



Guidance on building a local sense of belonging



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Foreword



In a fast-moving world, with busy lives and complex challenges, it is easy to feel isolated and detached. While social networking sites can connect us with friends all across the world, we may not know our neighbours well enough to have a cup of tea with them. We may be cautious, distant, and suspicious of others.

A sense of belonging to your community helps to overcome that. People who feel that they belong to their local area will get involved with local schemes and initiatives, will help their neighbours, will challenge inappropriate behaviour, will welcome newcomers and help them settle. They will pull together in a crisis and join together in a celebration. All this helps to build cohesive, empowered and active communities. And we know that three quarters of people strongly feel they belong to their area.

I want everyone to share in this positive feeling – to feel included, welcomed and wanting to give something back. Though of course, this is not something that can be achieved or built overnight. And it cannot be forced. It needs to be grown and nurtured.

Like other cohesion work, building a sense of belonging needs long term and sustained action. It also needs to reflect local circumstances and build on the history and geography of local areas. Different areas will prioritise different issues, For some this might be about communications, for others it might be a series of local events to build belonging.

Last year we worked with the Citizenship Foundation to publish the Citizens' Day Framework. This guidance is the next step and suggests ways in which councils, voluntary groups and other organisations can encourage a sense of belonging. There are some excellent examples of good practice – which you may want to consider or adapt to your own circumstances. I hope that you will find this a useful resource if you want to support local residents to have a greater sense of belonging to their village, town or city.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hazel Blears". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath.

Rt Hon Hazel Blears
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

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Executive Summary

- People have multiple parts to their identities, with different parts coming to the fore in different circumstances. This means that building up the part of identity which is a local sense of belonging will not be at the expense of other parts of identity
- People want to belong and can change elements of their identity more easily than in the past, providing the opportunity to increase local sense of belonging
- Building a local sense of belonging needs to focus on the things we have in common and so be inclusive, rather than place of birth or ethnicity, which are exclusive
- Local areas may wish to develop a local vision following consultation with the public and other key local stakeholders
- Local areas may also wish to undertake specific initiatives including:
 - Communicating the vision
 - Using history, key events in the past and local memories
 - Using geographical features and key buildings, parks and other symbols
 - Using symbolic events – celebrations, festival, carnivals
 - Using activities and shared interests – arts and culture, sport
 - Welcoming new residents
 - Using activities to promote empowerment.

Section 1

Background

Evidence

Analysis has shown that a sense of belonging to the immediate neighbourhood is a key indicator of community cohesion. The Citizenship Survey 2007-08 found that 75 per cent of people nationally feel they belong strongly to their neighbourhood, including 34 per cent who said they belonged very strongly. The proportion of people who said they belonged strongly to their neighbourhood has increased since 2003 (70%), but is unchanged from 2005. The widest variation is for people aged between 16 and 34 who are less likely than other adult age groups to feel a strong sense of belonging to their local neighbourhood.

The percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood is the second indicator in the national indicator set. The target is that the Places Survey shows an improvement in the majority of the local authorities who have adopted the indicator as part of their Local Area Agreement (LAA); along with the Citizenship Survey showing no national decline. Local level data for this indicator will first be collected through the 2008 Places survey, so at the time of writing we do not know to what extent belonging to the neighbourhood varies between different areas.

Our approach to building cohesion

The Cohesion Delivery Framework overview document sets out eight key principles on cohesion:

- Cohesion is relevant to all parts of the country
- Building cohesion has wider benefits to individuals, groups and communities
- Solutions are local and one size does not fit all
- Cohesion is about all parts of the community, not just race and faith issues
- Improving cohesion is about multiple actions tackling a range of causal factors
- Improving cohesion is about both targeted actions and taking account of cohesion in the delivery of other services
- Good practice in one place may not be transferable to another – but it may inspire an action that will work in another place

- Delivery is about common sense solutions that will help people get along better, that is what will make the vision a reality.

It then suggests a number of ways in which local work to build cohesion can reflect these principles:

- Undertaking an exercise to identify the key issues for cohesion
- Deciding on a set of actions depending on the local issues faced. And some pitfalls to avoid
- Making use of current guidance and good practice
- Planning for delivery through local partnership working.

Who this guidance is for and how it should be used

This guidance is aimed at local cohesion practitioners and will be particularly relevant where they are working in areas where building a sense of belonging is a key priority, or where it supports the delivering of improved community cohesion in other areas.

This guidance is not a blueprint for action. We are not suggesting that local areas take all the actions that it suggests or that we have covered all the actions that could be taken. Instead local areas should prioritise actions on the basis of their local mapping.

We plan to revise this guidance on the basis of local experience and so would be grateful to receive comments on it, whether they are suggestions for improvement or information about projects which have succeeded or failed.

We have set up an email address for such comments:

cohesion.guidance@communities.gov.gsi.uk

Section 2

Key findings from research

To inform our thinking about this guidance, we have reviewed research about people's identity and sense of belonging. Based on the research, we have reached the following conclusions (Annex A quotes examples of research which back this up):

- How a person feels about their neighbourhood is based upon a combination of their personal history, characteristics and perceptions, and how these interact with a particular place and the other people who live there
- People are increasingly identifying with their neighbourhood as a source of reassurance and connectedness in an ever more complex world
- Black and minority ethnic people are more likely to identify with their neighbourhood; as are people who live in rural areas
- People have multiple parts to their identities, with different parts coming to the fore in different circumstances. This means that building up the part of identity which is a local sense of belonging will not be at the expense of other parts of identity
- And that there is no clash between building a sense of local belonging and the importance of building a sense of national belonging
- Some parts of identity are fixed (eg place of birth or ethnicity) and others are flexible (eg values and interests). So building an inclusive local sense of belonging means helping people to move away from understandings of belonging that are based on fixed elements to an understanding that is more about what people have in common such as civic values and the local facilities they share
- People want to belong and can change the flexible elements of their identity more easily than in the past, providing the opportunity to increase local sense of belonging
- Building a local sense of belonging is about reaching: newcomers who are looking for something to sign up to; existing residents who feel marginalised and who need to be supported to adapt to change; and existing residents who lack pride in their neighbourhood.

Section 3

Developing a local vision as part of the Sustainable Community Strategy

All local areas have produced a Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out a shared vision and a shared sense of priorities for a place. Communities and Local Government 2008 guidance on this was set out in *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities*¹. Local areas will have developed this in consultation with local people and local partners through the Local Strategic Partnership.

Some local areas have taken the opportunity to develop a statement about cohesion and local belonging as part of their Sustainable Community Strategy. This can provide a useful starting point for mainstreaming community cohesion and local belonging and ensure linkages are made for improving community cohesion. If your area has not already done this, it can be a useful first step on work to develop a local sense of belonging.

Stoke-on-Trent

From the Stoke-on-Trent community cohesion strategy *Sticking Together*:

The Vision for our Community Cohesion Strategy is to ensure that Stoke-on-Trent is:

A city where people choose to live because our values are underpinned by equality, commonality and respect for diversity.

This vision will guide people when they come together to reach decisions for the benefit of their communities. It will be achieved by concentrating on the following six priorities that have been identified by wide-ranging research and consultation:

- to tackle, prevent and manage community tensions
- to address disadvantage and resolve inequalities
- to improve direct channels of communications and information
- to create a visible cultural partnership and develop a sense of belonging
- to promote engagement and effective involvement
- to make sure that young people are at the heart of community cohesion.

¹ www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongsafeprosperous

Oldham

The Oldham Community strategy includes:

The Borough of Oldham will be a place in which people are well educated, with a thriving economy providing people with decent jobs; which has an attractive and healthy environment; where people are safe and live together peacefully; where everyone receives equality of treatment and people treat each other with respect; which welcomes visitors and where people are proud to say they belong.

Tameside

Tameside has the following vision in its community strategy:

We want a cohesive community, where there are strong and positive relationships between people from all backgrounds and cultures, in the workplace, schools and neighbourhoods, and where all people have similar life opportunities.

Peterborough

Peterborough has the following vision in its community strategy:

The Greater Peterborough will be a truly harmonious community with a sense of pride and identity. The region will be famous for its levels of community engagement and for its two-way communication. People will feel involved and engaged. People will understand and value the contribution that Peterborough's different communities make to the life of Peterborough. They will feel free to celebrate their own cultural identity: whether that is as a rural, ethnic or faith community.

If your area decides to do this, the local vision will need to reflect local experience, issues and values. It may help to ask those you engage with some of the following questions:

- What does it mean to people to live in this neighbourhood?
- What symbolises this neighbourhood?
- What do outsiders think of this neighbourhood?
- What are the perceived and actual disparities within the community?

- What are people's aspirations for how the physical environment should look and feel?
- What could be the best way of getting people to work together to prevent discrimination that is based on race, religion and belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disability and age?
- What types of interaction do you want to promote in your community?
- What makes for a cohesive community?
- How to develop pride in the neighbourhood?
- What are the values which we believe should underpin our vision for a cohesive community?
- How to work together to address common concerns?
- How to welcome newcomers and helping both them and the local community to adjust?

You could also use the 2008 definition of community cohesion as a starting point for discussions:

Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together.

A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

A vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on three foundations:

- People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities
- People knowing their rights and responsibilities
- People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly.

And three key ways of living together:

- A shared future vision and sense of belonging
- A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
- Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

Section 4

Specific initiatives

You may wish to arrange specific activities or events to build a greater sense of local belonging – ideally these could be for everyone, but you may wish to target specific groups or bring together two different groups.

A sense of belonging is not something you can manufacture – it has to be grown and engendered. So as with other cohesion work this is about long term multiple initiatives.

4.1 Communicating the vision

Communicating the messages set out in your vision is an opportunity to address newcomers, marginalised residents and residents who do not feel proud of their neighbourhood.

Some key tips from local areas that have already done this are:

- Ask councillors to make a public commitment to the vision
- Explore the possibility of getting endorsement from local celebrities
- Make connections with local organisations from the community and voluntary sector, the faith sectors, trade unions and the business community. Encourage them or their leaders to make a public commitment to the vision
- Seek to get local ownership by the public, so that 'your' vision becomes 'our' vision for the community
- Use the local press as a vehicle for delivering the message through newspapers, radio and television
- Be innovative – use new media eg internet, texts, web groups
- Hold leisure events and encourage communities to sign up to the vision.

Blackburn with Darwen

The 'Belonging to Blackburn with Darwen' local strategic partnership campaign aimed to build more cohesive communities by strengthening citizenship and forging pride of place. The 'Belonging...' campaign used ordinary – and some extraordinary – citizens to get its message across. A poster and outdoor media campaign under the heading: 'many lives... many faces... all belonging to Blackburn with Darwen', featured local people saying why they were proud to belong to the borough and outlines some of their achievements.

All these citizens have a stake in the borough and its future and all have signed up to a 'charter of belonging', which is clear and uncompromising in its rejection of racism, prejudice and intolerance. This formal charter was signed by the members of the LSP, and a shorter summary was distributed across the borough so that the spirit of the charter was available to all.

The Guardian, reported on this on 11 May 2005: "On the back of the campaign, the council set itself the task of calculating how much public money was being channeled into particular wards. The aim was to disprove the myth exploited by the far right that particular areas received preferential treatment over others. Consultants employed by the council proved that all the nine poorest wards in the borough received the same level of funding, regardless of ethnic make-up. To complement the exercise, councilors, officials, senior police officers, and Blackburn's MP, Jack Straw, held public meetings to ram home the message of "belonging", reinforced by the mapping initiative - namely, that the borough was committed to giving every person and community equal treatment."

Source: Commission on Integration and Cohesion Case Studies (2007)

More information:

www.bwdbelonging.org.uk

Celebrating Coventry

Celebrating Coventry is a civic pride campaign. It was launched in the summer of 2004 by the Coventry Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership) to celebrate the diversity of the people and communities of Coventry. The campaign used a mix of good news stories and a highly visual publicity campaign to show people of different backgrounds in different city locations as proud 'Coventrians'. The Celebrating Coventry is now in its fifth phase, and it has become a popular, inclusive and sustainable feature of the local engagement calendar. Coventry's daily newspaper, the Coventry Telegraph lent its support to the campaign, and it has facilitated the campaign by boosting content and debate on diversity and cohesion through increased coverage.

Evaluation findings showed that a significant number of people felt their views of diversity had been positively influenced by the campaign (especially amongst respondents aged 30-40 years, and those from Asian and Black communities). Levels of tolerance and diversity are high across different neighbourhoods - not just those that are culturally diverse. Overwhelmingly, people felt that the images portrayed by the campaign related to them, and helped create a sense of belonging and civic pride.

The campaign uses local role models to promote active citizenship and cohesion, in real, everyday life situation, in public spaces across the city. In late summer 2007, Coventry hosted the UK Schools Games. At the same time, the city decided to hold a Celebrating Coventry weekend of activities to promote the city's commitment to community cohesion within and outside of the city.

Source: Commission on Integration and Cohesion Case Studies (2007)

More information:

www.coventry.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/community-and-living/celebrating-coventry

www.coventrydiversecity.co.uk

One London

The “We Are London, We Are One” campaign celebrated the diversity of London’s population, attempting to build closer relations between ethnic communities. Sponsored by British Gas and Capital Radio, the campaign was run by the Greater London Authority and followed the “Seven Million Londoners, One London” campaign launched after the Underground bombings on 7 July 2005, with the intention of showing that the people of London were proud to be part of a united city.

The campaign has featured in massive media coverage, particularly through prominent advertising on boards, buses and tubes. The distinctive One London logo has been adopted by many activities and organisations in the capital, whether affiliated with the GLA or otherwise.

Source: Commission on Integration and Cohesion Case Studies (2007)

More information:

www.london.gov.uk/onelondon/index.jsp

4.2 Use history, key events in the past and local memories

One way of promoting a sense of belonging is to bring people together to talk about their memories – when this is done on an intergenerational basis, it can teach young people a lot about the neighbourhood and can help to build intergenerational relationships. This can also be done online.

There might also be key events in the past that say a lot about the neighbourhood. Or the local history and past industries may allow a story of place to be told. Some local areas are able to use specific connections with famous writers such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Austen or Hardy. This can give people things to be proud of or give them a story of place.

These memories, stories and local connections can form the basis for a celebratory event or display at end of community project.

At schools this could include Who Do We Think We Are week, which celebrates identity and diversity – www.wdwtwa.org.uk

West Yorks joint services – shared histories

The 'This Is Our History' Project began its work in 2004 focusing on Bradford, but since then it has grown and expanded into Leeds and Dewsbury. The aim of the project was to open up the archives to a wider audience. The response to the project in Bradford exceeded all expectations, and many community groups came forward and produced digital archives.

These community archives provided groups with the opportunity to tell their stories and share their memories with future generations. The success of the project in Bradford led ASDA to provide funding to widen its scope into Beeston and Dewsbury.

In Beeston, staff are concentrating on the subject of migration into the area. Beeston remained a relatively small village until the 1930s, despite the burgeoning industrialisation of Leeds and Bradford. As such, many stories from the Beeston area are about what it was like to move there, and how life has since altered.

'This Is Our History' has also been involved with Hugh Gaitskell Primary School in Beeston to provide support for the 'Historymakers' project. This project helped to raise awareness of archival material and its possible uses in schools. The project also ran inter-generational sessions to allow pupils to talk to older people who have lived in their area for a long time.

Staff of the archive service are also working with employees from the ASDA store in Dewsbury to produce an archive of their memories of change in that area, including why they moved to Dewsbury and what effect the ASDA store has had on the area. Input has been sought from a wide range of employees.

Efforts to promote the project in Bradford continue through regular meetings with the groups, the project newsletter and attendance at the Bradford Mela and the Beeston Festival to encourage people to contribute their stories.

Source: Commission on Integration and Cohesion Case Studies (2007)

Liverpool www.whatwashere.com

NESTA (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) funded a pilot in Liverpool of this website, which allowed people to click on a map and then add their memories linked to a particular place.

This makes people feel valued and that they have a voice – that history is something about people’s memories of small things, not big stories being handed down or something that is for museums only. It allows people to feel part of a community: to talk about the changes, to feel a sense of belonging. It can be a learning tool for schools, giving the experiences of individual migrants. They have found that their site is good for people in hospital – giving them something to do, assisting their recovery. It is also useful for community workers, who need to find activities for teenage boys. People have posted inspiring stories about how they started a charity or overcame problems.

Source: [Commission on Integration and Cohesion Case Studies \(2007\)](#)

Celebrating Southwark

Southwark has published A Sense of Belonging which was the first in a series of booklets to promote ‘Celebrating Southwark’. It was a collaborative work, which collated the views of pensioners about their experiences of living in Southwark through the changes of the last 50 years through consultation. It aimed to build understanding across communities, faith and generations and encourage a sense of belonging through informing residents of their shared geographical history.

It features details across periods of historical in-migration that has seen Caribbean, African, Irish, South American, Balkan, Iraqi and Afghani communities settle in the area. The booklet conveys local residents’ views about their borough, and their perception of how people from different communities interact. It acknowledges that some white communities feel a sense of loss that coincided with the decline of traditional industries in the area and the strengths of the area’s diversity. It provides an opportunity to develop intercultural dialogue.

Source: [Commission on Integration and Cohesion Case Studies \(2007\)](#)

4.3 Use geographical features and key buildings, parks and other symbols

People may connect to a place through its buildings, particular landmarks, natural features, parks or other symbols. Local areas can identify these and use them as part of their brand, ensure they do not fall into disrepair or create them if they are lacking. A good example of public art which has caught the imagination is the Angel of the North. This is about shaping a distinctive place – buildings, parks, public art, social centres; or can be about celebrating ordinary spaces, such as a parade of shops. This can also address the things which make people ashamed such as vandalised or derelict buildings.

The tomorrow project suggested: “Common symbols can help bridge different local identities. As now, individuals in the same area may define their locality in different ways. For a pensioner it may be the local shops. For someone else it may be members of the synagogue or mosque. For a young family it may be the housing estate. ... Those who want to strengthen the sense of community may want to ask what symbols will draw different fragments together. In a culture where identity increasingly derives from symbols, finding unifying symbols can form a platform for new social bonds – ‘This open space matters to all of us, so we have something in common.’

People can be brought together through the development of public spaces – from a playground, to schools or shopping malls that provide facilities in the evening, to a village hall that shows films. Successfully bringing different people together will extend their sense of local identity. In particular, giving neighbourhoods greater responsibility for the upkeep of ‘their’ spaces and facilities could draw residents together and give them a greater sense of purpose. ...”

Commission on Integration and Cohesion visit to Lister Park

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion “visited **Lister Park** in March 2007 and were inspired by the inclusive community facilities it now offers. Previously dilapidated, and with a setting that provoked anti-social behaviour, following a £3.2m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund it was transformed into a genuine space for interaction and reflection – and was recognised as such when it won Best Park in Britain in 2006. What inspired us most was the extensive community consultation that went into its planning – creating a real sense of ownership among different groups in the local community – and how that translates into practice, with “pockets of culture” reflecting local communities. For instance, the beautiful Mughal Water Gardens, constructed using local materials and familiar plants, or the popular boating lake and pavilion. **Lister Park** is a real community hub that is used by a broad cross section of local communities.”

4.4 Use symbolic events – celebrations, festival, carnivals

This is a chance to celebrate the neighbourhood and people. Building a sense of belonging can be taken account of in existing celebrations or inspire new ones. It may be possible to get local celebrities involved.

The Citizens' day Framework (Citizenship Foundation, 2007) provides further guidance and examples on this.

www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/resource.php?s367

As do the following web-sites on street parties

www.streetparty.org.uk/

www.streetsalive.net/

'Out of Many – One England' Festival

The Out of Many – One England Festival was an inclusive celebration of St George's Day. The Sparkbrook Caribbean and African Women's Development Initiative (SCAWDI) organised this innovative, civic pride festival. It was a celebration of English culture, heritage and tradition in Sparkbrook, Birmingham. Sparkbrook has the second highest non-white population in Birmingham, with a total of 79 per cent minority ethnic residents.

The aim of the event was to encourage participation and engagement of the 'whole' community irrespective of race, culture or religion to promote a sense of English identity. The festival also aimed to bring people together across diverse boundaries/communities who would normally never interact.

Planning and a long lead-in time, allowed for sufficient scope for community engagement and participation prior to the event. This enabled cross-cultural preparatory work which culminated on the day in a huge, interactive community festival at Highgate Park, Birmingham, in the heart of the Sparkbrook constituency. The theme of St. George's Day brought together over 800 attendees from the whole community from across the city; participants came from a variety of groups and identities, rural and urban locations.

Source: Commission on Integration and Cohesion Case Studies (2007)

Burnley Community Festival

Burnley Community Festival has been held annually since 2002 and is designed to bring people together whilst showcasing local talent. The Festival was set up to encourage engagement and positive interaction between the borough's diverse communities. Activities include live music, stalls promoting the work of community groups and artists, and other forms of entertainment throughout the day.

Members of each of the borough's political parties staff a Council Road Show at the entrance to the festival; members of the community are given the opportunity to interact with councillors and decision makers. The stall displays work of the council, such as the new regeneration projects in the area and residents are able to offer their thoughts and criticisms on the council and make suggestions for improvement.

A consultation programme is a key part of the pre-event planning process which shapes the content of the festival; local residents participate in workshops and questionnaires are circulated throughout the area.

More information:

www.burnley.gov.uk/festival

Source: Commission on Integration and Cohesion Case Studies (2007)

4.5 Use activities and shared interests – arts and culture, sport

The arts can be a good way to explore identity or to celebrate it – Liverpool city of culture is a good example. Local sporting teams can also be part of a neighbourhood's identity and promote local pride and involvement.

You can also use people's shared hobbies and interests. *Belonging Research* commissioned by The Automobile Association (SIRC 2007) found that: "For men, the football or other sporting team that they support provides a stronger sense of belonging than religion, social class, ethnic background or political affiliations. The clubs they belong to are also important sources of social identity. Both men and women view the hobbies and interests that they share with others as an important source of identity. For women, this sense of belonging is as strong as that associated with their nationality."

DCMS has published a booklet on this Bringing Communities Together Through Sport and Culture, which includes examples

www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/CommunitiesBooklet.pdf

Charlton Athletic Race Equality (CARE) Partnership

CARE is a unique Partnership led by Greenwich Council and Charlton Athletic Football Club, and involves a range of partners including organisations from the voluntary and community sectors. CARE obtains its core funding from Greenwich Council, the Football Club, the University, and Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), but also operates by securing project funding from external agencies, including London Development Agency (LDA), Neighbourhood Renewal and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB).

The initial focus of the CARE partnership was to address racism, but over the years, the work has expanded to embrace a wider equality and diversity agenda, with a particular focus on community cohesion, by working with long-term established residents, settled minority ethnic communities and newer communities. CARE aims to build positive community relations by tackling inequality and discrimination, and promoting social inclusion.

The Partnership drives forward a range of projects by using sports and arts based programmes to promote cohesion, interaction and inclusion. The profile of Charlton Athletic Football Club is useful in attracting and motivating participants in the projects. There are a number of projects that demonstrate local good practice:

- The CARE *Primary Matters Education Pack* uses interactive drama based techniques to engage with primary school aged children to tackle racism, bullying and anti-social behaviour. It is a modular based drama programme which looks at all aspects of a pupil's life at home, school and in the wider community. Each module has a theme, for example, *Managing Conflict; Identity and Difference*.
- The CARE *Unity Cup* is an inter-faith, cross-cultural football tournament which aims to bring together members of different communities in order to build bridges between different groups. The CARE Unity model is based on a non-traditional method of team selection, where players are recruited in advance and then divided into mixed teams. The objective is to create multicultural teams who "work together as one" on the field of play (players are drawn from the extensive range of organisations that CARE work with). The event has a real impact in helping to develop and foster positive community relationships, and to build community cohesion and integration.

(continued)

- The *Multi-Sports Coaching Programme* is a capacity building project that aims to equip participants with coaching skills to enable them to go back into their communities to deliver sporting activities. The target groups for the programme are those often under-represented in sporting activities, eg black and minority ethnic and faith communities, refugee and asylum seekers. As a consequence of the project, some of the trainees have been employed by CARE to take sporting activities out to deprived housing estates in the Borough, and to work with specific groups in local schools.

More information:

www.charlton-athletic.co.uk/anti_racism.ink

Source: Commission on Integration and Cohesion Case Studies (2007)

4.6 Welcome new residents

You might use the IDeA and Communities and Local Government guidance on Migrant information Packs, or you might undertake other initiatives to welcome new residents.

Guidance on producing a Migrants' information pack (IDeA) and *How to communicate important information to new migrants* (Communities and Local Government) are available from:

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=7917246

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/newmigrantsinformation

Another way of doing this is to consider how you can enhance and make citizenship ceremonies more special. Mark Rimmer set out ideas on this in a paper for the Goldsmith Commission. www.justice.gov.uk/docs/goldsmith.pdf

Local communities also have a part to play as the example below shows.

Northfields Tenants Association – Cohesion and Sustainability Service

The Cohesion and Sustainability Service (CAS) emerged from the local Tenants Association taking action to tackle persistent problems that troubled the Northfields Estate, Leicester. Issues of anti-social behaviour and crime, exacerbated by unemployment, poor local amenities and service provision were creating unsafe, disconnected communities. This compelled the association to undertake its own consultation of local residents to find out what they felt the most significant issues were and how they could be confronted.

As a result, the tenants' association formed a key link between the community with the police and the housing department. The Cohesion and Sustainability Service emerged when the estate was assigned to house asylum seekers. The estate was traditionally white working class, and there had been some incidents of racism. As a preventative strategy, the Tenants Association carried out another consultation exercise to communicate with residents about the forthcoming changes. The response to this was positive, with residents coming forward to assist asylum seekers' settlement into the estate by offering Easter eggs and organising a trip for children, creating opportunities for interaction and integration.

All new residents are visited by CAS, and they provide a welcome booklet with information about local service provision and practical advice on how to register for services. CAS deals with any issue that impedes integration and good, sustainable community relations, such as unscrupulous landlords charging high rents to East European migrant workers. When Far Right parties started campaigning in the area, CAS responded to residents' fears or thoughts by providing advice and dispelling myths. The CAS offices are also used a neutral space for housing, tenant and community meetings.

Source: Commission on Integration and Cohesion Case Studies (2007)

4.7 Use activities to promote empowerment

Encouraging people to get involved in local democracy and decision making will give them a greater sense of ownership for their neighbourhood.

Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power sets out how government is encouraging more empowerment.

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitiesincontrol

Newham Community Groups Forum

The local authority aims to build long-term cohesion and interaction with communities and to share the responsibility of relationship building with different groups. Newham is an area with a 50 per cent minority ethnic community. The borough's minority ethnic communities reported that they are more likely to feel at home if they know their neighbours, and the forums aim to build contact between groups.

There are ten community forums which cover all the geographical areas of Newham. The forums act as the main point of connection between communities; four public meetings are held annually and there are four environmental 'walkabouts', which pinpoint problems in the local physical environment (50-70 per cent of which the council is able to consequently resolve). The ethnic make-up of the forums generally corresponds to the local area.

The local authority's commitment to the forums is demonstrated through its investment of £1 million over two years towards their work. There have been difficulties engaging young people, but this has been addressed by establishing youth forums and a youth parliament as a means of engagement; furthermore, the forums hope to increase interaction with new arrivals, for example, by building links with new East European migrants through community events.

Source: Commission on Integration and Cohesion Case Studies (2007)

Annex A

Further Evidence

How a person feels about their neighbourhood is based upon a combination of their personal history, characteristics and perceptions, and how these interact with a particular place and the other people who live there.

Research suggests how we connect with a local place will be influenced by:

- Where we were born
- Where we live and have lived
- Where our friends and family live
- Our personal characteristics – race, faith, gender, age etc
- Our nationality and/or immigration status
- What we feel proud of and what we feel ashamed of about our neighbourhood – its physical and human geography, its history, its architecture and so on.
- Our own personal history with, narrative of and understanding of where we live
- Our aspirations for ourselves and our neighbourhood
- The local narrative of what the place is about and how its people should behave
- Whether we feel we fit in with our neighbourhood – its social norms and values, the other people
- Who we feel belongs there and who we feel does not
- What other neighbourhoods or people we compare negatively or positively with our neighbourhood and its residents.

The Tomorrow project (www.tomorrowproject.net/?id=-205) discusses the complexity of local identity:

“Local identities are about identification with the place where you currently live. Though highly important, this is not the only form of identification with place. Individuals may identify with the place where they work, where they go on holiday or with a favourite spot, a few miles from home. They may identify with the place where they were brought up, a place that they have recently left or with a place they long to move to. Even identifying with the place where you now live can be complex. That ‘place’ may be your street, the suburb, an area of the city (‘South London’), the city, a county or region and the country, all at once. As so often with identity, a simple notion – identity with place – becomes more complex on closer inspection.”

“Rising prosperity has made people more mobile, which has given them greater choice over where to settle ... The spread of home ownership has also widened choice. The result is that birds of a feather have gradually flocked together since the 1970s. Younger people have been gathering in enclaves distinct from older people. ... Richer people have been moving away from poorer people. (*Danny Dorling & Phil Rees, 'A nation still dividing: the British census and social polarisation 1971-2001', Environment and Planning, 35, 2003, pp. 1287-1313.*)

“Individuals feel they belong when they have chosen to live in a place with others like them – ‘It’s my sort of place.’ Being able to explain to yourself how you were able to choose the right sort of place to live is a means by which locality becomes a source of identity – ‘I can identify with this place because I know why I’ve settled here.’

In-depth interviews with 182 residents in four localities in and around Manchester in the late 1990s revealed how incomers attach their own biography to their “chosen” residential location, so that they tell stories that indicate how their arrival and subsequent settlement is appropriate to their sense of themselves. People who come to live in an area with no prior ties to it, but who can link their residence to their biographical life history, are able to see themselves as belonging to the area.’ (*Mike Savage, Gaynor Bagnall & Brian Longhurst, Globalization and Belonging, London: Sage, 2005, p. 29.*)

‘Locals’, born and bred in an area, had a feeling of familiarity with it, but this did not necessarily translate into a sense of belonging. Often they felt they had been left behind, or were inferior because they could not choose to move, or the locality had been transformed (perhaps by new arrivals) so that it no longer felt like home. (*Mike Savage, Gaynor Bagnall & Brian Longhurst, Globalization and Belonging, London: Sage, 2005, pp. 45ff.*)

Belonging, a key ingredient of identity, requires the sense of choosing right – of choosing to live with others like oneself. Several factors influence whether individuals think ‘their sort of people’ live in an area. Among these are:

- Social and family connections ...
- Status, which allows residents to think that it’s a good area in which to live. ...
- Symbolic resonances. Choosing an area enables you to imagine yourself living a certain lifestyle. ...

Individuals often relate to the physical place as much as to people in that place. In traditional neighbourhoods, individuals recognised many of the residents, knew a number of them well and counted some as friends. Today, many ‘suburbanites’ scarcely see their neighbours. Yet familiar landmarks – the pub, the church, a well-travelled street, the supermarket, the cinema – all provide a sense of belonging. Add in the local radio station and the free newspaper, and you have the ingredients of a ‘symbolic community’. The individual belongs to the place and identifies with its symbols, but not the people.

“While some community centres have declined, others have reinvented themselves, not least the pub which has become more family friendly, a centre for eating and – increasingly – a locale for watching sport. New social hubs have emerged, such as car boot sales, skate parks, ‘the University of the Third Age’ for older people (typically in individuals’ homes) and supermarket cafés.”

People are increasingly identifying with their neighbourhood as a source of reassurance and connectedness in an ever more complex world.

Muir and Stone in Who are we? Identities in Britain (IPPR, 2007) found that:

“While all other territorial identities have declined in the UK ... identification with one’s locality (as distinct from region or larger area) increased between 1990 and 2000.

Although this is in line with international trends, there has been a much larger increase in the UK than elsewhere. Most individuals in the UK identify most strongly with their locality or town in preference to a regional, national or global identity. Fifty-six per cent of the population identify with their locality first, compared with 25 per cent that identify with the nation.

All generations choose local identity as the most important ... there is also potential for building on strong local identities to help break down barriers in towns, cities and neighbourhoods. In some areas a strong local identity rooted in a shared residency of a particular town or neighbourhood might be powerful enough to bring together people from different ages or ethnic backgrounds.”

The Tomorrow project (www.tomorrowproject.net/?id=-205) suggest that:

“‘Globalisation’ will continue to strengthen local identity, rather than weaken it as some suppose. As the world feels increasingly complex, travel looms larger in people’s jobs, change accelerates at work and individuals increasingly relate ‘virtually’ online, geography will matter even more than it does today. In an unstable, transient, changing and virtual world, place will be where you put down roots. It will not be global or local, but ‘glocal’ – the reassertion of the local within the globalisation process.”

Black and minority ethnic people are more likely to identify with their neighbourhood; as are people who live in rural areas.

Muir and Stone in Who are we? Identities in Britain (IPPR, 2007) found that:

“black and ethnic minorities tend to identify themselves more strongly with their local area than the population as a whole. People from ethnic minority groups also say that ‘this local area’ is more important to their sense of identity than the country of their family’s origin.”

And

“in England, rural dwellers have a slightly stronger local identity than urban dwellers, and Londoners have the weakest sense of attachment to their locality.”

People have multiple parts to their identities, with different parts coming to the fore in different circumstances. This means that building up the part of identity which is a local sense of belonging will not be at the expense of other parts of identity.

And that there is no clash between building a sense of local belonging and the importance of building a sense of national belonging.

Some parts of identity are fixed (eg place of birth or ethnicity) and others are flexible (eg values and interests). So building an inclusive local sense of belonging means helping people to move away from understandings of belonging that are based on fixed elements to an understanding that is more about what people have in common such as civic values and the local facilities they share.

Belonging Research commissioned by The Automobile Association (SIRC 2007) found that: “Instead of thinking about belonging in terms of one group, or one specific place, it is now far more common for people to incorporate multiple social identities or a sense of belonging to a number of different groups and places at any one time in the course of their lives. Only 14 per cent of poll participants agreed that they felt a strong sense of belonging to one particular social group, as opposed to 34 per cent who said that their sense of belonging had changed significantly during the course of their lives.

The value of having multiple parts to our identities is being able to move between these parts in different situations to find common ground with different people (Research by Professor Miles Hewstone in Northern Ireland has found that encouraging multiple identities makes people more open to difference). One key piece of common ground is the part of identity that is about local belonging – and strengthening that, need not be at the cost of weakening other parts of identity.

This means that the important work to build a stronger sense of national identity or Britishness will not clash with building a local sense of identity. Rather that the two will reinforce each other as the same things that will bring us together locally will also bring us together nationally.

People want to belong and can change the flexible elements of their identity more easily than in the past, providing the opportunity to increase local sense of belonging.

Belonging Research commissioned by The Automobile Association (SIRC 2007) found that: “On one level, belonging is certainly changing. While in the past a sense of belonging was more rigidly defined in terms of the traditional markers of social identity such as class or religion, people are now far more able to choose the categories to which they belong. We are now able to select from a wide range of groups, communities, brands and lifestyles those with which we wish to align ourselves and which, in turn, shape our social identities.

At the same time we may, or may not, remain rooted in our families or in the place in which we were born. The ‘landscape’ of belonging may have changed – with much greater opportunity these days to opt in and opt out of various groups – but we still want the same things from membership of these groups. We have timeless needs for social bonding, loyalty, security and acceptance. ... One aspect of this transition, then, is greater social freedom – we are able to join and leave certain social groups more easily than in the past. On the other hand, this suggests a greater sense of uncertainty – having more freedom can also involve being uprooted and unanchored.”

Building a local sense of belonging is about reaching: newcomers who are looking for something to sign up to; existing residents who feel marginalised and who need to be supported to adapt to change; and existing residents who lack pride in their neighbourhood.

We know that there is no correlation between the level of diversity and the level of cohesion; we also know that migration needs to be combined with deprivation for it to have a negative impact of cohesion and this negative impact is strengthened by an area’s lack of experience of migration. This message that the impact of migration largely depends on the attitudes and circumstances of existing residents is an important one, borne out by *Immigration and social cohesion in the UK The rhythms and realities of everyday life* Mary Hickman, Helen Crowley and Nick Mai (JRF 2008) which found that “a recurring ‘negative’ dynamic was observed in neighbourhoods characterised by:

- the feeling of declining (cultural, economic, spatial) predominance of a group representing itself as ‘from here’
- a prevailing social and cultural heritage referring to a ‘close-knit’ social environment and translating into specific codes of neighbourly and civic behaviour
- a strain on strategic resources (employment, income benefits, subsidised housing, good education facilities)
- a lack of information about the arrival of new groups in their immediate setting, their background and their right to access shared (scarce) resources.

In these areas people who feel they represent the predominant 'declining' majority:

- interpreted minimalist or different (cultural, urban–rural, etc.) notions of neighbourliness and 'civility' as lack of interest/respect and/or hostility
- expressed feelings of resentment for their subjection to prolonged deprivation/marginalisation and lack of access to social mobility by blaming newcomers for structural shortages in social provision (subsidised housing, non-exploitative low skilled jobs, economic support, education)
- produced dynamics of acute social antagonism (racist attacks, harassment, bullying) against newcomers."

"The opposite 'positive' case is that of areas marked by:

- a significant demographic, economic and cultural presence of diverse migrant populations
- the common (by long-term minority ethnic residents and by new arrivals) acknowledgement of the area's social and cultural heritage as mixed
- the common acceptance of a plurality of styles of neighbourliness
- the common acknowledgement of the coinciding of socio-economic growth/stability and the arrival of new migrant or minority ethnic groups.

In these contexts, the absence of a feeling of privileged entitlement to belonging to the area attached to a specific ethnic/faith/racialised identity makes it easier for the majority of residents to:

- accept or ignore different (cultural, urban–rural, etc.) notions of neighbourliness as part of a predominant acceptance of cultural pluralism
- express feelings of appreciation for the cultural diversity of the area, which is seen as a positive asset of local identity
- produce adequate institutional responses of acceptance and solidarity towards newcomers ...
- experience the arrival of new groups as in line with the history and everyday experience of the place, and as a resource for the economic well-being of the area".

The tomorrow project also looked at the challenge of deprivation: “‘Left behind’ identities will persist in areas of multiple deprivation. They will remain deep-seated for a whole variety of complex reasons – for example:

- Economic isolation. Many of these localities, particularly in the conurbation cores, lack sites suitable for business expansion and are a long distance from factories, call centres, retail parks and other potentially suitable centres of employment, which are increasingly located on the periphery of large towns. They are cut off from outside – physically (outer estates may have a single street in and out), culturally (with a dependency culture for instance) and relationally (with few networks into mainstream society: networks play a key role in helping people into employment). So even if jobs do emerge nearby, many residents will be excluded from them
- Multiple deprivation. Typically, concentrations of poverty are associated with ill-health, family breakdown, high rates of teenage pregnancy, crime and social misbehaviour, an unattractive physical environment and other problems that go with poverty. Not surprisingly, those who get jobs tend to move out, often denuding the community of potential leaders and of individuals who could have ‘leavened’ the concentration of disadvantages. People who remain frequently live chaotic lives, making it still more difficult to regenerate the area.”

Clearly if local areas are able to influence attitudes among those who feel marginalised so they feel more positive, that will do much to ease tensions and give a greater sense of local belonging.

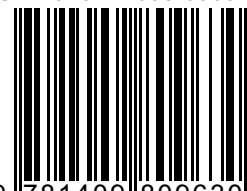
As we become more mobile and fewer of us sign up to traditional institutions, the mechanisms of the past for the setting and communication of local social norms and principles of behaviour are no longer so relevant. However, people still want to feel that when they live in or move into a neighbourhood, that they are signing up to something. This provides the opportunity for the local area to provide a concept of what its neighbourhoods are about – to give people something to integrate into.

For migrants, getting the balance between individual identity and integration is something for each person to negotiate – and giving people a sense of what to integrate into will help in this process.

Finally, there may also be people who live in a neighbourhood, but say they come from a neighbourhood nearby that is more aspirational, so work on belonging can build their pride and make them happy to say they come from the neighbourhood they live in.

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