbourhoods.

The team works hard to bring in additional revenue, for example through activities delivered to schools and fitness classes in parks and green spaces. External funding of almost £1.5 million was brought in over the subsequent eight years.

To ensure an effective joined-up offer within the city, the team works closely with the outsourced provider to improve and develop the leisure facilities and services. The team also works with a wide range of partners, including the Oxfordshire Sport and Physical Activity Partnership, Sport England, national governing bodies of sports, schools, sports clubs, charities and the voluntary/ community sector, to ensure sport and physical activity is accessible to everyone.

The programme has seen:

- year-on-year increases in regular adult participation in sport, reaching 31 per cent in 2016

- over 6,700 disadvantaged young people participating in the council-run 'Youth Ambition' programme

- more than 116,000 attendances at activities and events organised by the sport and physical activity team

- approximately 1,000 women engaged in the council-run 'Active Women' sport and physical activity programme

- a £13.18 return on investment for every £1 spent on the social rounders league

- a 53 per cent increase in participation at leisure centres, from £896,000 (2009/10) to £1,370,000 (2016/17), and a 40 per cent increase in visits by the target groups.

Austerity has of course put significant pressure on discretionary services such as these, but councils will still be well-placed to consider how culture and sports services, and public spaces such as parks and leisure centres, can be used to support cohesion. Involving other public agencies, the voluntary sector and local businesses or business groups can help to resource these activities and ensure they are tailored to the needs and interests of local communities.

**Council led events**

One opportunity is for councils to arrange large scale events that enable the whole community to get together. Hackney Council's 'A place for everyone' research received very positive feedback that people strongly valued opportunities for people of different backgrounds to come together through activities such as the local half marathon or carnival. Similarly, in July 2018, Barking and Dagenham Council held its fourth DAGFEST, an event bringing together local people for a day of cultural activities

### Hull City of Culture

Hull became the UK's City of Culture in 2017. An evaluation of the impact on the city found that a total audience of 5.3 million people attended over 2,800 events, cultural activities, installations and exhibitions during 2017. Over half the audiences were from Hull, with almost all residents attending at least one cultural activity during the year. The evaluation also found increases in residents' willingness to take part in a various cultural and non-cultural activities, including volunteering and sport.

**Making it easier for the community to hold events and get together**

Councils should also consider how they can make it as easy as possible for local residents to arrange their own events, by taking a supportive approach to those seeking to organise events, maintaining common spaces and supporting initiatives such as Fun Palaces (see box below).

The Government has produced guidance on supporting communities to organise street parties and similar events; councils should consider how they can support these events by waiving or at least minimising fees for road closures and simplifying organisational processes as much as possible.

### Fun Palaces

The Fun Palaces campaign began in 2014 and aims to promote culture at the heart of communities, and communities at the heart of culture. During the annual weekend of action in October, local makers run fun palaces in a variety of locations. Fun Palaces cover a wide range of different activities and interests – such as arts and crafts, heritage and history, sport, science and food. An evaluation of the campaign shows that fun palaces brought people of different ethnicity, age and background together to experience activities that many were not used to being involved in, such as science or the arts. Figures indicated that since 2015, both makers and participants have become more diverse year on year, and a greater proportion have lived in the most deprived postcodes. 64 per cent of maker teams included people from an ethnic minority, 28 per cent included disabled people and 21 per cent of maker teams included people both over the age of 65 and under 18.

**Specific activities and programmes**

Councils can also develop programmes of specific cultural activities intended to promote community integration and cohesion. In developing these, councils should work with local partners to:

- understand existing provision and take-up of services and opportunities

- establish what barriers there are for specific groups, for example, cost, geographic, perception etc

- engage communities in planning and delivering services

- ensure language and terminology is used appropriately and isn't off-putting for specific groups

- involve schools, for example through inter-schools events or considering how holiday activities can support this agenda/be mainstreamed throughout the year

- organise cultural events that promote inter-cultural and inter-faith understanding and respect

- implement an effective information and communication plan so people know what opportunities are available

- consider how to sustain positive outcomes and goodwill in the longer term, after the activity or programme has ended.

## 'Community Maker' – building a cohesive community through an arts and culture project in Stoke-on-Trent

The 'Community Maker' project focused on the Portland Street area of Hanley, where 33 houses have been refurbished and sold for £1 each as part of a long-term process of social renewal and urban regeneration led by Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Community Maker formed part of the cultural sector's response to place-making for the area, bringing long-term residents together with new arrivals to build an active and engaged community.

The project was originally proposed by a local resident and taken up by British Ceramics Biennial, whose community engagement programme seeks to promote positive social change through cultural activity. The idea was to work with local people to explore personal stories, cultural identities, ceramic heritage and relationship to place through the making and sharing of food and through designing and making ceramic objects together.

The project created a space for people to get together, eat, talk and make ceramic items – and, through these activities, to explore how the community could develop. The communal meals provided a neutral, relaxed space for conversations on issues such as what makes a strong community,

what resources and support the community would need to develop, and what was already there to be celebrated.

Community Maker has contributed to the creation of an active community group of residents eager to play their part in its renaissance. In total, 256 residents took part in activities including walks, ceramic workshops and meals, and participants said it had a positive impact on their perception of the area, its heritage and people. In response to requests for a permanent community space, Stoke-on-Trent Council offered a disused pub for a multi-use community centre and involved the community in the design and delivery of this.

## Creative Barking and Dagenham – Cultural Connectors

Creative Barking and Dagenham's (CBD) mission is to is to enable local people to create, commission and curate outstanding arts and creative activities in their areas, and to promote the borough as a place where exciting art – of all forms – is made and shown. A growing and open network of local residents, the Cultural Connectors (CC), are the decision makers and advocates for the CBD programme. They are involved at all stages of the programme, from commissioning and selecting artists, participating in steering groups for our festivals, to taking part in trips and visits as well as having access to skills and knowledge development opportunities. The CC network is open to all Barking and Dagenham residents to join at any time.

### Libraries as community hubs
Libraries are trusted spaces, freely open to all, where people explore and share reading, information, knowledge and culture. They reach and support the whole community regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status or educational attainment; nearly 60 per cent of the population holds a current library card. In England alone public libraries

were visited 225 million times in 2014/15 – more than visits to Premier League football games, the cinema, and the top 10 UK tourist attractions combined.

Libraries reach all parts of the community but unlike most cultural or public institutions, they are proportionally more likely to be used by black and ethnic minority groups; amongst the adult population, libraries are used mostly by those aged between 25 and 44 years old. 68 per cent of five to ten-year-olds and 74 per cent of 11 to 15-year-olds visited the library in the last year. By bringing parents together around a common theme at rhyme times or reading sessions, libraries can introduce people of different backgrounds who wouldn't otherwise meet.

Libraries are increasingly being seen as vital community hubs – bringing people together and giving them access to the services and support they need to live better lives. Many councils recognise that library services are critical to the effective delivery of a wide range of desired strategic outcomes, a number of which are relevant to cohesion and integration, including:

- increased reading and literacy

- improved digital access and literacy

- helping everyone achieve their full potential

- greater prosperity

- stronger, more resilient communities.

Many of the key forms of engagement and awareness needed to support cohesion are already central to the library role. For instance:

- providing information

- hosting events

- helping with English language skills

- providing space and resources for people to speak their own languages

- helping with digital skills

- exploring heritage

- accessing public services.

## Derbyshire library service

In Derbyshire, the library service has been taking a strong lead on integration and cohesion, including the following projects:

- **Polish Community Day at Shirebrook**: Working with the Polish Consulate the library service hosted a day of activities at Shirebrook Library for the local Polish community to provide activities, translation services and support on applying for visas, joining the library and accessing the Polish language stock available, as well as various activities to help break down community barriers. Attendance at the event exceeded the expectations of the Consulate and demonstrated the value of holding events in libraries, as safe, neutral, community venues.

- **Syrian Vulnerable People Resettlement Scheme**: As part of the scheme all library managers attended cultural awareness training to help them better understand the situations facing families that might be accessing library services and to better understand the wide range of cultural differences. The library service was included as part of the families' tour of the local community and library cards were issued as part of their induction. The library service had ensured that Arabic books suitable for all ages were available in the relevant libraries and Arabic keyboards and associated software were also purchased. In a number of the libraries, the families have continued to use the library to access the free WiFi and computers and have joined in community craft and reading activities. There are strong links between community safety staff, responsible for supporting the Syrian families, and library staff and there is ongoing dialogue about additional ways that libraries can support the families to settle into Derbyshire.

- **Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Forum**: Derbyshire libraries have

a strong working relationship with Derbyshire County Council's BAME forum and have worked with individual communities to enable them to create 'Welcome to your library' leaflets in their own languages. The service has also bought specific book titles, authors and resources in consultation with community groups through the forum.

- **Assisted Digital UK Visas and Immigration**: Derbyshire libraries are now providing assisted digital help to individuals who are required to renew their in-country visa online.

**Access to parks and open spaces**

The Integrated Communities Strategy also highlights parks and open spaces as valuable shared community spaces, an issue explored in the CLG Select Committee inquiry into public parks (2016-2017). The committee noted that public parks provide a social space for people of different ages or from different backgrounds to come together, citing the role of parks in community integration as set out by one community group, the Friends of Page Park: "the park breaks down the barriers of ignorance and fear, it's somewhere we can all enjoy and our children can play together. Our parks and open spaces are vital in bringing our communities together and acceptance of our different ways we live, accepting the different religions and ways of others."

The inquiry also highlighted the lack of green space in the most deprived (and typically more diverse) wards in the UK, when compared with the green space available in the most affluent wards; and also, the poorer quality green spaces available in areas where black and ethnic minority groups comprise 40 per cent or more of the population. Addressing these issues can help to tackle health inequalities as well as promoting cohesion.

Councils can think about how their parks and open spaces can contribute to cohesion, for example through the facilities and activities available in them, such as sports or gardening clubs. Birmingham Council is working with Sport England and the Active Wellbeing Society to develop metrics to measure the impact of participation in physical activity on cohesion.

# Regulatory and environmental services

Regulatory and environmental services can play an important role in supporting cohesion by influencing the environment in which people live, and helping to enforce related cultural norms that people value, for example around littering or noise.

A number of areas have experienced localised cohesion tensions linked partially to the impact of behaviours by new arrivals on the existing community; for example, whereby newcomers are accustomed in their home countries to throwing litter onto the street, spitting or regularly congregating outside properties. This can be extremely disruptive to established residents, who understandably do not like waste being dumped outside properties, or who may feel threatened by groups of people hanging around certain streets.

Councils can help to address this through working to educate newcomers about cultural norms and established behaviours, as well as working with community hubs to help people understand when groups are, and are not, doing anything wrong. Ensuring that professionals understand where issues may be cultural, and that the appropriate first response may be to educate rather than enforce, can also help to resolve issues most effectively. Where issues cannot be resolved in this way, councils then have a range of enforcement powers that can be used to tackle specific problems.

Through their work, regulatory and environmental services have a role in creating environments which are more pleasant and safer places to be, encouraging a sense of connection and investment in places by local residents. They can also be involved in responding quickly to specific issues which can undermine cohesion, such as by removing racist graffiti.

## Multi-agency Task Force – Thanet District Council and partners

The Multi-agency Task Force (MTF) in Thanet was established in 2009 to launch a fresh approach to tackling: housing intervention; protecting the vulnerable; health inequalities, and work and skills within two of the most deprived wards in the district. The task force brought together 14 local agencies working together in a co-located office to deliver a targeted approach supported by integrated working. MTF aims to identify the most complex social issues and deliver a joint 'street level' service to respond to risk and vulnerabilities.

The initial focus of MTF was enforcement-led through a programme of high profile activities and direct intelligence-led interventions. One of these was a focus on issues with waste and recycling, which were prompting a high number of complaints. The lack of storage in the many houses of multiple occupation in the area, coupled with cultural behaviours, led to rubbish being left out and bags being ripped open by seagulls.

The council introduced large Euro-style on-street bins to provide greater capacity to store rubbish, as well as using seagull-proof bags. It educated landlords and letting agents about the issue, including providing information in different languages. The council also took a robust approach to enforcement, taking action where people or local businesses were using the new bins for non-household waste ie fly tipping or trade waste. It set up a waste forum as part of the A Better Cliftonville (ABC) group. Over time, the council has changed and tweaked the recycling and waste service to suit the area; this has made a real difference in terms of how waste is handled, with the result that the council now gets fewer complaints about rubbish.

As part of its work, the task force went out door-to-door speaking to local residents. Within just a couple of streets, this activity identified a significant concentration of vulnerable residents – including young people Not in Education Employment or Training (NEETs); two properties housing people with mental health issues; two children's homes and several independent fostering placements – and a number of referrals for local agencies to support. It also revealed some severe housing issues, with some residents living in poorly managed and unsafe properties.

In response, Thanet District Council has introduced a selective licensing scheme (subsequently renewed in 2016) and created a specific enforcement team. Just over 2,000 privately rented homes are subject to the selective licensing designation. About 1,750 are currently licensed, with the rest either subject to a licence application or under investigation.

Stringent regulation has made a significant difference to accommodation in the two wards, with a number of landlords prosecuted and receiving fines at the top end of the scale. More than 1,800 homes have been fully inspected. Over 1,000 homes have been subject to a breach of licence condition warning. There have been approximately 40 successful prosecutions; of these the highest fine was set at £20,000.

The council has targeted the most problematic bedsits, acquiring 118 rooms though compulsory purchase powers and negotiations. The programme converts these into high-quality family homes for rent. It has completed 21 new homes, has a further 11 currently on site and has funding for further projects. This has been supplemented by work completed by Kent County Council, which has provided nine refurbished homes for owner occupation.

Regulatory and environmental services can also provide a set of tools for disrupting the activities of demonstrators or extremists where they are operating in public spaces and buildings and undermining cohesion. This is an issue on which councils may need to work closely with their local police force.

## Disrupting violent extremism through regulation and enforcement

As part of its work to disrupt the activities of those with violent extremist views, which were undermining cohesion in the borough, the **London Borough of Waltham Forest** has used a range of regulatory approaches and tools. The council developed a community premises protocol that supports community venues with their hall hire procedures, to help prevent venues being used by extremists. The protocol sets out a four-stage process to ensure that hiring processes are safe and managed accordingly, to safeguard premises, staff and residents, and ensure that publicly owned venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists.

Enforcement powers have also been used to disrupt highly-visible activities, such as leafleting or the use of loudhailers by extremists preaching hatred on the street. The council's neighbourhood teams have successfully stopped activities using powers to control noise and prevent the obstruction of pavements.

In 2016 **Bedfordshire Police**, supported by Luton Council and community partners, secured a civil injunction against Britain First's leadership under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014. Evidence was gathered to satisfy the court that the group's activities in Luton posed a considerable public nuisance and had impacted on community tensions. Not only did this prevent further demonstrations, mosque incursions or 'Christian patrols' in the Luton area by Britain First, it also demonstrated to Luton's residents the willingness of statutory agencies to challenge the behaviour of such groups when they posed a threat to community relations.

Regulatory services also have a role to play in disrupting modern slavery, an issue which may have implications for community cohesion where it is linked to the arrival of newcomers in communities and/or poor quality and over-crowded housing.

## Disruption to tackle modern slavery

In 2015, **Cornwall Council** was one of five local authorities which took part in the Cabinet Office's Better Business Compliance pilots, which sought to better identify local businesses likely to pose the highest risk of non-compliance and target interventions to turn the business around or to cease illegal business practices. In Cornwall there was an emphasis on tackling modern slavery and human exploitation.

Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced labour. Anyone can become a victim of modern slavery – and it is a crime that affects British victims as well as those trafficked into the UK – however certain groups are identified as being particularly vulnerable to exploitation through modern slavery, including unaccompanied, internally displaced children; children accompanied by an adult who is not their relative or legal guardian; young girls and women; and former victims of modern slavery or trafficking.

Cornwall's approach included multi-agency awareness-raising training, joint operations with private sector housing, the fire service and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), and establishing a mechanism for sharing intelligence and reporting concerns. Local partners also worked together via the Migrant Workers Action Group (MIGWAG); a multi-agency approach to tackling human exploitation, modern slavery and unfair/unsafe employment practices.

'Week of action' joint operations are undertaken each year, targeting businesses (including farms) who tend to employ temporary and non-UK national employees. Councils' and other agencies' powers of entry are used to ensure access to all businesses targeted during these weeks.

Issues uncovered typically concern housing conditions, illegal immigration, minimum wage breaches, and health and safety/unsafe working conditions. Operations against suspected modern slavery in Cornwall will involve a number of agencies, from the police to local authority emergency planning teams.

## Services for asylum seekers, refugees and new migrants

### Overview

The UK referendum on leaving the EU illustrated that people have very different views on the desirability of immigration into the UK. What is perhaps less contentious is the view that, once here, there are benefits to communities and the individuals themselves if newcomers are able to speak English, adapt to accepted laws and values and integrate into local economies and communities. Research suggests that the impact of new arrivals may differ between areas with high levels of migration and those that are new to migration or have experienced sudden change, but there are differing opinions on who should meet the costs of newcomers being supported to settle and integrate. Again, it is less subjective to note that resources for councils and other public or voluntary organisations to provide resettlement support have reduced significantly in recent years.

The Government's Controlling Migration Fund (CMF) was launched in November 2016 to help councils mitigate the impacts of recent migration on local communities. Through the CMF, £100 million is being made available to local projects between 2016-17 and 2019-20. Many councils are using CMF funding to support local cohesion work, and it is important that the sector shares the learning from the different projects funded by the CMF.

Beyond the CMF, there are a range of different support schemes in places for people coming to the UK as asylum seekers or refugees, and no specific provision for economic migrants to draw on. The LGA has consistently argued for the system to be more joined up, and will continue to do so as any new proposals stemming from the Integrated Communities Strategy around migrant support are introduced.

It is clear that the current Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS)[4], which seek to resettle 23,000 refugees by 2020 and were co-designed with local government following early engagement with councils, are more effectively helping refugees to integrate into their new communities[5]. This is clearly linked to the fact that the support provided through the scheme much more closely reflects what is required, with five years of funding available for refugees' resettlement journeys, including a year's worth of funding across health and education services and additional funding for English as a second language (ESOL) provision, combined with high levels of community support and engagement.

The LGA has provided guides for local authorities in the first year of the (then) Syrian resettlement scheme and longer term integration support after year one, which include a range of case studies from local areas.

In contrast, the requirement to make savings on the Government's contract for housing nearly 40,000 other asylum seekers has led to significant numbers of asylum seekers being placed in regions with lower housing costs, often in less prosperous areas with existing development or regeneration challenges.[6]

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4    Which replaced the earlier Syrian resettlement scheme.
5    The Syrian Vulnerable Resettlement Scheme, NAO, September 2016, www.nao.org.uk/report/the-syrian-vulnerable-persons-resettlement-programme/
6    At the end of June 2017, a total of 38,954 people were receiving a cash allowance, somewhere to live, or both, in the UK under Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (Immigration statistics, April to June 2017, Home Office, August 2017)

The placement and churn of large numbers of people in more deprived areas; their inability to work while asylum applications are processed, and the limited support available from accommodation providers to facilitate their integration pending asylum decisions all combine with a lack of funding for councils and other local agencies to meet local costs of support. Collectively, these factors can undermine the cohesiveness of local places, creating a situation that is unsettling for both newcomers and new arrivals alike.

Local authorities may also provide unfunded accommodation and financial support to destitute families and adults with care needs with a 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) condition[7]. As these families and individuals cannot access mainstream benefit support and social housing, they may struggle to integrate as they do not have stable accommodation, face difficulties engaging in social activities due to the cost, and childcare costs may prevent them from sustaining employment.

Illegal entrants, visa overstayers or failed asylum seekers with NRPF, and European Economic Area (EEA) nationals who are not eligible for out-of-work benefits, housing or homelessness assistance, may result in hidden homelessness and destitution within migrant communities, with resulting impacts on integration activity. The lack of engagement with mainstream services may make it even harder to work with families and individuals to change their status, such as returning to countries of origin.

This issue may be compounded in some areas by migrant workers who are working illegally and therefore similarly unlikely to create roots in an area if they are effectively living off the radar. Some of these groups may have been victims of or are at genuine risk of becoming victims of modern slavery, an issue on which the LGA has recently published guidance. Modern slavery is invariably linked with housing issues such as beds in sheds or other

poor quality, over-crowded housing, which can increase tension if communities resent the impact on their neighbourhoods but do not necessarily understand the exploitation that is taking place.

The impacts of destitution – such as street homelessness and begging – will also be a very visible and possibly resented presence in local areas, particularly in areas with existing cohesion challenges.

If local agencies are perceived by long standing residents as not taking action on these issues, this can create mistrust and frustration; therefore it is an issue on which councils should actively engage with their communities and be open and upfront about their options for dealing with these issues.

**English as a second language (ESOL) provision**
Within the very challenging and politically sensitive context set out above, councils are nevertheless doing their best to use their own services, such as libraries, alongside voluntary and community sector (VCS) capacity to provide support for newcomers, particularly English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The importance of English language proficiency is a key part of the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper; reflecting how ESOL can assist newcomers to better integrate into their local communities and economies, access services and engage in civic participation, potentially reducing the isolation Dame Louise Casey warned of in her report.

While the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper states that substantial funding is made available for English language through adult education budgets, Jobcentre Plus, community provision and specific support for some refugees, in recent years funding for ESOL has been cut, leading to a reduction in both ESOL provision and vital supporting services, such as crèche facilities for parents and carers of young children. The green paper recognises that the delivery landscape can be difficult to navigate for some people, and there are challenges with different aspects of current provision.

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7   There is no central data collection on NRPF but information from the Network indicates that 2349 households were being supported by 45 local authorities at the end of 2016, NRPF Network

For example, as noted ESOL is provided through Jobcentre Plus, but while beneficial in an employment context, there are concerns that is too limited in duration and does not adequately support individuals to understand conversational English. Similarly, it may not assist harder to reach groups who may: have disabilities or medical issues; be at home supporting a family or with caring responsibilities rather than seeking employment; or who have moved to the UK for marriage. These groups were highlighted in the Casey Review as being particularly at risk of becoming isolated from wider society.

For this reason, council and VCS work around ESOL has tended to focus on more informal, conversational learning with schemes designed to enable people to participate in their local communities.

- **Norfolk Library Service** has acted as a host for the council team working to help refugees integrate into the area, building on their established position of a non-judgemental, inclusive venue.

- **Suffolk Libraries** has a 'Chat and Chill' group which meets weekly in Ipswich County Library, for women to meet and make new friends. Over 17 languages are spoken and staff help the women who come to learn English and acquire basic skills, using the medium of crafts and conversation. They have made bunting for special occasions, shared recipes and patterns. About 25 women come every week and this has helped them build relationships and confidence.

- **Bolton Libraries** liaise with ESOL providers who teach in the library meeting rooms, and the library provides lists of other ESOL providers and classes in Bolton. Bolton Libraries is supplying ACIS (formerly Starting Point) with dual language Bookstart books and meeting with the local Refugee Action in order to discuss tours of library for groups of their clients.

The green paper notes the £10 million funding provided by the Home Office and Department for Education as part of the (former) Syrian resettlement scheme, which enabled areas to build their capacity and make childcare provision to open access to English classes for people with young children.

Again, this highlights the benefits of having co-designed this scheme with local government to ensure that what is needed is what is provided, and recognises that the funding available through the Department for Work and Pensions scheme is not sufficient to help all groups within the community to speak English.

From April 2019, the Government plans to devolve responsibility for the adult education budget to Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Greater London Authority (GLA), which will provide these authorities with greater scope to provide tailored local support on this issue. For other areas, the Integrated Communities Strategy action plan commits to develop a new strategy for English language in England; this is due to be published later in 2019. The paper also references examples of support around English language learning and includes a pledge to support volunteers through the development of an online hub.

The British Academy's recent research project 'If you could do one thing…' included a series of case studies focusing on ways in which different areas had supported new immigrants. The case studies are available here.

# Managing challenges or trigger events

It is inevitable that councils will sometimes have to manage challenges or trigger events that pose a threat to cohesion. The European referendum in 2016 and terrorist attacks in 2017 led to spikes in hate crime, perhaps the most obvious indicator of cohesion issues; similarly, local incidents (some of which may in themselves constitute hate crimes) can equally risk creating tensions and undermining local communities.

The LGA has published specific guidance on civil resilience, as well as documents reflecting on the learning from councils which have recently responded to major terrorist incidents: this section focuses solely on the actions councils can consider to support cohesion in the wake of an event that could undermine it.

## Leadership and community support

Councils' key role when an incident threatens cohesion is to show visible civic leadership, provide reassurance to local communities – who will look to local leaders at times of crisis – and reinforce messages about local cohesion and shared values. Failing to provide this visible leadership can create a vacuum that can and will be filled by others, who may have a different agenda in terms of community cohesion and wider issues. Councils must therefore act quickly to establish and demonstrate their leadership role.

Pre-existing and strong local partnerships will support councils to do this swiftly and effectively, and councils should therefore consider proactively developing plans for how partners can work together following an

incident, as well as investing in developing these relationships before an incident occurs. It will be important in the aftermath of an event for representatives of different communities to publically come together to show unity, and councils should be aware of who the appropriate people are in their areas – whether that is faith leaders, community representatives, ward councillors or others – and how they could quickly convene them if necessary.

In the aftermath of an event, what councils do to directly support local communities is hugely important, and community engagement is vital. Clearly, what is required will be determined by what has occurred and where, but again the public leadership role of council officers and councillors being seen to be present and available, and visibly dealing with community concerns, will be critical. Councils' overall resilience planning should therefore include some general principles and a plan on how they would expect to fulfil the community leadership role following an incident.

## Communication

A council's communication plan following an incident should be seen as a critical supporting component of its leadership role, rather than a separate strategy or end in itself. The LGA has developed guidance for councils on internal communications during emergencies: additionally, our crisis communications advice provides general guidance on this issue.

These guidance documents emphasise that, again, councils should have proactive plans in place for managing communications after an

incident. These should set out the audiences a council will need to reach during a crisis, a list of stakeholders to contact or work with during a crisis, and the channels to be used to communicate messages. Liaising with the mainstream media will be an important part of this.

Councils should be clear about the impact on their overall approach if there is a cohesion angle to the incident they are responding to. From a cohesion perspective, these proactive plans should take account of the different groups within the local community, and the best way of reaching them, building on the learning from the engagement work outlined earlier in this document.

One element of handling a response may need to include community tension monitoring, which will test the effectiveness of mechanisms put in place to assess this. Of particular significance may be monitoring the reaction to events on social media, including taking steps to correct inaccuracies or rumours that can otherwise quickly spread and gain currency, potentially jeopardising community relations. This was a key part of the work that Manchester City Council undertook following the terrorist attack in May 2017, with a team of several people focusing on this.

### Responding to the Manchester Arena attack – supporting communities

Manchester's response to the Arena attack in May 2017 built on and benefitted from the council's earlier engagement with the community in order to promote community cohesion. The council's Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee had recently reviewed the city's approach to community cohesion, but this work was subsequently reviewed and in some places supplemented after the attack. Perhaps the key learning from Manchester's experience is not to wait for a trigger event before developing a local approach and building community links.

The council emphasised the importance, amidst the wider emergency response phase, of having someone to step back and say 'what does this feel like for our community?'. Three days after the attack, the council held an open invitation listening session. There was no specific agenda for the session; the intention was to provide an open forum so that members of the community could tell the council what they were doing, and what they thought would help. This proved to be a very valuable session that helped identify key groups and individuals, the things the council needed to do, and gave the council a clear sense of how things felt on the ground.

The council made an effort to promote information about how hate crimes could be reported. Alongside getting messages about this into the media, council staff visited local high schools to emphasise the message that hate crime should be reported, and to promote the True Vision website as a way in which crimes can be simply reported using a smart phone, without the need for victims to go to a third party.

As part of the multi-agency Recovery Coordination Group established in Greater Manchester following the attack, a community recovery workstream, overseen by the Community Recovery Group (CRG) led on planning and coordinating activities in the short, medium and long term, and will continue to assess the impact of the attack on communities over time. The CRG worked with communities, stakeholders and partners to undertake a community impact assessment, which refreshed the earlier approach to community cohesion and developed a Greater Manchester Challenging Extremism and Building Community Cohesion Action Plan based on four areas for action:

- Building community resilience and countering extremism

- Engaging and supporting faith and diverse communities

- Building youth leadership and resilience

- Supporting schools and the further/higher education sector and institutions.

Alongside a wide range of other activities, the engaging and supporting faith and diverse communities theme has focussed on continuing to engage and build relationships with communities impacted by the attack, through one-to-ones, dialogues and workshops.

The plan was supported by an existing campaign and grant programme, 'RADEQUAL', aimed at building community resilience to prejudice, hate and extremism, with small grants allocated to support groups and communities been impacted by the attack.

## Preventing and tackling hate crime

Where an incident risks provoking retaliatory attacks against specific communities, councils should work with the local community, police and other partners to consider what additional measures can be put in place to provide protection, reassurance and support. They should also think about what proactive work can be undertaken to seek to prevent hate crime occurring.

The community cohesion and hate crime section on the LGA website includes links to a number of case studies of preventative work that councils have undertaken both to try to prevent hate crime but also to encourage victims to report. Existing forums such as Essex's Strategic Hate Crime Prevention Partnership can be drawn on following an incident that may trigger a spike in hate crime. The Government has also recently updated its plan for tackling hate crime which sets out a number of actions on hate crime.

The **Strategic Hate Crime Prevention Partnership (SHCPP), in Essex**, is an association including voluntary, statutory and council bodies that work to raise reporting of hate crime and deliver preventative measures. Membership includes:

- Essex Police

- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

- Community voluntary services

- Community safety partnerships

- Schools

- Fire Service, etc.

There is a social media presence using **#StoptheHate**, and a website of the same name. This promotes third party reporting centres in Essex and other initiatives supervised by the partnership.

As part of the work of the partnership in raising awareness of hate crime:

- 90 minute sessions were delivered during the school holidays to 16 to 18-year-olds regarding the increase in hate crime following the EU referendum, discussing the issues and engaging the young people to develop projects to run in the community that will increase cohesion and encourage confidence in reporting hate crime

- The partnership has employed a coordinator to engage with communities under the protected characteristics and collaborate on awareness-raising materials including advertising. The coordinator will also consult with the community on how to increase reporting, including on how to manage the network of third-party reporting centres

- The coordinator will map the work of voluntary and statutory agencies and ensure a joint approach – for example, working with organisations funded from different sources that are delivering

hate crime awareness in schools to avoid duplication and ensure partnership working.

**Hate crime reporting in Rotherham**

Rotherham Council has prioritised hate crime reporting, including this within its corporate plan and receiving quarterly reports to cabinet. Work has focused on understanding what is happening locally, and giving residents the confidence to report hate crime. This has included providing funding to voluntary organisations to collect data and report hate crime (see below), encouraging residents to report to a single email address rather than by calling 111, and monitoring the police's performance in responding to it. It is expected that every local hate crime victim should be dealt with within 24 hours; a senior investigator should make contact within seven days, and victims should receive a booklet with relevant information. Although around half of hate crimes do not have an identified perpetrator, there is now 80 per cent satisfaction for how hate crime is dealt with, and restorative justice that brings victims and perpetrators together is being introduced where possible.

As a specific example, there were concerns about an increase in hate incidents against local ethnic minority women, but it was clear that few women were reporting directly to services. Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA), an infrastructure support organisation for the black and ethnic voluntary and community sector of Rotherham, designed a women's project to improve contact with local women to find out directly about their experiences and to give them the tools to deal with hate crime.

Building up social bonds was a key focus for the project, particularly in the early stages. The women involved became friends both inside and outside the group, beginning to support each other beyond the scope of organised activities. Coupled with learning more about hate crime and measures to tackle it, confidence amongst the group grew, resulting in a sense of

increased empowerment; the women reported that they understood how to make their voices heard on issues that mattered to them. The project changed attitudes towards reporting incidents, encouraged women to come forward, and improved relationships with local agencies. Several of the women have gone onto regular volunteering work.

# Further information and resources

Further information is available from the sources below:

**Integrated Communities Strategy
Green Paper**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/
government/uploads/system/uploads/
attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_
Communities_Strategy.pdf

**Integrated Communities Action Plan**
www.gov.uk/government/publications/
integrated-communities-action-plan

**The Casey Review: A report into
opportunity and integration**
www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-
review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration

**All Party Parliamentary Group
on Social Cohesion**
www.socialintegrationappg.org.uk

**British Academy project: local actions
to promote social integration**
Key lessons, essay collection and
case studies
www.britac.ac.uk/node/8607

**British Future think tank**
www.britishfuture.org

**The Challenge**
https://the-challenge.org/

**The Cohesion and Integration Network**
https://cohesionintegration.net/

**Integration Hub**
www.integrationhub.net/

**iCoCo foundation**
http://tedcantle.co.uk/

**Local Government Association**
Community cohesion and hate crime resource
www.local.gov.uk/topics/community-safety/
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www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/
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**Special Interest Group on Countering
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www.khub.net/group/special-interest-group-
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www.local.gov.uk/fgm-resource-guide-
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www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/
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**London Councils social integration
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www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/
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**Social Integration Commission, 2014-15**
http://socialintegrationcommission.org.uk/
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**Webber Phillips Guides to good practice**
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**Council of Europe**
Intercultural cities: good practice case studies
www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/home

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Migrant integration information and good
practice case studies
https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/home

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