

COMMUNITY cohesion

IN YORKSHIRE
AND HUMBER



Local Government
Yorkshire and
Humber



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IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY PARTNERSHIP



Introduction

Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH) is the representative body of the region's local authorities, Fire and Rescue Authorities and Police Authorities. As such, LGYH is uniquely positioned to enable its members to collaborate on issues of common interest. One such issue has been identified as 'community cohesion', this being an issue of such importance that it underpins the wellbeing of the region.

This statement has been prepared by LGYH as a result of consultation based on the 'Cohesion in West Yorkshire' Statement. It has been designed to ensure that it truly reflects the divergences which exist within the region and as such not only sets out the region's common community cohesion issues, but also adopts a common approach to addressing them.



Context and key challenges



The communities that make up the Yorkshire and Humber region are complex. Many residents have a sense of their own identity which combines commitment to the place where they live with connections with others who share with them a way of life or a particular faith. In an increasingly global economy and society, many people in the region also have connections with places and events across the world.

This complex picture is a great strength. The region owes much of its economic success and the vibrancy of its cultural life to the diversity of the backgrounds of its inhabitants.

However, it is a strength that cannot be taken for granted. Some parts of the region may be affected by tensions and separations between and within communities. These tensions and separations are evident in the daily lives of people living in the region. They are most obvious when they are identified by ethnicity and faith, but can be just as powerfully defined by degrees of poverty and affluence, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or other factors which impact upon minority groups. Perceptions of unfairness, in international and national events, as well as in local circumstances, can also generate tensions and polarise communities.

Such tensions and separations between communities can, where they exist, undermine the strengths that come from diversity and affect the lives of individuals on a day to day basis. Everyone who has an interest in quality of life within the region shares a concern over these issues, and we must all work together to achieve the integrated and cohesive society that we wish to live in.



An integrated and cohesive community

We wish to create the conditions identified by the Commission for Integration and Cohesion (CIC), which defines an integrated and cohesive community as one where:

- There is a 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 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.

(Source: Our Shared Future: Final Report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007)



The Yorkshire and Humber approach . . .

We believe that the following principles should underpin our approach to achieving a cohesive community.

1. Rights and responsibilities of the individual

Every individual has a right to be treated fairly and with respect by other individuals and civic authorities. This applies regardless of income, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability, or where they live in the region. It applies whether an individual has recently arrived in the region or has been resident here for a long time. In turn, each individual has a responsibility to treat others fairly and with respect. Every individual also shares a responsibility to develop common ground with others, whatever their beliefs, cultural preferences and lifestyles, so that everyone can prosper and share a high quality of life.

2. Listening and developing understanding

If cohesion is to be achieved, there is a need for a full understanding of the attitudes and concerns of individuals and groups. This means creating safe environments where individuals are able to express themselves freely, and where people encouraged to listen to each others' views and offer constructive challenge. It is also important that the region's local authorities and other organisations provide community leadership and avoid making assumptions and using stereotypes. They need strong local engagement complemented by regularly updated research into opinions and attitudes.

3. Attention to 'felt fairness' across communities

If the tensions and resentment between some communities in the region are to be reduced, there is a need to address the gaps in housing, health, education, employment prospects, the environment experienced by different communities and inequalities to access quality public services. There is also a need to address the tensions that can result from unfairness, real or perceived, in the way in which resources and activities are allocated by civic authorities.



4. Collective responsibility and collaborative responses

As democratically elected bodies, the region's local authorities are responsible for providing local leadership in this area. However, the region's local authorities recognise that they can only achieve this by collaborating with the police, community and voluntary sector, faith organisations and other agencies. There is a need for a collective commitment on the part of all involved to work together to achieve the goal of integrated and cohesive communities.



Strands of action

The desired characteristics of integrated and cohesive communities will not be obtained unless there are sustained programmes of action. The actions must be focused on the circumstances where the barriers are most significant, and must be properly resourced and sustained. Partnerships in each of the local authority areas within the region will build cohesion actions into their Local Area Agreements and Sustainable Community Strategies which will deliver more integrated and cohesive communities.

The balance of integration and cohesion issues is different in each locality, so the balance of actions will be determined locally. But the following areas of action are likely to feature in some combination, and success is unlikely if they are pursued in isolation from one another:

- Providing strong community leadership, in expressing the strengths of a diverse community, rights and responsibilities of individuals, the relationships sought between communities, and the need for a positive sense of a shared future for each area. Strong community leadership is also needed to address barriers to integration and cohesion. This includes tackling discrimination and hatred in all its forms, including religious discrimination, racism, homophobia, sexism, ageism and discrimination against those with disabilities.
- Embedding neighbourhood policing and introducing neighbourhood management. Communities that feel isolated, unwelcome or threatened often prefer to rely on informal social control rather than engaging with authorities, such as the police and local authorities that exist to help address community concerns. If such communities are to engage with external agencies, they need to feel confident that these bodies will deal effectively and sensitively with issues that arise. The neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood management models which are being introduced will build this trust and confidence. As we demonstrate the value of engaging with community safety partners, communities will feel less inclined to look inwards to solve their problems and be more prepared to work with the police and others to obtain resolution.



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