



Liverpool
City Council



Community Services
Community Cohesion Report
June 2017





Contents

- INTRODUCTION 2
- BACKGROUND 3
 - Panel Members 3
- CONTEXT 4
- EMERGING THEMES 5
 - Successful projects 5
 - Key challenges 6
 - Working together 7
 - Guiding principles 7
- RECOMMENDATIONS 8
 - Next steps 8
 - Contributors 8



INTRODUCTION

Community Cohesion is a term commonly used to describe how everyone in a geographical area lives alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect.

Liverpool has a proud history of welcoming people from abroad and different communities and supporting them to make Liverpool their home. The city has seen the emergence of many new communities in recent years, in part as a result of the dispersal of asylum seekers by the Home Office but also international migration to the UK following the enlargement of the European Union, with the largest increase in numbers being from Poland and other central European countries. We aim to be an inclusive and diverse city; we have a vibrant LGBT community and are home to renowned higher education institutions, attracting tens of thousands of students to the city each year.

The vision of the city council is a clear and ambitious one; to make Liverpool a distinctive global city. Among the aims and priorities underpinning this vision are pledges to develop a shared sense of identity and community pride, and to protect and support our most vulnerable residents. This report and its recommendations sets out how to make this a reality for the city and its partners.

We would like to thank all of the panel members for the time they have dedicated to this work, to all of the invited guests who presented to the Panel and those who submitted online. Finally, we would like to thank all of the people in the city who, either professionally or voluntarily, work tirelessly to foster good relations between and within our communities.



Cllr Frank Hont - Cabinet Member for Housing and Cllr Emily Spurrell- Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety

BACKGROUND

The Liverpool Strategic Community Cohesion Panel was formed in response to various discussions and a workshop which pulled together many stakeholders in the city in the summer of 2015. Many attendees felt that the city needed to take a more strategic approach to the issue of cohesion, building on and bringing together examples of known good practice in different fields and set a clear vision and expectation for others.

It was recognised that for success to be achieved all partner agencies and sectors needed to be involved in setting the vision for the city. Stakeholders agreed that a multi-agency approach

which gathered evidence of the scope and scale of the issue in Liverpool was essential, thus the idea of the Community Cohesion Strategic Panel was born.

The panel members were drawn from across the statutory and third sector, and heard evidence from invited contributors at each 'select committee' style session. A full list of panel members can be found below and contributors are listed at the end of the report. Additionally, those not able to attend and give evidence in person were invited to submit written evidence around the key questions and these are also incorporated into the report.

Panel Members

Name	Organisation	Name	Organisation
Tracey Gore	Chief Executive, Steve Biko Housing	Tony Okotie	Chief Executive, Liverpool Charity Voluntary Services
Paula Harrison Woods	Director of Student Services, University of Liverpool	Elaine Rees	Chief Executive, Liverpool Learning Partnership
Colleen Martin	Assistant Director - supporting Communities, Liverpool City Council	Inspector John Sacker	Merseyside Police, Community Relations
Gary Oakford	Group Manager, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service	Jill Summers	Head of Safer & Stronger Communities, Liverpool City Council

The panel convened formally for the first time in March 2016 and met for a total of six themed sessions. The sessions are summarised in the table below. A list of contributors to the panel is included at the end of the report.

Panel Sessions Dates	Themes
15 th March 2016	Media and communication
17 th May 2016	Sport and culture
13 th September 2016	Housing and neighbourhoods
15 th November 2016	Faith
10 th January 2017	Education and Students
6 th February 2017	Migration

People were asked to address the following questions:

- What contribution to community cohesion in the city has your organisation / work made over the past 5 years? Can you give some examples of successful projects please?
- What have you learned from your experiences and what have been the key challenges?
- How can we work more collectively as a city, and as a city region, to improve community cohesion?

CONTEXT

The population of Liverpool is increasing and is projected to grow by 4.8% by 2024 to almost half a million¹. Liverpool's population is less ethnically diverse than the population of England and Wales as a whole. 18.6% of the population nationally are Black and Minority Ethnic, compared with Liverpool's 13.8%. The city has a large student population of over 60,000 university students including international students.

The social and political context is dynamic; the effects of austerity have resulted in a reduction in public sector resources at the same time as increases in demands for services². Liverpool is at the centre of the Liverpool City Region, and has recently elected a City Region Mayor, working in partnership with five other local authorities. Nationally, the UK voted to leave the EU in June 2016, however Liverpool as a city voted 58% in favour of staying in the EU. Anxieties arising from Brexit and other international events ranging from the migrant crisis, terrorist attacks and overseas elections, all have the potential to create tension and have an impact on how communities view each other.

At the local level, we recognise that every neighbourhood is different and that neighbourhoods are constantly evolving. Some neighbourhoods in the city are rapidly changing in terms of the population, both numbers and turnover, or the type of people living there; others are undergoing transformation with new housing, facilities or infrastructure whilst others are staying the same physically and with a stable population.

From a central government policy perspective, Dame Louise Casey published her review into opportunity and integration in December 2016, making a series of recommendations to the government to develop a new communities programme to complement and underpin existing work to tackle extremism, hate crime and violence against women and girls.



¹ liverpool.gov.uk/council/key-statistics-and-data/data/population/

² ft.com/content/5fcbd0c4-2948-11e5-8db8-c033edba8a6

EMERGING THEMES

Successful Projects

Cohesion activities have been happening for years in the city and continue with, and without, the help of the City Council or Central Government. Some large scale events supported by the council such as the Giants and the programme of arts and music festivals help to foster a sense of togetherness and pride. However smaller, local activities are equally as important in making people feel part of their city.

Liverpool is known for having a great sporting heritage and it is true that sport offers a tremendous opportunity to bring people together, whether through KICKS football projects run by the police and fire service with young people; table tennis teams of asylum seekers playing in local leagues and breaking down barriers, or young people trying out a range of ability sports for people with physical disabilities, we know that this is a tried and trusted community cohesion tool. Daisy Inclusive UK and the Anthony Walker Foundation both run inclusive

We organised 'Meet Your Neighbours' events based in Kensington and raised awareness of the Polish community among local service providers -
Merseyside Polonia

activities across the city that bring people together with the aim of understanding and experiencing the world from a different perspective.

The panel heard that activities held in community centres for neighbours to meet each other, particularly in those areas where the demographics have been changing rapidly, have also come through as being valued and successful events. They create a safe space for people to talk, often over food and refreshments, and discover what they have in common. This is as true for inter-generational and abled/ disabled communities as it is for newer migrant communities.

Students play an invaluable role in the city which is sometimes under-rated. Two examples are 'Leave Liverpool Tidy', a reduce / re-use/ recycling project with students and local residents donating unwanted household items at the end of a tenancy. Secondly, Volunteering Liverpool is a collaboration

I have initiated my own curriculum teaching Islamic Studies at the Liverpool Arabic Centre Supplementary School using a curriculum which supports Citizenship, British values and human rights -
Moner Ahmed, Liverpool Arabic Centre

with the student Volunteering Centre and other further education providers to take up opportunities in the community.

Many schools in the city have done some brilliant work in this area, embracing the Schools of Sanctuary movement in welcoming newcomers and adopting Healthy Schools charters and inclusion policies. There are 19 schools in Liverpool who have already received the School of Sanctuary status with 8 more working towards it.

Other educational settings are also playing a positive role in promoting cohesion and bridging cultural, religious and inter-generational gaps, for example through supplementary schools or in youth centres. Schools are doing work to combat homophobia and to tackle gun and gang culture, as well as helping young people to understand different points of view and develop empathy.

'In 1952, Britain signed the European convention on Human Rights because we were proud to protect people whose lives were endangered in their own countries.

Through Schools of Sanctuary we can resurrect that pride, reach out in friendship, learn from different cultures and enrich all our lives. Liverpool has a great tradition of welcoming the stranger and this is evident in the large number of schools who are keen to become Schools of Sanctuary in the city. A number not matched in such a short time in any other city across the UK.

Well done Liverpool!'

Rose Mc Carthy, National Co-ordinator, School of Sanctuary

Key Challenges

An important thread that emerged through the Panel was empowering communities and giving them the skills, and resources, to provide support to their communities.

Employing more diverse staff was seen as a way of reflecting the changing demographic of the city and providing opportunities for people to mix in the workplace.

For newcomers to the city, the challenge was about helping people to settle and integrate. Integration- a key contributor to community cohesion- in simple terms is what happens when new and existing residents adjust to one another. The ability to acquire English is a crucial element to being able to get on and live a full life. This is being addressed in an innovative way by initiatives such as the 'Supporting English Language Learning' booklet produced by Churches Together in the Merseyside Region which has launched a practical, free resource to help communities support newcomers to learn English³.

The key challenges for the work we did was breaking down the barriers. Despite attending classes and giving presentations on what services we could offer, leafleting the area, translating the leaflets into the relevant languages, the uptake was poor. There was a general mistrust of the police due to experiences and perceptions of policing in their home countries and therefore a general reluctance to engage with us -
Merseyside Police

Countering the speed and proliferation of information circulated on social media was seen as a challenge. From the evidence given, the panel felt that providing positive messages on diversity, and being able to respond quickly and accurately to untruths, either via social or traditional media is crucial.

It is also important that people have the skills, knowledge and experience to challenge intolerance, and extremism whenever it raises its ugly head. Proper training and support for people who are involved in sensitive and challenging conversations was seen as essential.

Schools, alongside other agencies, are charged with being vigilant with regard to the 'Prevent' and radicalisation agenda which can prove challenging when trying to build trust and relationships with families.

Uncertainty following the Brexit vote and the (at times divisive) nature of the referendum debate, and what that could mean for newly settled communities who fear for their future in the UK was highlighted as a concern. There has been a rise in reported hate crime in Liverpool in the last 12 months and the panel heard examples from groups such as the Anthony Walker Foundation and Daisy UK who have supported people who had been targeted because of their race, faith or disability. Between April and December 2016, 1382 hate crimes were recorded in Liverpool; a 30% increase compared with the same period in 2015. The majority of recorded hate crimes recorded in Liverpool in this period were racially motivated (69%).

A key theme across the board is the impact of austerity measures and in practice this often means that many organisations have lost staff; changes in personnel, especially where individuals who have built good working relationships with local community groups and partners, have left, or a dedicated role no longer exists. Equally, funding reductions for the voluntary and community sector was often cited as a challenge as money is no longer available to support simple activities such as gardening, sports or craft activities, events at which people from different generations and backgrounds may come together.

A change in demographics across the city was also highlighted, for example the shift of students away from the Smithdown Rd area in favour of the city centre, leaving a supply of cheaper properties and a significant change in the character of the area.

Liverpool is taking a lead role in the Syrian Refugee Resettlement scheme alongside its ongoing commitment to the asylum dispersal programme, having welcomed asylum seekers since 2000. The panel heard that the proliferation of differently funded resettlement schemes (directed by central government) coupled with imminent changes arising from the Immigration Act 2016 are likely to present challenges and potentially increase demands on service.

Working Together

Some contributors felt that there was little focus on the positive contributions of minority communities to civic life and these should be highlighted to counteract negative perceptions in some areas. In this respect the ongoing relationship with key media outlets is seen as critical, one where positive stories about community cohesion are promoted on a regular basis. The major media outlets, such as the Liverpool Echo and Radio Merseyside, can and have the potential to be, a real positive vehicle for cohesion stories however their influence is also significant in the negative portrayal or perceptions of communities.

Neighbourhoods are at the heart of the community cohesion debate and many organisations work side by side to create safe, clean and welcoming places to live; tackling issues like anti-social behaviour, hate crime, graffiti and putting on events that bring communities together. This is where the crucial, everyday community cohesion activity happens.

Housing associations in the city have worked together to devise and sign up to minimum standards for dealing with hate crime, underlining our collective commitment to promoting good relations and community cohesion between all sections of the community -
Steve Biko Housing Association

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have embarked on an innovative project of seconding one of their Arabic-speaking employees to a local authority to support the resettlement of Syrian refugees, further developing the spirit and practice of partnership working.

Over recent years the availability of forums to discuss and debate community issues has reduced as resources have diminished. The existence of a regular forum or outlet to discuss community cohesion issues together was suggested by many as a way of co-ordinating and supporting community cohesion action.

Identifying key members and voices of each community is seen as vital, as without working in partnership with communities themselves, efforts can be undermined at the outset. This can help organisations build an understanding of what each

community requires; where there are tensions and where positive things are happening.

Equally, it was felt important, at a local level, to work with all groups in the area, including majority groups, so that no sections of the community can feel alienated or forgotten.

Guiding Principles

From the contributions, the panel has developed a set of principles of community cohesion:

Community Cohesion does not happen overnight and neither is it a static process. It has to be everyone's responsibility (and not just statutory agencies) including schools, residents, groups, elected members, young people, faith communities, the voluntary and community sector, the media etc

Importance of continuous community engagement - not just when things go wrong. Communities need to be engaged through ongoing programmes of activities which include empowering people to come together to make a difference in their neighbourhoods.

Leadership. Having the difficult and sensitive discussions with and between communities and challenging issues that create tension and seek to divide

Shared values and local identity. Creating a sense of belonging to Liverpool and a sense of pride is really important. Shared values, promoted and repeated consistently by prominent voices, prevent communities from being singled out and embed the impression that Liverpool is a place for people of all backgrounds to thrive. A truly welcoming city.

Celebrating diversity & promoting understanding. Showing support for important events in the cultural diary

Tackling inequality. Helping communities to overcome barriers.

If we have the means to let our citizens view others as mums, dads, sons, daughters, footballers, teachers, farmers, professors and opticians, rather than Asylum Seekers, Migrants, illegals or Refugees we will find that there is a different attitude towards having someone from a different background living in your street.-
Ewan Roberts, Asylum Link Merseyside

³ cuf.org.uk/news/liverpool-downloads

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide leadership to respond to sensitive issues.
- Adopt a common understanding of community cohesion and promote it across our organisations.
- Create a campaign to promote Liverpool people's identity in all its diversity.
- Develop a Liverpool hate crime strategy.
- Work to improve access to and provision of ESOL classes.
- Develop an asylum seeker and refugee strategy.
- Refresh and promote the city's work around City of Sanctuary and Schools of Sanctuary.
- Develop a media response based around the principles of community cohesion and rapid myth busting.
- Create a regular forum to share good practice and discuss emerging community cohesion issues.
- Promote and support the use of existing community information directories.

Next Steps

This report will go to Cabinet, and to the Citysafe Board and the recommendations and action plan will be overseen by the Safer & Stronger Communities team. The report will be published on the city council web pages at <https://liverpool.gov.uk/council/strategies-plans-and-policies/equality-diversity-and-cohesion/>

Contributors

- Agent Marketing
- Asylum Link Merseyside
- Brook Education
- Daisy Inclusive UK
- Liverpool Arabic Association
- Liverpool City Council
- Liverpool Housing Trust
- Anthony Walker Foundation
- Bay TV Liverpool
- Cobalt Housing Association
- Granby Toxteth Development Trust (Roma Development)
- Liverpool John Moores University
- Liverpool Echo

