



VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE- 3RD DECEMBER 2014

SUBJECT: MAINSTREAMING COMMUNITY COHESION

REPORT BY: CHRIS HUNT COMMUNITY COHESION CO-ORDINATOR (WEST GWENT)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To raise awareness of the community cohesion agenda and promote the emerging need to embed cohesion within both the statutory and voluntary sector.
- 1.2 The background to the development of the community cohesion agenda lies in lessons learned from the 2001 civil disturbances in Northern England - Bradford, Burnley and Oldham and in Wales 2003 - Wrexham. In the aftermath of these public disturbances the government took two approaches with regards to community cohesion: targeted community interventions and mainstreaming. The first refers to projects specifically relating to community cohesion i.e. that aim at directly bringing people together and on creating a sense of belonging. The second refers to introducing the principles of community cohesion to all the work undertaken by government at local, regional and national levels.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following those disturbances, listed above, a series of reports were commissioned to analyse the causes of the unrest in each area and to suggest actions to address these causes. The findings are detailed within the report titled *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*, often referred to as the 'Cantle Report', which set out the broad parameters of much of the agenda. In 2009 the Welsh Assembly Government also published an All Wales national strategy (detailed below) along with funding to each of the 22 Local Authorities of Wales to support the agenda.
- 2.2 *Why mainstream community cohesion?* We are living in increasingly diverse communities which can often present challenges in the way people get on together; immigration, deprivation, prosperity can all impact the way communities integrate with each other and on rare occasions these factors can create community tensions which can disrupt cohesion. Recognising local cohesion priorities (such as the growing influence of far right extremism or the intolerance of some communities towards diversity or difference) and strategically embedding cohesion in the way we provide services and support communities will encourage communities to become more cohesive, particularly with regards to tackling intolerance, and to develop greater community resilience to violent extremism.
- 2.3 There is no single universally shared understanding of what community cohesion means, but at its simplest, the term 'community cohesion' is used to describe how everyone in a geographical area lives alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect. No matter what our background, religion, or political persuasion, we all share some fundamental values: foremost among them being respect, tolerance and freedom of speech. By reinforcing those common values, by supporting chances for people to come together, learn more about each other, and overcome misperceptions, we can reinforce those shared values and

strengthen our communities.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Community Cohesion agenda is linked with the Single Integrated Plan, Caerphilly Delivers, within its Safer Caerphilly strand, cohesion priorities such as Hate Crime and tackling intolerance is also linked within the CCBC's Strategic Equality Plan.
- 3.2 For in-depth information see link to **Mainstreaming Community Cohesion Guidance for Local Authorities in Wales**
[Local Authority Mainstreaming Community Cohesion Guidance](#)
Hard copies of this document can be made available on request.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Welsh Assembly Government launched 'Getting on Together' the national community cohesion strategy for Wales along with the first of its funding streams in 2009, this was part of the Welsh Assembly Government's One Wales commitment to achieve a 'fair and just society, a place where all citizens are empowered to determine their own lives and shape the communities in which they live'. *Getting on Together*, recognised that community cohesion is a cross-cutting agenda, relevant to all policy areas. Forming part of this mainstreaming approach, in 2012 Welsh Government funded Regional Cohesion Coordinators across Wales to support and encourage authorities and partnerships to mainstreaming the agenda, and in 2014 a national community cohesion plan was developed which outlined 7 key cohesion objectives to be mainstreamed.

- 4.2 These include:-

<p>Outcome 1: Departments, organisations and people understand hate crime; victims make reports and get appropriate support</p> <p>Outcome 2: Departments, organisations and people understand slavery; victims make reports and get appropriate support</p> <p>Outcome 3: Increase awareness and engagement across Gypsy and traveller Communities (where appropriate)</p> <p>Outcome 4: Increase awareness and data established on immigration</p> <p>Outcome 5: Communities First (CF) Staff are knowledgeable about community cohesion issues and communities across the protected characteristics are involved in the CF programme</p> <p>Outcome 6: Key policies and programmes through relevant plans are embedded</p> <p>Outcome 7: Policies and service are responsive to changes in communities</p>

- 4.3 *What is Mainstreaming?* The following is taken from the *Mainstreaming Community Cohesion Guidance for Local Authorities (Sheffield Hallam University)* 'mainstreaming involves infusing the principles and priorities of the community cohesion agenda into the collective consciousness of a local authority or partnership so that responsibility for building cohesion is embedded within the everyday duties and functions of all departments and partners. The aim is to build consideration of cohesion issues into strategies and plans, policy and practice from the outset in a bid to maximise the benefits and minimise the costs for community cohesion. Practically, it is about asking the right questions so that you can see how best to actively promote, and avoid undercutting, community cohesion through your plans and activities. It is also a way of improving the effectiveness of mainstream policies by making visible their cohesion consequences. Central is the assessment of the implications for cohesion of any planned action'.

4.4 Tangible benefits of Community Cohesion

4.4.1 Promoting cohesion has wider benefits to individuals, groups and communities such as:-

- Community empowerment including people helping each other, coming together to solve problems and trusting one another
- Volunteering
- Equalities and perceptions of fair treatment
- Preventing crime and anti social behaviour and necessary interventions
- Sense of belonging and having friends from different backgrounds, which will bring other benefits
- More efficient use of public resources
- Enhancing the quality of life of everyone in the community
- Community gets involved in solutions as well as public agencies
- People from all generations have a sense of hope and positivity about their lives.

4.5 The potential role of the voluntary sector in developing community cohesion

4.5.1 The voluntary sector has been recognised as a key stakeholder in helping to achieving the principal aims of community cohesion, thus, while responsibility on community cohesion has been linked to both local and national government, the third sector is regarded as an important partner in developing the agenda.

4.5.2 Whilst the public sector has the potential to influence policy-making and service delivery, especially on issues such as housing and policing, the role of the third sector (in relation to the cohesion agenda) can be seen more in terms of liaising directly with communities, especially those defined as hard-to reach communities and communities of interest. Therefore, recognising the role the third sector can play in mainstreaming community cohesion is of particular importance to ensure the agenda is appropriately embedded.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Equality Duty clearly overlaps with the aims and ambitions of the community cohesion agenda. The Equality Duty focuses on issues of discrimination and inequality, which are well known to undercut community cohesion. Furthermore, Community cohesion emphasises the importance of positive attitudes and good relations between groups, which are critical to the pursuit of tolerance and equality.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 N/A

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 N/A

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 N/A

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 To ensure there is consideration given to the community cohesion agenda within the delivery of third sector provision, particularly in relation to areas of engagement/participation where barriers may be experienced by those community members who have different backgrounds or protected characteristics.
- 9.2 To reflect the impact of community cohesion on future project proposals. Where need arises to liaise with the Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator (Christopher.hunt@torfaen.gov.uk) to support those bidding processes.
- 9.3 Community events and ongoing activities such as advocacy services, community festivals, sports clubs for children and young people, community outings and other such events, are reflective and carefully planned to take account of differing cultural needs/ practices and build on shared interests.

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