# Integration up North

# Migrants and community cohesion

Are you writing, refreshing or being consulted about your community cohesion strategy? Do you want to ensure that new migrant communities are included in it? And that they can be encouraged to play an active role in contributing to the area? This briefing is for you. You may be:

- An officer with responsibility for community cohesion
- A neighbourhood manager
- A police officer working on cohesion issues
- A voluntary or community organisation involved with cohesion in your area
- A migrant organisation

## Community cohesion: what is the problem?

Community cohesion is **not always easy to define** and is sometimes called community integration or social cohesion. In government it is the responsibility of the Department for Communities and Local Government who publish a description of their [policies in this area](#) and most local authorities have a strategy that covers this. [Hull City Council](#) is writing a new policy in partnership with [Humberside Police](#), other local statutory agencies such as health and the voluntary and community sector. Their working definition of community cohesion is that it is "about enabling people from all walks of life, different faiths, race, culture and ages to get on with each other. Put simply community cohesion is the social glue that binds communities together." The government's position is that

"We believe that people can come together in strong, united communities if we encourage and support them to:

- have shared aspirations, values and experiences
- have a strong sense of mutual commitments and obligations, promoting personal and social responsibility
- take part in local and national life and decision-making
- fulfil their potential to get on in life
- challenge extremism and hate crime[1]"

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[1] [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-community-integration/2010-to-2015-government-policy-community-integration](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-community-integration/2010-to-2015-government-policy-community-integration)

**Cohesion work is covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty** and measures to improve cohesion should, of course, foster good relations between communities. Public sector authorities must also have regard to their duties to eliminate unlawful discrimination and advance equality of opportunity. Some current measures of race equality may not adequately cover new migrants and monitoring arrangements should be reviewed to ensure that inequalities affecting new arrivals can be measured and tackled.

**Migrants**, especially if many arrive in one area in a short time, **may be perceived as a threat to community cohesion.** But a report commissioned by the government's Migration Advisory Committee in 2012 found that

"The evidence we have assembled in this report indicates very clearly that, contrary to popular perception, immigration has no discernible impact on social cohesion and that migrants are, on the whole, well integrated. Social deprivation, set within areas of pre-existing ethnic diversity, is the root cause of low social cohesion, and the policy implications should flow from the logic of that finding."[2]

**Measuring community cohesion can be difficult** partly because it is not closely defined. One useful set of indicators derived from a Europe wide study[3] has five measures:

- trust in neighbours
- collective efficacy (the capacity to act collectively to solve neighbourhood problems)
- reported social problems
- social connectedness (the quality and number of connections individuals have with family, friends and acquaintances)
- overall satisfaction with the neighbourhood

Some of these are measured in various national surveys which provide a baseline[4] and most local resident or citizen surveys already include or can add questions that will show progress across these areas. In areas where there has been significant inward migration it is important that such surveys have samples that include the new migrant communities, and so some purposive sampling should be considered. It is also important that perceptions of cohesion are measured against views on public services (which are essential for fostering trust) and the experience of deprivation in relevant areas.

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[2] The Impacts Of Migration On Social Cohesion And Integration, Final report to the Migration Advisory Committee, January 2012 Shamit Saggar, Will Somerville, Rob Ford & Maria Sobolewska
[3] Ruud Koopmans and Merlin Schaeffer, Perceptions of Ethno-Cultural Diversity and Neighbourhood Cohesion in three European Countries, Discussion Paper, WZB SP VI 2014–103, November 2014
[4] For an overview of most of these see Measuring National Well-being – An Analysis of Social Capital in the UK Veronique Siegler, Office for National Statistics 2015 http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_393380.pdf

**Involving migrants in developing and delivering policies on cohesion is essential** and emphasises that their role is about solving rather than causing problems. Eurocities provides comprehensive guidance on [making participation effective in diverse neighbourhoods](#) and [engaging migrant communities in policy-making processes](#).  Consultation should be as much about finding out what migrants can contribute to the area as about enabling the authority to find out about migrants' views.

**Migrants often arrive into deprived communities who may believe that their own resilience is undervalued and sometimes undermined**.  It is important to base all cohesion work on what is known about the strengths of these communities and to appeal to shared values of trust, welcome and belonging.  Communities do not respond well to being blamed for their fears or concerns, especially by agencies they may hold responsible for some of their troubles.  Mythbusting is best done by trusted individuals, not council leaflets.

**Education and culture** can be key sites where cohesion works well.  Parents share a common interest in the development of their children and schools can enable simple and purposeful joint action to support this.  Enjoying and learning each other's cultures, and developing new art or music is a good way to involve those who may otherwise be difficult to engage.  But one-off events can be counter-productive.

## Dos and don'ts

- ✓ **Do** provide as many opportunities as possible for migrants and others to interact positively, pursuing common aims
- ✓ **Do** work long-term and enable communities to build up meaningful relationships with the officers responsible for community cohesion
- ✓ **Do** make sure that all investment in communities is redistributive and available to the long-term settled and new immigrants alike
- ✓ **Do** enable and support expressions of both unity and difference: social cohesion of local communities depends on self-confident individuals working together
- ✓ **Do** invest in mediation to be deployed in areas where problems are anticipated or where an issue flares up
- ✓ **Do** provide balanced information about migration into the area in a consistent way
- ✓ **Do** consult with colleges and schools about the best ways they can encourage good interactions between migrants and others
- ✓ **Do** involve migrants and their organisations in all consultative and participative processes
- ✓ **Do** consider getting local leaders and opinion formers involved in challenging myths (the [Barcelona anti-rumours campaign](#) is a well- known example of this)
- ✓ **Do** work with the communications department to develop key messages about cohesion and migration and then support them with stories, information and other resources that they need to put those messages out


- × **Don't** assume that all migrants are represented by their organisations: get faith communities, businesses, student unions and trade unions involved as well
- × **Don't** spend too much on one-off events: investment in longer term work is more likely to produce results even if it seems low key and small scale
- × **Don't** produce one-off communications aimed at changing negative opinions: they are more likely to reinforce them and do not inspire trust.[5]
- × **Don't** underestimate the power of art and music to bring people together
- × **Don't** be fazed by the effect of external events that may temporarily divide or disrupt communities: they may offer great opportunities to bring people together, ask difficult questions and demonstrate strengths

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[5] Attitudes to Migrants, Communication and Local Leadership: Final Transnational Report COMPAS University of Oxford 2012
http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/files/Publications/Reports/Amicall_Report_ENG_v3_single_WEB_READY.pdf

## Examples of good practice

**Hull City Council** is writing its community cohesion strategy in partnership with Humberside Police, local agencies for health and education and the private, community and voluntary sector.  Hull is City of Culture in 2017 and this provides a unique opportunity to celebrate Hull as a bridge to the world.  But officers are also keen that all communities, settled and new, feel they gain from these events and the strategy is being designed to ensure this.  The Strategy will be finished in late 2015 and can be obtained from the community cohesion team, contact details via www.hullcc.gov.uk

**The City of Rotterdam** has a strategy to involve residents in actions within the public domain which they share at street level. Its key principle is self-reliance: with the city as funder and facilitator, it stimulates residents to devise, control and execute their own initiatives themselves. With annual budget of €1.3m, it is coordinated by a team of seven. 15% of the population (about 90,000 people in 1800 streets) participate in around 2500 initiatives. Initiatives include language help between neighbours, school students and old people's home residents learning and exchanging and fundays for carers.

**Leeds City Council was** able to respond rapidly and stand alongside affected Muslim communities when they were under the glare of negative media attention after the 7/7 bombings. Strong links with community groups enabled council workers to support Muslim community leaders by helping at press conferences, reassuring anxious residents and parrying negative publicity via their communications department. The message from the Council was clear: we stand by our Muslim citizens, and reject a hate narrative around our communities. City Councillors joined MPs, police and community leaders in a public march of solidarity which symbolically brought the besieged communities to the Town Hall where Muslim and other faith leaders as well as civic officials stood together on a common platform.

**City of Barcelona** developed its Anti-Rumours Strategy as a long term city-wide project for maintaining social cohesion and fostering intercultural interaction and relations in the city in 2010, and has a network of 400 people, some from organisations, some as individuals, who have been trained as "anti-rumours agents" to "dispel existing rumours, stereotypes and prejudice concerning cultural diversity in Barcelona" and foster positive interactions.  The project was then extended to four further cities and is now an independent social enterprise: contact at http://www.antirumores.com/

## Help!

- Migration Yorkshire - www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk
- The report to the Migration Advisory Committee is an authoritative account of the effects of migration on social cohesion:  The Impacts Of Migration On Social Cohesion And Integration, Final report to the Migration Advisory Committee, January 2012 Shamit Saggar, Will Somerville, Rob Ford & Maria Sobolewska https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257237/social-cohesion-integration.pdf
- A good summary of research on migration and social cohesion in the UK is available at http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/immigration-diversity-and-social-cohesion
- Government policy on community integration 2010 to 2015 is detailed at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-community-integration/2010-to-2015-government-policy-community-integration
- The four toolkits produced by Eurocities for the Integrating Cities Implementoring project cover many areas of practice associated with community cohesion, include good practice from all over Europe and are available at http://www.integratingcities.eu/integrating-cities/resources/implementoring_toolkits
- The Office for National Statistics guide to Measuring National Well-being – An Analysis of Social Capital in the UK Veronique Siegler, Office for National Statistics 2015 http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_393380.pdf includes a lot of useful indicators

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