

Cabinet – 12th December 2007

Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services

Development of a Community Cohesion Strategy for the Borough

Purpose of Report

1. This report outlines the proposed framework for the development of a partnership Community Cohesion Strategy.

Background

2. During the spring and early summer of 2001, there were a number of disturbances in towns and cities in England involving large numbers of people from different cultural backgrounds. These resulted in the destruction of property and attacks on the police.

The Home Secretary's response to these issues was to set up a Ministerial group on Public Order and Community Cohesion. A Review team was also established which made recommendations for actions, which they felt, would address the factors, which lay behind these disturbances.

Recommendations were also made of a more long-term proactive nature to improve the 'Community Cohesion' across our towns and cities not necessarily directly affected by those disturbances. It is hoped that these, more preventative measures will improve the access to, and general sense of community belonging within the changing make up of our communities.

Successful Community Cohesion will also provide a greater voice and input to communities, and hopefully develop better social harmony. This in turn will improve quality of life and prevent the factors present in the recent disturbances becoming issues for other communities

UK Developments

The UK Community Safety plan makes several mentions of Community Cohesion and specifically has it as one of the eight key priorities. In 2005 the Government launched "Improving opportunity strengthening social strategy" setting out a commitment to create strong cohesive communities.

Post the July 7th attacks, the "Preventing Extremism Together" (PET) initiatives were set up. This has led to the setting up of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion.

The Scottish Executive has launched "One Scotland – Many Cultures, a proactive anti racism campaign promoting multi-culturalism and Community Cohesion.

The Commission for Integration and Cohesion has produced the document 'Our Shared Future' May 2007. This document sets out the UK Government's practical proposals for building integration and cohesion at a local level. These proposals have been based on a combination of new evidence and an analysis of the response to an extensive consultation process.

The rise in terrorism in recent years has brought an additional dimension to Community Cohesion throughout the UK. A rise in Islamophobic attacks has often followed negative reporting in relation to Muslim faith and culture.

The 7th July 2005 London attack compounded this growing pressure, particularly the involvement of British born Muslims in the suicide attacks. Most notably, the recent attempts to bomb London involved terrorists living and working in Glasgow, Scotland.

Implications for Dudley

There is a clear need for our communities to adapt and become more comfortable with the social processes that are taking place across Dudley Borough. New communities are emerging and this is presenting challenges to the public sector in relation to access to services and service provision.

Concerns caused by the changes can have an adverse affect upon the health of our communities and result in disengagement among certain groups including younger members of our society. There is a need for a positive approach to strengthen our communities as these changes take place. Dudley needs to promote a shared future, a positive and inclusive image for the Borough and cohesive local communities.

Whilst there is an acceptance, and it is evident, that some excellent work in relation to Community Cohesion is being achieved in Dudley, a Dudley Community Cohesion Strategy will seek to scope, consult, collate and document best practice in order to ensure that Dudley Borough is well placed in relation to developing cohesive communities.

I would also want to make reference to the benefits of developing a Strategy. This might look something like:

Benefits of Developing a Strategy

In developing a Community Cohesion Strategy Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council and partners will create the conditions to improve the quality of life and safety of all communities throughout Dudley. It should not be viewed as a response to minority groups alone, it is about the improvement and promotion of social harmony for all people living and working within the Borough.

Dudley is already doing good work in relation to preventing violent extremism and tension monitoring. However, the development of a Community Cohesion

Strategy for Dudley provides a real opportunity to incorporate this work in the overall strategy.

In incorporating the existing work related to extremism within a Community Cohesion Strategy the Borough would be able to

- Provide Dudley MBC and partners with guidance to secure and preserve the well being of their area and all people living, working and visiting the area.
- Provide guidance to prevent individuals or groups unwittingly attacking sections of the community, creating distrust or disorder.
- Provide guidance on effective responses to extremist action.
- Provide greater awareness of minority groups

The overall vision of the Dudley Borough Community Strategy is

“the promotion of stronger communities throughout the borough. A strong community has many qualities. It exists where all people are happy and proud to live and where there is decent housing, a clean and safe environment and an area that is attractive, vibrant and harmonious.... A strong community is not just about places, however, it is also about groups of people with common interests who could live in a number of different places throughout the borough

The communities across Dudley pride themselves in being a ‘welcoming community. The challenge of Community Cohesion Dudley is to improve the quality of life for all our communities. It will strive to ensure that all members of our communities regardless of their background and circumstances are included and provided with equality of opportunity. This will allow Dudley communities to grow and prosper. It will encourage all persons to take pride in the Borough and make a positive contribution to the future prosperity and harmony of Dudley.

3. The vision in the Community Strategy expresses how partners in Dudley value the strength and cohesion of communities. As part of the work to respond to the aims of the Community Strategy, the Council has been leading work through the Dudley Community Partnership on the development of a Community Cohesion strategy to give expression to, and support the promotion of Stronger Communities. Nationally there has been a range of guidance around the need for each local area to review its arrangements and develop such a strategy. In addition the revised Local Area Agreement has also emphasised the need to develop a clear vision of what cohesion means for the Borough and areas of focus.
4. The Government established the Commission on integration and cohesion to review the experience and views of different communities across the Country and report on the key issues that at a national and local level needed to be taken into account in promoting community cohesion. Their report in Spring 2007 has been used to help prepare this document. Their definition of integration and cohesion is attached as appendix 1.

5. In addition the Dudley Community Partnership held a Community Cohesion Action Planning event which focused upon immediate community cohesion priorities for the DCP. The outcome of that event has been reviewed by a DCP working group to help frame a set of proposed priorities for Community Cohesion and the content of a draft Strategy. A summary of the draft Strategy is attached as Appendix 1.

6. **Aims of the Community Cohesion Strategy**

The aims of the Dudley Community Cohesion Strategy are to:-

- Promote a more cohesive community with shared values and equal opportunities in all areas of society.
- Establish a greater sense of Dudley citizenship which encompasses the history and diversity of Black Country life.
- Promote contact between diverse groups and cultures.
- Provide an opportunity for community involvement in the promotion of community values and cohesion.
- Provide a clear, co-ordinated basis upon which Dudley MBC can deliver this work along with partners.

The key starting point for the draft strategy is a statement of what positive community cohesion means for the Borough. The proposed vision is one where:-

- Local people have a genuine sense of belonging within the area.
- The diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and valued.

That strong and positive relationships are being developed and sustained between our different communities.

7. In order to achieve this vision we will need to work towards:-

- Working towards greater fairness in the provision and outcome of our services.
- Identifying as a specific goal, the aim of promoting greater interaction and integration between the different communities that comprise our Borough.
- Working with others to improve understanding and respect.

8. The draft strategy outlines a range of important influences and facts linked to promoting community cohesion, and highlights a number of areas where the Council and its partners can focus upon, including:-

- Gaining a wide agreement on the vision of Community Cohesion
- Mapping and targeting of the population and communities

- Identifying key outcomes and measures to track progress
- Promoting cohesion through regeneration and tackling inequality
- Community safety
- Schools and learning
- Reducing community tensions and violent extremism
- Sports and cultural activities
- Community engagement / Consulting with identified community members and groups

9. It is intended to take the draft strategy to a future meeting of the Dudley Community Partnership, prior to undertaking public consultation on the draft. Members are asked to note the progress to date in developing the strategy, and comment upon the suggested local vision of community cohesion, and the areas of focus arising from the review of national and local issues.

Finance

10. There is no specific financial implications arising from this report

Law

11. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, enables the Council to do any thing which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the borough, or any part of it.

The Local Authority is covered by a general duty to promote race equality as set out in the Race Relation Act 1976 as amended in 2000 and supported by subsequent supplementary legislation.

The general duty involves the three strands:-

- Eliminating discrimination.
- Promoting equality of opportunity.
- Promoting good relations.

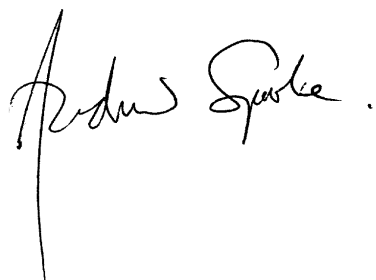
Dudley MBC has a specific duty to set out in a Race Equality Scheme how it is working to fulfil these duties. The adoption of a Community Cohesion Strategy for Dudley will mean that Dudley MBC will have a piece of work in progress which could mean that it is moving towards fulfilling its duties to 'promote good relations' and provide a clear, co-ordinated basis upon which the Local Authority can deliver this work along with key partners.

Equality Impact

12. The draft Community Cohesion strategy has been developed with reference to a wider range of information on children and young people, older people and BME communities within the Borough. Much of the work already undertaken to promote community engagement does include a broad cross section of local people. Subject to approval of the Cabinet and the DCP, the draft Community Strategy would be consulted upon in accordance with the Compact consultation principles.

Recommendation

13. It is recommended that the Cabinet note the progress in developing a Borough Community Cohesion strategy and comment on the proposed vision for Community Cohesion and suggested areas of focus,



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List of Background Papers

Nil

DRAFT

Appendix 1

Draft Community Cohesion Strategy - Summary

2008 - 2011

Diverse + Distinctive + DUDLEY

Vision and Introduction

Knowing our communities in Dudley

How Cohesive are our communities?

Where we go from here - community cohesion priorities

VISION AND INTRODUCTION

The overall vision of the Dudley Community Partnership's Community Strategy is

“the promotion of stronger communities throughout the borough. A strong community has many qualities. It exists where all people are happy and proud to live and where there is decent housing, a clean and safe environment and an area that is attractive, vibrant and harmonious. People in a strong community would not be disadvantaged by where they live, their culture or social background, their age, gender or how much money they earn.

A strong community is not just about places, however, it is also about groups of people with common interests who could live in a number of different places throughout the borough. Reflected in a strong community, are high levels of participation in a range of activities and a high number of community volunteers who frequently give their time for the benefit of others.”

This statement in the Community Strategy express how partners in Dudley value the strength and cohesion of communities. In Dudley, we believe that positive community cohesion within the Borough is one where:-

- Local people have a genuine sense of belonging within the area.
- The diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and valued.
- That strong and positive relationships are being developed and sustained between our different communities.

We feel that to achieve this vision we will need to work towards:-

- Working towards greater fairness in the provision and outcome of our services.
- Identifying as a specific goal, the aim of promoting greater interaction and integration between the different communities that comprise our Borough.
- Working with others to improve understanding and respect.

The Government established the Commission on integration and cohesion to review the experience and views of different communities across the Country and report on the key issues that at a national and local level needed to be taken into account in promoting community cohesion. Their report in Spring 2007 has been used to help prepare this document. Their definition of integration and cohesion is attached as appendix 1.

At the end of 2006, Dudley Community Partnership held a Community Cohesion Action Planning event which focused upon immediate community cohesion priorities for the DCP.

The outcome of that event has been reviewed by a DCP working group to help frame a set of proposed priorities for Community Cohesion and the content of this draft Strategy.

KNOWING OUR COMMUNITIES IN DUDLEY

The development of the Community Cohesion Strategy, is presented in the light of known information about the state of cohesion and integration across the Borough.

Dudley is a Borough which is based on a series of distinctive local township areas, indeed the Council area committee structure is based upon 5 different township locations. There is anecdotal evidence that many of these communities are stable, with strong local bonds and associations. There is a highly distinctive Black Country culture among established residents, with a relatively high degree of association between neighbourhoods and groups.

On the other hand however, the townships and neighbourhoods can be relatively independent from one another, and links between residents across different townships can be limited.

Overall Dudley offers a high standard of well being - crime is the lowest in the West Midlands and has been falling over the last 5 years; there is a high quality local environment; health outcomes are improving. Unlike many urban areas Dudley's population has remained stable and experienced no significant decline.

However, there are pockets of significant deprivation, with 9 wards identified by the Dudley Community Partnership as being of greatest concern, these are:-

- Castle & Priory
- St James'
- St Thomas'
- Brockmoor & Pensnett
- Brierley Hill
- Netherton & Woodside
- St Andrews'
- Lye & Wollescote
- Coseley East

In addition, within these wards, the experience of disadvantage is not consistent across residents, with significant inequalities existing across all Community Strategy themes.

A key principle of the Community Cohesion Action Plan is that greater cohesion can only be sustained in the long term if there is a commitment to address these inequalities, and improve the well being of all members of the community.

Against this initial background, we can see that our population in Dudley is diverse and distinctive, some highlights relating to ethnicity, age and gender are:

Ethnicity

92.5% of people in Dudley are white.

At 7.5%, Dudley Borough has the lowest percentage of black & minority ethnic groups within the West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities. Although the percentage of the population from black & minority ethnic groups is low for the Borough as a whole, there are small areas where the concentration of specific groups is much higher:

- the highest concentrations of Indian population are to be found in and around Dudley Town Centre.
- The highest concentration in a single output area has 55% of its population from the Indian ethnic group.
- The Pakistani population is concentrated in three areas: to the south east of Dudley Town Centre, to the north of Brierley Hill and around Lye town centre, with smaller communities in St James's and Halesowen North wards. The total Pakistani population in the Borough numbers 6,227 (2.04%).

The 'output areas' with the highest concentrations of black ethnic groups are in St Thomas's, St James's and Netherton & Woodside wards. The highest percentage in an output area is 15.5%.

Mixed heritage groups comprise: White & Black Caribbean, White & Black African, White & Asian and other Mixed. No output area has a concentration larger than 8.8%, and there is no geographical pattern. The total population of mixed groups is 3097. (1.02%).

Age

The age distributions of ethnic groups in Dudley are similar to those for the country as a whole. Each group, however, does display different characteristics.

The total population of all white groups shows the demographic 'time bomb' phenomenon, characterized by an ageing population. In Dudley Borough, the percentage of the population of pensionable age has increased from 54,500 (17.89%) in 1991 to 59,362 (19.45%) in 2001.

Religion

The White groups in Dudley Borough are more likely to be Christian than in England and Wales as a whole. 81.5% declared themselves to be Christian compared to 75.7% in England & Wales. Conversely, White groups with no religion average 10.9%, compared to 15.4% in England and Wales. 57.4% of mixed groups in Dudley Borough are Christian, with the next highest category having no religion at 23.5%. These statistics are consistent with England and Wales as a whole.

The Indian communities in Dudley Borough are 53.1% Sikh and 33.2% Hindu. Within England and Wales 29.1% are Sikh and 45% Hindu. The Pakistani community are largely Muslim, with 94.3% in Dudley and 92% in England and Wales. Black groups in Dudley Borough are 72.9% Christian, and were the highest group to not state any religion. The highest group to have no religion is the Chinese Group, with 57.5%. Other religions for this group are Buddhist at 17.8% and Christian at 14.1%.

How Cohesive are our communities?

In order to understand the way in which our community coheres or not, we need to know the extent to which our population in Dudley relates to one another in a way that improves understanding and tolerance.

National Data

One way of approaching this is through national data that can be used to provide a benchmark to assess the extent to which people from different backgrounds meet, develop friendships and break down stereotypes. A National Survey conducted in September 2006 asked people how often they had mixed socially with people from different ethnic groups to them. It found that although relatively large numbers of people interacted with others in everyday settings such as work and the shops, these interactions were not being translated into meaningful relationships:-

- *32% indicated that they had daily contact with other ethnic groups at work, school, or college, for example. 47% had at least weekly contact with other ethnic groups at the schools*
- *But 42% indicated that at their home, they mixed socially with people of other ethnic groups less than once a year. And only 33% of people had mixed socially outside work or school with people of different ethnic groups from themselves” (Reported in Commission on integration and cohesion interim statement)*
- *53% of the respondents felt that people not treating other people with respect and consideration was a problem.*
- *73% of the people in Dudley agreed that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, with the average being 74% for all Metropolitan Borough Councils.*

The fact that some groups in Dudley live in closer proximity may cause us to question the extent to which different groups mix in Dudley i.e. people may not mix just because they live close to one another.

Local data

Some data local to Dudley can help us see the way in which people in Dudley do or do not live in ways that help improve understanding and respect.

Local workforce

The composition of the workforce of organisations such as the Council may be another way of understanding the way in which Dudley’s population interacts. At 5.4% of the workforce is approximately representative of those living in the Borough from BME backgrounds.

Racist incidents

A 'negative measure' of community cohesion is the number of **racist incidents** which is monitored by the Council.

The total number of racist crimes recorded over the past three years are:-

2003 - 2004 = 220 (note only police recorded crimes as there was no real mechanism to encapsulate total racist crimes i.e.; including other agencies)

2004- 2005 = 251 crimes (including other agencies)

2005 - 2006 = 292

There has been a noticeable increase in racist incidents since the events of 7th July 2005 since when there has been a total of 36 in comparison to 13 crimes recorded in July 2004.

The majority of crimes have occurred specifically around north Dudley. Areas such as Kates Hill, Sedgely and Russells Hall have been identified as 'hot spots.'

The general rise in racist incidents has also been mirrored within schools:-

| Annual Racist Incidents Reporting | 2002 - 2003 | 2003 - 2004 | 2004 - 2005 | 2005- 2006 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Numbers of forms returned | 59 | 74 | 97 | 101 |
| Number of non returns | 53 | 38 | 15 | 11 |
| Number of Nil-returns | 24 | 33 | 42 | 45 |
| Total number of incidents reported | 169 | 119 | 236 | 246 |
| Ethnicity of Victims | | | | |
| Asian | 74 | 52 | 74 | 70 |
| Black Groups | 18 | 12 | 53 | 33 |
| Chinese or Other | - | 5 | 11 | 7 |
| Mixed Race | 26 | 18 | 59 | 49 |
| White Groups | 13 | 14 | 34 | 29 |

The rate of return has increased, year on year, since this process was introduced in 2002. An increasing number of incident reports were expected as people gained confidence in the process and trust in the systems available to support victims and tackle racism.

Happiness Survey

A more positive measure of community cohesion in Dudley might be derived from the Survey initiated by Dudley's community empowerment network, Dosti, on happiness in the Borough. This found that 9 out of 10 described themselves as "happy." On this basis, it might be inferred that the experience of people in Dudley is such that it allows them to respond positively to such a question and which bodes well for community cohesion.

Housing context

The Indian group has the highest percentage of owned households with 84.1%. 50.4% are owned with a mortgage or loan and 33.3% are owned outright, the highest of any ethnic group. The remaining 0.4% of households are in shared ownership. The ethnic group with fewest owned households is the Black African group with only 35.4%, 7.3% being owned outright and 28.1% owned with a mortgage or loan. 22.1% of the Pakistani population live in households with no central heating. In Lye and Wollescote Ward 25.2% of the Pakistani population live in households with no central heating, and in St Thomas's ward the figure is 20%.

The highest group in England and Wales, is again the Pakistani Ethnic group with 17.8% having no central heating. This is by far the highest group with all other groups ranging between 4.4% for Indian to 8.9% for Bangladeshi. In England and Wales, 7.2% of all households have no central heating, whilst in Dudley, the figure is much higher at 13.0%.

The Pakistani group is the highest ethnic group to live in households with an over occupancy rating at 36.6%.

In Lye and Wollescote ward, 45.3% of Pakistani households meet the over occupancy rating, whereas the figure is lower in St Thomas at 39.2%. The Borough figure of over occupancy for all groups is 6.6%.

The highest groups to live in social rented households are Other Black (49.5%), Mixed White and Black African (46.7%), Mixed White and Black Caribbean (46.4%) and Black Caribbean (40.9%). Only 7.6% of Indian households are in social rented Accommodation.

16.7% of Black African households are in Accommodation rented from a private landlord or letting agency, but none of the Mixed White and Black Africans live in this type of household.

Employment

The Borough figure for unemployment is 5.9% and the average for England is 5%. Within Dudley, the group with the lowest levels of unemployment is Mixed White and Black African, although there are only 32 economically active people in this group in the Borough. The figure for this group in England & Wales is 11.9%. The ethnic group with the highest unemployment rate is the Pakistani group, with 18.5% of economically active people aged 16-74 in this category. In England & Wales the figure for this ethnic group is 14.1%.

The highest group in England & Wales is the Bangladeshi group with 16.1% economically active people unemployed, compared to a Borough figure of 14%. The lowest group in England & Wales is the White British group with 4.6%, compared with 5.5% in Dudley Borough.

Learning

Dudley residents have more people without qualifications (37.4%) than the England & Wales average (29.1%).

Older people in Dudley are far more likely to have no qualifications. For instance, 70% of all people aged 60 - 74 in Dudley, compared to 17.2% of 25 to 34 year olds, have no qualifications.

The group with the highest percentage of people having no qualifications is the Pakistani ethnic group, with 50.8% of all 16-74 year olds holding no academic, vocational or professional qualifications. (This is higher than the England and Wales percentage for this group which is 41.3%. The highest group nationally is Bangladeshi at 47.2%.) The general pattern in Dudley Borough is that all ethnic groups other than Black African have a lower percentage of people with higher qualifications than England & Wales averages.

Far Right Activity

The Borough has seen significant Far Right activity. In 2003/04, a British National Party (BNP) Councillor was elected to the Council, for a 12 month period in the Castle & Priory Ward. At subsequent elections, BNP candidates have stood in a number of seats in the Borough, and consistently obtained a significant percentage of the popular vote. There have been tensions raised around national and local issues in respect of community cohesion. Generally local partners and community leaders have responded strongly to these tensions, producing literature to challenge myths and untruths; addressing community tensions over policing actions etc.

The Far Right Monitoring Group, supported through Centre for Equality and Diversity has developed a role of bringing community groups together to identify issues around community tensions and co-ordinating any response action.

Our activity so far

Appendix 3 describes a number of case studies that show some of the ways that we have been working on the issue of community cohesion in Dudley to actively improve understanding and tolerance amongst people in Dudley. It does not mention everything that we do within the mainstream of our work whether in the statutory or voluntary and community sector. Appendix 4 'tells the story' from a community perspective of the way in which we have worked together within the Dudley Community Partnership to develop our approach to community cohesion to improve understanding and tolerance amongst people in Dudley.

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE - COMMUNITY COHESION PRIORITIES

Arising from the assessment of local views and information the following issues have been highlighted as areas of focus for the Community Cohesion Strategy.

Leadership and Vision

The Dudley Community Partnership has a key role in promoting community leadership, providing the overall strategic lead in forming partnerships. There are a number of specific actions for this theme linked to the implementation of the new Local Area Agreement:-

- To involve a broad cross section of residents in confirming the distinctive vision of community cohesion for Dudley Borough – one based on a vision of a shared future within communities.
- To encourage widespread inclusion of communities within those partnerships.
- To ensure partnership plans explicitly acknowledge and contribute to the goals of community cohesion.
- Encourage active citizenship among all residents.
- Develop an explicit communicate strategy to underpin and express the Partnership vision and commitment to cohesion.

Reviewing Performance

As part of the LAA, the Partnership has identified a series of Performance Indicators that provide a general overview on cohesion matters. However a number of these are annual, survey based indicators and are not readily reviewable. The DCP needs to ensure that all partnerships review their key strategies to identify direct or proxy indicators of cohesion which can supplement the annual PI's within the LAA. The Partnership Community Cohesion Advisory Group will be responsible for finalising the list of key PI's, receiving reports on overall performance and making recommendations to the DCP on future priorities and actions.

Regeneration

As indicated above, the Borough has highly ambitious, large scale regeneration aims. The regeneration plans have a regional and sub-regional basis, as well as focusing upon our key local townships. Through the physical regeneration of the Borough, our towns, transport, communications, cultural and leisure facilities, there is a strong and direct opportunity to enhance community cohesion. This will include issues of:

- Working with new employers to ensure that attractive training and employment opportunities are available to all residents of the Borough.
- Specifically targeting issues of discrimination and disadvantage to ensure that those residents who are more at risk of unemployment or low skilled jobs are supported to achieve fair and equal outcomes.

- Creating new, accessible public facilities and amenities for our town centres, which are designed explicitly to promote interaction between different communities of the Borough.
- Ensuring that Regeneration addresses the needs of all communities, and that the reasons for our priorities are clearly explained, to avoid myths and conflict over resources. This is not only for BME communities, but also members of white working class communities experiencing deprivation to address the potential for tension and hostility forming.

The Regeneration Partnership which has overall responsibility will take the lead in reviewing the existing economic regeneration policies and plans to enable the community cohesion agenda to be integrated across all key regeneration programmes.

Safety

Without effective reassurance around personal safety the community cohesion agenda is unlikely to be fully developed. The Safe and Sound Partnership will work towards enhancing community cohesion, for example through:-

- Building upon the PACT meetings across the borough to engage all local communities in making local neighbourhoods safer
- Targeting hate crime to ensure that all local communities are protected from crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Developing the Safe and Sound fear of crime reduction campaign explicitly to acknowledge the importance of reducing fear of crime across all communities.

Tackling Inequality – narrowing the gap

Through the work on the borough Community Strategy, we have demonstrated the extensive inequality and disadvantage across the borough. The Partnership believes that closing the gap in key outcomes such as health chances, learning outcomes, job opportunities, exposure to crime, etc, is vital to ensuring that all members of the community feel an equal part of our society and take a full part in community life. The report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion has confirmed the importance of linking cohesion with poverty, inequality, discrimination and other forms of multiple deprivation. The latest research reveals that :-

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

Through the LAA the Partnership will maintain a focus inequality and working to promote fair outcomes for all. This will include:-

- Identifying the key PI's of the LAA that the Partnership will focus upon to close the gap.
- Ensuring all thematic partnerships develop clear action plans centred upon these outcomes.
- Working together as partners to ensure that all statutory duties on agencies are fully implemented.

Schools and learning

The schools and learning environment will have a highly prominent part to play. Research indicates that going to work, school or college together emerged as the top way of encouraging interaction, with 47% of people identifying using shared education resources as a motivation towards mixing together. As the Commission for Community Integration has already indicated "improving the value of these everyday education and employment interactions would have a significant impact on cohesion."

To this end, the Partnership is committed to:-

- Developing the Routes to Roots project aimed at providing an innovative learning resource for children and young people. The initiative provides a structured learning journey to raise awareness of the interconnection of different cultures; challenging myths and prior assumptions; generating a range of accredited learning competencies
- Closing the educational attainment gap of vulnerable and minority groups by effectively targeting support and resources.
- Using the opportunities presented by extending the number of children centres to enhance the opportunities for local people to broad the range of inter community activities offered to them.
- Nationally, a key barrier identified to integration and communication is an inability to speaking English. Therefore effort is need to identify the demand within the Borough for developing these language skills, and the role of the partnership in providing greater opportunities either within educational, community or workplace settings.

Community Cohesion and Preventing Violent Extremism

International and national events have the potential to shape and heighten tensions within the Borough. The Borough Strategy aims to recognise this and bring together local agencies and the communities together to face respond to these tensions. We already have a positive recent history of agencies and community leaders working closely on where incidents have occurred to ensure that trust and co-operation across agencies and communities is maintained. However, there is a need to establish more robust and document arrangements that underpin the key responsibilities and working protocols across the partnership in response to a range of circumstances. This will include:-

- Emergency planning arrangements
- Communication

- Community support and reassurance
- Reviewing information and action in relation to community tensions

In addition the Council is the local accountable body for the national Pathfinder programme which is focused upon supporting Muslim communities across the country to address the potential threat of violent extremism. The Black Country programme supported by the Pathfinder initiative includes:-

- Training Imams
- Tackling Extremism Conference
- Building on the nationally acknowledge work of Green Light.

Sport and Culture

National survey data reveals that social events is second to work and school as a place for community interaction – 30% of people though that socialising outside of school or work encouraged mixing, and 22% thought that shared hobbies and sports clubs were important. The newly established Culture Partnership and Culture Strategy will be central to reviewing how the local activities can be developed to promote local interaction and respect.

Community Engagement

Drawing from the overall context of community leadership, the Partnership can sponsor or support local communities to participate within civic life, or to help equip them to address their own needs. The key aims being:-

- to ensure our engagement activity targets groups who are at risk of exclusion.
- we enable local communities to experience greater contact with others.

The information outlined in Appendix 2 and 3 demonstrates some of the significant progress already taken within the Borough to promote community cohesion through the local community engagement – not least the work promoted through the Alliance for Community Cohesion. Sustaining the capacity of the Alliance to extend the positive work being delivered by and within local communities is a priority for the Partnership.

A range of other means are also used by the partnership to promote engagement in the community through the police PACT process, housing area panels, the involvement of social care users and carers, the youth parliament, school councils and parent-teacher associations, health panels, Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) in health and social care, etc, all of which are available for use

Community Cohesion - From Plan to Action

This document offers a basis for taking forward a range of actions that will practically help improve community cohesion within Dudley Borough. However, it is not complete or exhaustive – it offers a starting point, from which we can build. We need to hear from people what they think. In particular:-

- What are the key local issues that influence positive community relationships?
- What are the local barriers to communities integrating?

- Are the actions in this draft the right ones? Are there more important actions that have not been mentioned?

Comments on the scope of the document are welcomed, as are views on how best to take it forward and engage with local communities.

Commission on Integration and Cohesion – Proposed Definition of Integration and Cohesion and summary of recommendations

An integrated and cohesive community is one where:

- There is clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country.
- There is a strong sense of an individual's rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn.
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment.
- There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny.
- There is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a strong focus on what they have in common.
- There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other institutions within neighbourhoods.

This definition builds upon the original accepted definition of Community Cohesion agreed by the Improvement and Development Agency, the LGA and the Home Office, first published in the LGA's 2002 "Guidance on Community Cohesion".

CASE STUDIES

There is already a wide range of activities taking place to secure greater community cohesion, a sample of which is highlighted below.

Tackling Extremism Together

Dudley was selected by the Department of Communities and Local Government as one of three areas to create a Tackling Extremism Together (TET) forum. The government initiative was launched following the London bombings in 2005 and Dudley was chosen to establish a forum in May 2006. Dudley Community Partnership's "Alliance for Community Cohesion" felt there was a need to avoid the impression that any specific terrorist threat to community cohesion in Dudley was more significant than that posed by far-right political activity. At an event held in July more than 100 people from a wide cross section of the community gave unanimous support for this approach. They also supported the ongoing work based on developing positive relationships across the community and with partner agencies.

International Women's Day - Bringing diverse communities together

International Women's Day gave a flavour of how women from diverse and separate communities work together thanks to an event called Food Around the World. Women from Lye spent a time together cooking and learning new recipes and cooking skills as well as sharing the food they produced. English, Asian, Chinese and Caribbean food was sampled by more than 70 women of different ethnicity and faiths, who not only enjoyed what was on offer but also learnt more about one another's cultures. Dudley Council's adult community learning and neighbourhood management teams, together with local voluntary partners, including Sure Start, the Lye Wollescote Partnership, The Orchard Partnership and others organised the event.

Minority communities involved in decision-making

Through the work of a local vicar, with the encouragement of Interfaith, contact was made with leaders of two local mosques in one community. Following visits between the church and one of the mosques, both mosques now have representation in the local partnership and are involved through this and neighbourhood management in local decision-making. The local Quran Education Centre hosts up to 200 children daily studying the Quran after school and through these partnerships is keen to take a further part in the wider community.

Vulnerable People's Network - Partnership working to support society's most vulnerable people

The Vulnerable People's Network (VPN) is a partnership of voluntary, statutory and faith groups who have come together to identify and address the needs of vulnerable people, especially new arrivals within the Dudley borough. The group has a particular focus on supporting refugees, asylum seekers, gypsies and travellers. Its remit includes:

- challenging inequalities, racial harassment and issues affecting integration and offering support for victims of these issues

- fostering joint working across partner agencies to maximise resources to the benefit of the local community
- encouraging a coherent approach to the refugee integration work across the borough of Dudley and southwest Sandwell

Faith Communities – coming together in the community

The *Dudley Borough Interfaith Network* holds regular forums, offering the chance to visit a local faith community, ask questions and meet people of other faiths building bridges where there are currently none.

Brierley Hill Community Forum - *Bringing all groups together to benefit the community*

In 2001 the members of Churches Together in Brierley Hill invited other community and voluntary organisations to join them in creating the Brierley Hill Community Forum (BHCF). Their main idea was to maximise their joint contribution to creating stronger communities across the wards of Brierley Hill and Brockmoor & Pensnett.

The forum has developed significantly since the early days and now embraces a wide range of faith, community and voluntary groups working together for the good of all local residents. It is one of three key stakeholders in the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership (BHRP), which is overseeing major physical and economic developments in the area.

Representatives of other faith groups in Brierley Hill have now joined the forum. This means all the faith groups in the two wards are committed to working together with a wide range of partners for the good of local people. One of their major contributions is the provision of children's and young people's activities and they are key players in BHCF's active youth forum.

Radio Ramadan

Radio Ramadan is a community radio station that airs during the month of Ramadan across Dudley borough. The station provides service information for the community and explains to people how they can access these services.

As well as providing Islamic information for the local community, many local community partners were also invited to take part. The Interfaith Network and Churches Forum joined together to speak about local activities, the police discussed interaction with the local community and leaders from CFED (asylum and integration), DCP and Dosti were also involved.

Green Light

Established by the Dudley Muslim Association, Green Light aims to empower local Muslim youth to promote a better understanding of traditional mainstream Islam. They aim to counter negative perceptions of Islam, to organise regular exhibitions and activities aimed at creating better awareness of issues concerning young Muslims and to represent their interests in the wider community.

Routes to Roots

Dudley Community Partnership commissioned an interactive learning resource to help children and young people develop their understanding and knowledge of different cultures.

The project was instigated by talking to local children and young people about their experiences, knowledge and views. Educational material is now being developed to underpin the project. The aim is to create an accredited learning resource that can be used not only within Dudley borough schools but also nationally. The project is based on developing 'the Learning Journey', which has been acknowledged by the DfEE as an outstanding example of using the Internet to support individual and team learning.

Draft Community Cohesion Action Plan Priorities

Subject to consultation on the principles and outcomes of the draft Community Cohesion Strategy the following proposed actions have been identified. These need to be prioritised and finalised in line with the adoption of the Strategy.

- Publish and circulate a clear policy statement in relation to Community Cohesion.
- Integrate Community Cohesion issues into all Community visions and strategies.
- The provision of a template for Dudley MBC and partners to accurately measure the changes in the population within the Borough on an on-going basis.
- The development of systems that will capture community cohesion/tension data across the disparate databases used by partners
- The development of a methodology which will allow the compilation of the figures with minimum use of resources.
- The development of a protocol which will allow the discussion of the results within an appropriate forum.
- The completion of a Community Cohesion scoping exercise with partners.
- The scoping of the existing work being conducted in local authorities throughout the UK.
- The Promotion of a Borough image to promote 'Community Cohesion' across Dudley.
- The development of tools to assist the promotion of the 'Community Cohesion' images throughout the Borough.
- Provide Dudley MBC and partners with guidance to secure and preserve the well being of their area and all people living, working and visiting the area.
- Provide guidance to prevent individuals or groups unwittingly attacking sections of the community, thus creating distrust or disorder.
- Provide guidance on effective responses to extremist action.
- Provide greater awareness of identified minority groups.
- The provision of Community Cohesion WebPages for Dudley which will reflect Best Practice for specific projects and schemes and provide guidance for stakeholders.
- The completion of a series of seminars to promote the Community Cohesion Dudley Strategy.