

Everyone Different, Everyone Matters

Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy 2017



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Building strong, cohesive and integrated communities

Cohesion: *The process that must happen in all communities to ensure different groups of people get on well together.*

Integration: *The process that ensures new residents and existing residents adapt to one another.*

(Commission on Cohesion and Integration, 2007)

1. Why is Cohesion and Integration important?

Community cohesion and integration lies at the heart of what makes a strong and safe community. Building good relations between different communities is a necessary step towards improving people's quality of life and giving them the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

In July 2015, the government asked Dame Louise Casey to conduct a review to consider what could be done to boost opportunity and integration in our most isolated and deprived communities.

Her review found that with the country experiencing rapid population change there are still large social and economic gaps between ethnic groups; that ethnic segregation is increasing in some areas; and that women in some communities are suffering from huge inequalities.

As a nation, we are getting older, more secular and more open about our sexuality, while the growing ethnic minority population is younger and more likely to identify as religious (particularly among Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups).

Many of these changes in our population are due to immigration and higher birth rates in some communities. In a situation where the country has been through an economic downturn the pace and scale of immigration has felt too much for some communities. The review found, however, that unease about immigration is not limited to traditional White British communities.

As the diversity of the nation has increased, people from minority groups have become both more dispersed and in some cases more concentrated and segregated.

Taken together, high ethnic minority concentration in residential areas and in schools increases the likelihood of children growing up without meeting or better understanding people from different backgrounds.

Although ethnic concentration can improve bonding between people from similar backgrounds, particularly when they are new to an area, it can also:

- limit labour market opportunities;

- reduce opportunities for social ties between minority and White British communities; and
- lead to lower identification with Britain and lower levels of trust between ethnic groups, compared to minorities living in more diverse areas.

The review found inequalities and divisions appear to be worsening in some more isolated communities where segregation, deprivation and social exclusion are combining in a downward spiral with a growth in regressive religious and cultural ideologies, some impacting more significantly on women.

The prevalence and tolerance of regressive and harmful practices, has and can continue to be exploited by extremists, both 'Islamists' and those on the far right.

The review is clear that although the changes and challenges they present all of us are complex, we all have a responsibility to counteract hate in any form, and to undermine those seeking to divide us, whoever they are and however uncomfortable it may be. It states that a failure to talk about all this only leaves the ground open for the Far Right on one side and Islamist extremists on the other. Social cohesion and equality are not things we can take for granted; they require careful tending, commitment and bravery from us all.

2. What does it currently look like in Calderdale?

The towns and villages that make up Calderdale are diverse and complex communities, with people having commitments and connections to their neighbourhood but often also to others further afield who share their way of life, background or faith.

One of Calderdale's greatest assets is this diversity. Halifax, Todmorden and Elland are home to sizeable minority ethnic communities and the Calder Valley is home to one of the largest lesbian and gay communities in the country. Such diversity is becoming increasingly important in attracting mobile, knowledge-based enterprise and in developing the whole cultural, social and economic vibrancy of an area.

However, although this diversity is a great strength, it can also lead to tensions and divisions between communities. These are most obvious when identified with ethnicity and faith, but can also be defined by poverty and affluence, age, gender, disability or sexual orientation and insularity of place.

The size and unique geography of Calderdale can make it difficult for communities to meet, creating a natural tendency for people to associate with their own village/town rather than the wider area which can add to feelings of separateness. The added barrier of not speaking English can compound cultural and geographic barriers. English language is a common denominator and a strong enabler of integration; this was reaffirmed in the Casey Review 2016.

The ability to 'join in' and 'take part' in community life is essential if new arrivals are to be accepted and local people to feel comfortable.

If newly arrived migrants are able to speak English more quickly and understand lifestyle norms in Britain it will aid integration and enable people to make a local contribution and not be perceived as 'other' or a problem. Local established communities will feel less threatened and focus less on the differences and more on the similarities if they are able to communicate.

The rapid increase in international migration over recent years has presented many challenges to Calderdale. Changing populations and the arrival of people from communities hitherto not significantly represented in parts of the borough, such as economic migrants from Eastern Europe, have placed pressures on public services and on schools in particular. Issues of access to services are being vocalised by local people in affected neighbourhoods, the impact of increased migration/transience is also visually evident on the public realm in already under pressure neighbourhoods.

Improving relationships within and between different communities so they get on well together and mix easily can help to increase people's sense of belonging to their neighbourhood and to Calderdale as a whole.

Compared to other areas in West Yorkshire, fewer people in Calderdale say they feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together.

We recently hosted a visit of the Chair of the All Parliamentary Group on Integration – Chuka Umuna MP, and listening to groups of young people confirmed the sense of unfairness that persists in Calderdale, a sense that someone else is getting everything and 'local people' are some way down the priority list.

We are mindful that migration, Brexit and international incidents may further harden this opinion. Continued migration will occur and Calderdale seeks to be a welcoming place for new arrivals through our Valley of Sanctuary scheme. We also need to ensure we mitigate any negative impacts in terms of demand for services, and such as unscrupulous letting of poorly maintained properties. We have secured funding from Government through the Controlling Migration Fund to support host communities in terms of impact.

Halifax and Calderdale overall are places where the risk of segregation and people living divided lives is real. This can affect our schools and workplaces as well as our communities, and can foster misunderstanding and discord. In 2016 the think tank Policy Exchange analysed the 2011 Census data and produced a list of the best and worst places in the country from the point of view of integration. Halifax was ranked as the 7th least integrated place in the index based on figures including whether residents held UK passports, the ethnic mix of households and employment status.

The less integrated we are as a borough, the greater the economic and social costs we face. We know that the consequences of economic exclusion and poverty are wide-ranging and long-lasting. Children from low income families are less likely to do well in school, are more likely to suffer ill-health and face pressures in their lives that can be associated with unemployment and criminality.

Halifax has a young population and over 40% of 0-15 year olds live in income deprived households. 10 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Park ward are in the poorest 20% in the UK, some in the poorest 10%. The impact of migration has been greatest in these areas.

Understanding that we are all different and accepting and respecting differences is a key sign that people within our communities are becoming more confident. However there are those within our communities who seek to divide us.

We have an active extreme right wing presence in Calderdale and a number of activists living in the area with wider links to national organisations. We have seen local activism which seeks to build on people's fears and misconceptions and feelings of unfairness.

Such perceptions and behaviour constitute a frequent source of tension, misinformation, and hostility between communities. This reflects in part in residential segregation, but it also reflects parental choice. Tensions between different ethnic groups in schools have often reflected tensions in the wider community.

We want people to feel they are being treated fairly, that they are part of their community and that they can influence decisions in their local area and play a part in shaping its future. This may happen in many ways, including doing voluntary work for local groups or charities; being school governors, magistrates or councillors; or simply helping neighbours or friends on an informal basis.

If people feel a sense of belonging, then trust in local statutory agencies like the police and the council will improve and local communities will have an increased understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

Likewise, where people from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities they will develop strong and positive relationships with each other in the workplace, in schools and college, within neighbourhoods and in social and sports and leisure networks.

Ultimately, strong local communities with citizens who are actively involved in civic and community life will be communities where those citizens have a higher level of personal and collective wellbeing and resilience.

3. What are our Strategic Objectives and guiding principles?

Ensuring "Calderdale is a place where everyone has a sense of pride and belonging based on mutual respect" is one of the priority outcomes in the Joint Wellbeing Strategy 2012 – 2022. The Council has also agreed a new mission to 'Be the Best Borough in the North' and realise this through growing the economy, reducing inequality, and building a sustainable future. These objectives will not be achieved unless we have an effective approach which actively addresses cohesion and integration to harness the talent of all our communities, and create conditions in terms of housing, public services and public realm which create a good quality of life for all.

The Council and other organisations in the area want Calderdale to be a place where everyone has the best quality of life possible and where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their true potential - a place where people are (and feel) safe, and where people from all communities feel they belong.

We recognise that good relations within and between communities, built on mutual understanding and respect, is vital for the future prosperity of Calderdale and its residents. Our vision is a Calderdale where we recognise and celebrate difference and where all statutory organisations seek to meet individual needs through appropriate and accessible services.

We use the phrase ***Everyone Different, Everyone Matters*** to describe these aspirations and our overall objectives are to create a place where:

- There is a widely shared acknowledgement that different individuals and different communities all have a part to play in shaping the future of the area.

- There is a strong sense of individuals' rights and responsibilities - people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn.
- Residents from different backgrounds have (and feel they have) similar life opportunities and equal access to services.
- There is trust in local institutions to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and their decisions are always transparent and subject to public scrutiny.
- There is a strong recognition of the contribution of those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to the area, with a focus on what people have in common as well as an acknowledgement and acceptance of their differences.
- There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in their workplaces, in schools and in their local neighbourhoods.

However, as indicated earlier, we are also concerned about the development of extremism in British society, with a very small minority of people wanting to undermine democracy, threaten good community relations and endanger their fellow citizens. Extremism is based upon intolerance, lack of respect for other people and a rejection of the cohesive community we seek, and is not restricted to any one part of society. We need to address its causes, deal with its manifestations and prevent its transmission into wider society.

In Calderdale PREVENT and Cohesion are two distinct but interlinked agendas. A community in which extremism is challenged builds relationships that increase community cohesion. Equally, a community that is cohesive is likely to be more resilient to extremists who seek to divide it.

A number of principles underpin our approach to trying to build an integrated and cohesive community where we value the fact that everyone is different and through our actions we demonstrate that everyone matters:

- **Clarifying rights and responsibilities** - every individual has the right to be treated fairly and with respect by other people and public authorities; but every individual also has the responsibility to develop common ground with others, whatever their beliefs or lifestyles.
- **Listening and promoting understanding** - individuals need to be able to express themselves freely in 'safe environments' and people's attitudes and concerns need to be listened to and taken seriously.
- **Addressing issues of 'felt fairness'** - closing the gaps in health, education, employment and the environment experienced by different communities which can lead to resentment, and dealing with real or perceived unfairness in the way resources and services are allocated by public bodies.

- **Working together in partnership** in pursuit of integration and cohesion - with all agencies' and sectors' contributions valued equally.

4. What activity are we going to deliver to address this?

Calderdale takes an integrated approach to cohesion in line with the views of communities that this should not be manufactured or 'false'. All our consultation and community engagement indicates that people's sense of belonging, local pride and feeling of 'fairness' should be a priority.

People want their immediate surroundings and streets to be clean and tidy and they prioritise services for young people. Locally we know through community networks and stakeholder groups that English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is in high demand with very little availability.

It is our belief that if people can communicate and engage with one another, if the neighbourhood looks cleaner and more cared for and young people are engaged and feeling positive, we can mitigate the impact of migration in key neighbourhoods.

Recognising our existing priorities, local challenges and taking on board feedback from our partners and local communities we will focus on the following in developing our local action plan:

- Establishing common ground/values and a shared sense of belonging
- Promoting active citizenship and participation in community and civic life;
- Promoting social mobility through education and skills
- Supporting tolerance and tackling extremism
- Reducing inequality/ improving life chances and opportunities
- Encouraging English language learning
- Improving the public realm and local environment

We recognise that different communities and localities have different needs and challenges - the communities and issues in Northowram are very different from Todmorden and, in turn, from Park and our approach will reflect this.

Community cohesion and integration is best achieved through continuous dialogue, mutual understanding and frequent social interactions between different groups, faiths, cultures and ages, encouraged and facilitated by strong community leadership.

Community based working in neighbourhoods is intrinsic to attempts to strengthen cohesion as it helps the Council and partners to re-connect with citizens and better understand (and respond to) community needs and concerns. Locality working arrangements in North and East Halifax and Halifax Central in particular have been essential and effective in responding to local community challenges and mitigating community tensions through targeted interventions. Area-based Safer, Cleaner, Greener meetings have ensured that information is shared across agencies and that plans and

interventions are appropriate, timely, proportionate and sensitive to local situations. We will continue to work with and through these established structures.

The faith sector plays an important role in bringing communities together to promote a shared sense of belonging. We will capitalise upon the way in which community, faith and voluntary sector organisations have credibility with, and closeness to, local communities, in order to create a shared sense of belonging, encourage 'active citizenship' and deliver cohesion initiatives at a neighbourhood level.

5. How will we know we are making progress?

Local knowledge helps us make better sense of our data in relation to community cohesion. Different communities, neighbourhoods and localities in Calderdale will face differing barriers to community cohesion. By looking at what is happening in our local communities, we are more likely to achieve a meaningful measure of community cohesion in the Borough.

We know that cohesion and integration are exceptionally difficult to measure, however, we will monitor and evaluate success in a number of ways:

- Hate crime and Anti-Social Behaviour monitoring via West Yorkshire Police data collated by the Community Safety Partnership.
- Results of the Police and Crime Commissioner's public perception survey asking residents if they feel people from different backgrounds get on well in their neighbourhood (Calderdale wide) and satisfaction with the local area.
- A resident talkback survey seeking views on migration, cohesion and integration.
- A survey of the views of participants in relevant engagement and project activities, pre and post engagement.
- Feedback from ward councillors, community workers and voluntary, community and faith organisations active in neighbourhoods.
- Numbers of people who take up British citizenship through a formal Citizenship Ceremony, broken down by nationality.