Getting On Together - a Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales

Foreword by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

Getting On Together - a Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales - is 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.

We know that for most people Wales is a good place to live and work, but we can't take that for granted, and so we must give attention to those factors that could have an impact on local cohesion. These include the experience of persistent poverty and exclusion, the composition of communities changing through inward and outward migration, and also the impact of the current economic downturn which places increased demands in the short to medium term on available public services.

We developed the Strategy and accompanying Action Plan in partnership with public sector partners and the third sector, with the aim of identifying an approach to supporting strong communities that will be relevant and proportionate for all communities across Wales. During the twelve week consultation period on our draft Strategy, we held a variety of consultation events and workshops across Wales. I would like to thank all those involved in organising and participating in these events for providing their insight and support. We also received 76 written consultation responses providing us with suggestions to strengthen the Strategy, concerning social inclusion and issues that you told us are particularly relevant for Wales such as rural living and the potential impact of all forms of violent extremism.

Getting On Together and the accompanying Assembly Government Action Plan sets out our priorities for improving community cohesion. The Strategy emphasises the importance of identifying community cohesion issues at a local level and the need for cross-cutting strategic partnerships to drive forward local frameworks for action.

The measure of success for this Strategy is that in the years to come the communities which we value so highly in Wales continue to be good places to live, places characterised by mutual respect, places where people there can and do get on together.

Dr Brian Gibbons AM
Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

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Executive Summary

Wales needs strong, resilient and harmonious communities that can respond effectively to the increasing pace and scale of economic, social and cultural change in the 21st Century.

The purpose of this Strategy is to support service providers such as local authorities and their partners to develop a strategic approach to promoting and maintaining cohesion in their local areas. The Strategy encourages action which is appropriate and is proportionate to local circumstances, and reflects Welsh priorities by providing guidance on issues that we know can impact on local cohesion.

In this Strategy the term 'community' itself can mean many different things, for example describing the people living alongside each other in a residential area, (but who may have little interaction). It can also relate to particular groups of people who come together because of shared interest and experience. The definition of community can also be wider to involve regional and national identities.

The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government taking part in a 'Friends and Neighbours' (FAN) group meeting at the launch of the Strategy consultation. For further information on FAN groups visit www.thefancharity.org or contact the FAN Secretary 07989 041495

Community cohesion as a strategic aim can only be achieved through practical support across a broad range of policy and service delivery. This Strategy focuses on those policy and service delivery areas that research has shown can have a significant impact on how well a community gets on together.

- Housing;
- Learning;
- Communication;
- Promoting Equality and Social Inclusion; and
- Preventing Violent Extremism and Strengthening Community Cohesion.

There is a broad range of activity - reflecting the reality that cohesion is everyone's responsibility. This Strategy emphasises the value of local partnerships, the important role of organisations that are working at community level and readily acknowledges that the engagement of people living in communities is vital. A community which works well together in these ways is also a community which is likely to be resilient when external challenges arise or internal tensions develop.

The Strategy offers local cohesion partners a framework and guidance for developing a local community cohesion approach and provides examples of existing good practice. The framework sets out the benefits of community mapping and highlights some of the main issues for consideration. It is designed to be adapted to local needs. This Local Cohesion Framework is set out in Annex 1.

The Strategy also offers guidance on how partnerships can measure the impact of cohesion activities through monitoring and evaluation. This guidance is at Annex 2.

The Welsh Assembly Government wants to encourage local partners to promote the benefits of cohesion by taking and linking up action across all areas of public service delivery. In this way partners can identify and link to work that is already going on but which may not be recognised as supporting cohesion. Promoting cohesion is not a separate activity but an inherent part of developing and delivering Community Strategies and complimentary to the fulfilment of statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

The Welsh Assembly Government will be supporting cohesion at a national level including the provision of grant funding to support local cohesion initiatives to promote cohesion. We recognise the need to mirror within the Welsh Assembly Government some of the activities we are asking local partnerships to take forward. We have therefore produced an action plan that accompanies the Strategy which sets out what the Welsh Assembly Government will be doing to deliver this strategy.

Chapter One: Introduction

Wales needs strong, resilient and harmonious communities that can respond effectively to the increasing pace and scale of economic, social and cultural change in the 21st Century.

Getting On Together - a Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales is part of the Welsh Assembly Government's *One Wales* commitments to achieve a fair and just society, in which all citizens are empowered to determine their own lives and to shape the communities in which they live. *One Wales'* aims include:

- promoting equality; and

- enhancing citizenship and community cohesion.

Delivery of the Strategy will contribute to developing communities in Wales that are safe, vibrant and inclusive.

This Strategy focuses on some of the main issues that can impact on local cohesion. A key message is that service providers working directly at community level are those best placed to work in partnership with local people to identify and address the factors that could impact on cohesion in their areas. Recognising each locality has its own identity and distinctive needs, the suggested approach and frameworks are designed for adaptation by local partnerships.

The Strategy provides guidance on how local partners can work together to develop a Local Cohesion Framework that identifies what local priorities are. Partners will need to develop a full understanding of the work that is already going on to support cohesion, some of which may not currently be recognised as such. The foundation for developing a local cohesion approach will be to undertake Community Mapping which will build an up-to-date and accurate picture of who is living in a community and what the cohesion priorities are likely to be. Partnerships should also undertake scoping activities that can find out more about local events and activities that bring people together such as festivals or even local campaigns on issues that are affecting the community thus promoting social solidarity.

What Does Community Cohesion Mean?

There is no single universally shared understanding of what community cohesion means. The term 'community' itself is used for different purposes - including to describe the people living alongside each other in a residential area, (even neighbourhoods where people have little interaction) or to refer to particular groups of people who come together because of shared interests and experience. The definition of community can convey as sense of regional and national identities.

At its simplest the term 'community cohesion' in this Strategy is used to describe how everyone in a geographical area lives alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect. Where every person has the equal chance to participate and has equal access to services. It is about integration, valuing difference and focusing on the shared values that join people together. It conveys a sense of acceptance and integration and of developing shared values. It is also concerned with supporting communities to be resilient when problems and tensions arise.

At our consultation events we asked people from many different backgrounds what they thought community cohesion meant to them. Some of their definitions can be seen below.

Definitions of Community Cohesion at Consultation workshops:

'Living together with differences'

    'Cohesion - the opposite of conflict and tension'

'Sharing experience and having a common understanding'

    'Diverse communities coming together, sharing a language'

'Newcomers integrating into local communities'

    'People living and working together'

'Living in harmony'

    ' Having the same vision for the future'

The Assembly Government supports the UK Government's formal definition of community cohesion:

"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".

Our 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; and
- 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 recognition of the value of diversity; and

- strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

Department for Communities and Local Government (2008).

To promote a shared understanding, the Welsh Assembly Government also recognises and commends the four underlying principles expressed by the Commission on Integration & Cohesion in *Our Shared Future*:

• the sense of 'shared futures' which we believe is at the heart of our model and our recommendations - an emphasis on articulating what binds communities together rather than what differences divide them, and prioritising a shared future over divided legacies;

• an emphasis on a new model of responsibilities and rights that we believe will be fit for purpose in the 21st Century - one that makes clear both a sense of citizenship at national and local level, and the obligations that go along with membership of a community, both for individuals or groups;

• a new emphasis on civility and mutual respect, that recognises that alongside the need to strengthen the social bonds within groups, the pace of change across the country reconfigures local communities rapidly - and that means a mutual hospitality within and between groups; and

• a commitment to equality that sits alongside the need to make social justice visible, to prioritise transparency and fairness, and build trust in the institutions that arbitrate between groups.

Alongside which the Welsh Assembly Government has established for Wales:

• a commitment by public bodies and others working across organisational boundaries to putting citizens at the heart of service provision.

Why Do We Need a Community Cohesion Strategy?

The background to the development of a strategic approach to community cohesion lies in lessons learned from the 2001 civil disturbances in Northern England - Bradford, Burnley and Oldham. Since then the UK Department of Communities and Local Government has produced a number of guidance documents to support local authorities consider how they will approach cohesion.

The need to develop a strategic approach to community cohesion is just as relevant for Wales though in many cases the stress factors may be different. We are living in increasingly diverse communities and experience has shown us that in Wales on the rare occasions when local tensions arise they can quickly escalate into disturbances. We also recognise that communities in Wales may have particular cohesion priorities, for example relating to the impact of poverty and deprivation or the growing influence of far right extremism in some areas. We also have in particular the challenges faced by rural communities in the face of migration and a commitment to the sustainability of Welsh-speaking communities. We also recognise that some communities would wish to develop greater resilience to violent extremism.

Our vision for the future in Wales is that we value diversity and that different groups live alongside each other in harmony and demonstrating social solidarity and producing shared social capital for the community.

The Welsh Assembly Government's approach to community cohesion in Wales is proportionate, consistent with our commitment to sustainable development and acknowledges the need to identify cohesion priorities that meets the needs of different communities across Wales.

For most of us Wales is a good place to live and work. The *Living in Wales* Survey 2007 found that there were very positive views on community cohesion and respect for diversity and different cultural backgrounds. For example:

- 76% agree with the statement - This neighbourhood is a place where people from different backgrounds can live together harmoniously;

- 58% agree with the statement - It is better for a country if there is a variety of different cultures.

Although there is a high degree of integration in most Welsh communities, not everyone has a positive experience. Many different and interrelated factors can impact on local cohesion including:

- the experience of poverty and social exclusion can be linked to lower levels of cohesion within economically deprived communities. People may perceive they are competing for scare resources;

- increased immigration into the UK, most recently from EU accession states. This may have increased uncertainty and apprehension as communities become more diverse, particularly where previously there has been limited change in the composition of the community;

- additional housing pressures created by inward migration into rural areas where there may already be high demand for affordable homes;

- perceptions particularly in a recession, of increased competition for employment and services between new arrivals and the settled population leading to an increase in community tensions;

- global media with the instant reporting of world affairs which can result in an incident that has occurred in another part of the world having a local effect within hours;

- the increased global terrorist threat and the concern that disaffected and excluded individuals, particularly young people could become radicalised;

- tensions arising between different age groups or income groups, such as in some university towns where there is a transient student population living alongside the established settled population;

- concerns that demographic changes in rural areas could impact on the sustainability of predominantly Welsh-speaking communities;

- in the longer term climate change may lead to changing patterns of international migration, including those displaced as a result of conflict bringing new diverse groups to Welsh communities;

- individual experience relating to gender, ethnic background, disability, age, religion/belief and sexual orientation which can have a significant impact on perceptions and experience of cohesion.

Aims and Objectives

Aims

The aim of the Strategy is to strengthen community cohesion in Wales.

This will be achieved by providing public service organisations such as local authorities, the third sector and other partners with a strategic framework for developing a local approach to community cohesion that identifies and meets local priorities.

Objectives

The objective for this Strategy is to shape and support local efforts to improve community cohesion across Wales.

To achieve this, the Strategy:

- sets out a framework for local partnerships to use;

- provides guidance on a) undertaking local community mapping and on b) monitoring and evaluating community cohesion;

- sets out our intention to mainstream cohesion across the Welsh Assembly Government;

- identifies and shares existing best practice about community cohesion efforts in Wales.

An action plan which sets out what the Welsh Assembly Government will do is published alongside this Strategy.

Community House Presbyterian Church of Wales Peace Event

Community House in Newport hosts many activities for the whole community, these include a playgroup, older people's lunch club, Ashianna club for Asian Women and a youth club.

In July this year a Peace Event was held to celebrate local diversity and to mark their 40th anniversary. Activities at the event included:

- singing and talks by people from different religions, including Muslim children, the Caribbean Christian Church, Hare Krishna and Baha'i Faiths;

- Newport Mind Writing Group read poetry;

- Maindee Active Girls performed a drama;

- Pam Evans from Peace Mala made peace bracelets with children;

- people were encouraged to attach peace messages to a Tree of Life.

Further information www.etonrdch.org

What Does a Cohesive Community Look Like?

A cohesive community is one which is safe, vibrant, inclusive, has a sense of local identities and social solidarity. Unless people feel safe in their homes and their communities they will not have the confidence or desire to participate in community activities. A cohesive community is vibrant in the sense that there are activities available (which could be organised by the local authority, the town and community council or third sector organisation) in which a variety of people can participate. Inclusivity is key because (as set out in chapter 5) a cohesive community is one where everyone has opportunities to access services and participate in community life if they wish.

A cohesive community is also strong and resilient. It is able to develop solutions to its own problems, which might vary from the proposed closure of village amenities or the development of extremism in an area of a city. A cohesive community is also sustainable - a place where people want to live and work and can learn and prosper, where a community's heritage, character and distinctiveness combine with a shared and inclusive vision of the future. Such a community would support the strategic

direction expressed within the Assembly Government's *Our Healthy Future* which emphasises the importance of improving good health and well being for everyone and achieving fairer health outcomes. It highlights the positive impacts that a strong community, where people feel safe, involved and have access to a range of services, can have on both physical and mental health well being.

Research carried out by Duncan and Thomas in 2007, *Successful Neighbourhoods: A good practice guide,* suggested the main 'ingredients' for successful neighbourhoods. These can be also used to help us consider what a cohesive community looks like:

- a good quality, safe and well-maintained environment;

- effective democratic neighbourhood representation;

- active neighbourhood management, with direct involvement of the community in decision-making about local services and a commitment to joined up operating by service providers;

- community control of appropriate neighbourhood assets;

- a well developed social network, with on-going investment in strengthening and widening social capital;

- a good degree of social cohesion between different communities living alongside each other;

- a clear sense of neighbourhood identity and belonging;

- good access to essential community facilities for all age groups;

- access to good schools and employment opportunities;

- low levels of crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour, with visible and effective neighbourhood policing;

- a good affordable public transport service, encouraging people to make some journeys without using their cars; and

- demonstrable, year on year improvements in the statistical indicators of deprivation - ill health, mortality, worklessness, illiteracy and school performance.

During the Strategy consultation we received feedback that local cohesion approaches should also focus on the need to identify whether there are cohesion issues that are particularly relevant for Wales and three were suggested:

- the higher historical prevalence of economic and social deprivation;

- community cohesion issues in rural areas including access to affordable housing;

- the sustainability of Welsh language speaking communities.

This Strategy forms part of the Welsh Assembly Government's approach to the strategic development of public service delivery in Wales expressed in *Making the Connections*. This approach promotes active collaboration between service delivery organisations as the way forward for the efficient delivery of public services. *Delivering beyond Boundaries* has developed its main theme of citizen centred service delivery based on local leadership and effective partnership working. Local Service Boards have been established throughout Wales to take forward local delivery agreements, providing shared ownership and commitment to delivery. Many Local Service Boards have already identified cohesion as a priority objective for their areas.

The Strategy's emphasis on local development also complements the approach taken by the Welsh Assembly Government's *Wales Spatial Plan*. This 20-year vision of the sustainable development of Wales recognises that different areas of Wales will have different opportunities and challenges. Locally focused cohesion activity can help to support the delivery of Spatial Plan objectives notably that of 'building sustainable communities'.

The Benefits of Developing a Local Approach to Community Cohesion

Public service organisations working at community level are already undertaking a great deal of work that supports local cohesion, much of which may not be specifically aimed at cohesion. For example in providing well managed social housing and in the provision of community education and leisure services. Drawing this together into a well developed local community cohesion approach will not only ensure that partners can be more responsive to their communities, they are also more likely to be alive to current community concerns and will have early intelligence if tensions arise.

At present there is no legislation that specifically relates to developing and implementing community cohesion strategies in Wales. Nevertheless taking forward community cohesion work will also help local authorities and other statutory partners to demonstrate and in some cases present examples of best practice in meeting their existing statutory duties.

Public authorities could look at the development of their equality schemes to identify how cohesion activities can support the delivery of existing equality commitments. In the longer term taking a strategic approach to cohesion will help organisations identify ways in which they demonstrate they are meeting and often surpassing equality duties. For example a local project aimed at bringing people from different ethnic backgrounds within a community together to promote mutual understanding can clearly demonstrate how the local organisation is working proactively to promote good relations. Some of the statutory duties that can be met by taking a proactive approach to community cohesion include:

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

The purpose of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 is to promote race equality in the way public authorities work. The general duty says that the body must have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups.

Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Disability Equality Duty was introduced into legislation in the Disability Discrimination Act (amended 2005). It places a general and specific duties on public bodies to promote equal treatment for all people, regardless of disability.

Equality Bill

The Bill contains specific provisions which if enacted will allow the Welsh Assembly Government to determine specific duties appropriate for Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government plans to hold a public consultation in 2010.

Local Government Act 2000

Section 4(1) of the Local Government Act 2000 requires county and county borough councils in Wales to prepare community strategies, for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well being of their areas and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. These reflect the strategic priorities set out in Children and Young People's Plans, Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategies, Local Development Plans and other major plans and strategies.

Who Should Be Involved?

Developing a local community cohesion approach is not the responsibility of just one organisation. A successful approach will acknowledge the role of all organisations working in the community, including the third sector, many of whom already have an established role in supporting local cohesion. Such organisations will be working at the heart of the community and will have first hand knowledge of local issues and can provide early intelligence when tensions develop. Partnerships should include organisations that have a specialist role in supporting particular disadvantaged groups. It is important to recognise that it may be necessary to focus activity for targeted groups to build inclusion and for capacity building to help people become actively involved in their communities, for example specific work to promote the inclusion of people who communicate using British Sign Language.

Potential partnerships that can work together to promote cohesion are already established, such as Community Safety Partnerships and Local Service Boards. The Welsh Assembly Government's Community Cohesion Fund will support partnerships involving Community Safety Partnerships and Communities First Partnerships to work together in a more strategic way. Some local partners that could be involved in a local cohesion partnership are suggested below:

Mainstreaming Community Cohesion

Community Cohesion is very much a cross-cutting agenda relevant to many policy areas and it therefore makes sense to embed cohesion into policy and service delivery. This may reduce the need to provide funding and resources for specific cohesion projects. However, there will always be the need to target resources to support specialist projects and engage hard-to-reach groups.

Recognised good practice involves "mainstreaming" cohesion considerations across the full public service partnership, with a focus on certain key services:

• social housing;

• planning and neighbourhood renewal;

• schools and children;

• services for young people, old people or 'vulnerable' people;

• recreation and culture.

The Department of Communities and Local Government has produced *Guidance for local authorities* on how to mainstream community cohesion into other services.

Within the Welsh Assembly Government we will use our policy gateway process to achieve mainstreaming, alongside the activities set out in the Action Plan that accompanies this Strategy.

Chapter Two: Housing and Community Cohesion

The way we feel about where we live can have a significant impact on our physical and psychological well being. We all want to live in good quality, affordable homes in a safe and attractive environment. Poor housing provision can be one of the most significant contributors to the development of community tensions, resulting in low levels of cohesion. The pressures on social housing landlords are growing and the current economic downturn may increase housing need.

As the demand for good quality affordable housing remains high it may not be surprising that community tensions can develop as people see themselves competing for the limited number of available houses. Housing issues that could negatively affect cohesion could include:

- the lack of transparency and perceptions of unfairness in the allocation of social housing by long standing residents set against the needs of new arrivals, particularly in areas of social deprivation;

- competition for housing in popular areas where there is a lack of affordable homes, potentially more significant in rural areas;

- inequality in choice of good quality housing, which could be related to income;

- poor maintenance of housing and surrounding external environment and lack of community facilities;

- housing need far outstripping housing supply within chosen markets and localities;

- anti-social or even criminal behaviour by neighbours.

The lack of affordable housing in some rural areas may be particularly acute; the rising price of houses has made home ownership unattainable for many families who have established ties to a small town or village. This could result in overcrowding as generations of families live together or that families and particularly young people cannot afford to remain in their areas. This can have a negative impact on a community as the generational diversity is decreased and community facilities could be closed.

Housing Provision and Cohesion

Individual well being depends heavily upon perceptions of safety, belonging and friendships, these perceptions are critical in relation to a person's home. The terms 'sense of belonging', 'strong and positive relationships' and 'focus on new and existing communities' contained in the UK definition of community cohesion cannot be successfully tackled without addressing the approach towards the provision, maintenance and allocation of housing.

As community tensions develop in a local area the situation for some individuals and families can become critical very quickly. Poorly planned or designed housing can contribute to increased risks and fears for personal safety, leading people to feel frightened and isolated in their own communities. In the worst case scenario this housing will not only be expensive to maintain but could threaten the well being of the whole community. By contrast, well thought out, successful housing provision can facilitate social interaction, sustainability and a sense of pride in the community. Having tidy, well maintained neighbourhoods and safe community facilities where people can meet will have a positive impact on community cohesion.

Social housing landlords are an important resource in developing a local cohesion approach, having well established community links and taking a pro-active approach to partnership working. They can demonstrate a strong background of involving tenants through consultation, service delivery and capacity building within the communities that they serve. At grass roots level housing staff have a high degree of contact with residents and the local housing office will often be the first point of contact for tenants and residents seeking support or advice. This contact, if used to its full potential, provides an opportunity to engage with community members and deal with their concerns and any emerging community tensions.

Social landlords are required to record and monitor levels and types of anti-social behaviour in their communities and therefore they may be more aware of tensions that exist at a local level. This puts them in an ideal position to identify and raise issues at an early stage and to work with partners to take action to support the community.

Private housing provision by contrast is not as well regulated as social housing provision. There is recognition that the majority of new community members may find themselves living in private rented accommodation. This accommodation will vary in quality, but there is some anecdotal evidence of instances of overcrowding, financial exploitation, high fuel costs, poor safety and sanitation. Local authorities have an important role in identifying where these problems arise and working with the community, private landlords and tenants to overcome them.

Merthyr Tydfil Global Village

The **Merthyr Tydfil Global Village Event** was established in 2005 to celebrate and raise awareness of the cultural diversity and heritage of Merthyr Tydfil. Discussions took place within the Multi Agency Diversity Forum (MADF) - a partnership of local statutory and voluntary organisations that meet to address issues of diversity and hate crime. The Global Village event is linked to Merthyr Tydfil's Heritage Festival and involves as many members of the community as possible.

This year the organisers are delighted that so many local groups are involved. We are particularly proud of the work our local young people have put into preparing for this event, finding out about the cultures and traditions of people who are members of our community and also celebrating Merthyr's own history.

For more information visit Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association at www.mtha.org.uk

Training and awareness of housing staff

Negative perceptions around the fair allocation of housing can be very emotive and if not addressed can ultimately lead to the development of community tensions. Housing staff have an important role in helping to allay fears and provide accurate information including dispelling myths and being alert to community tensions as they develop. Their work can be supported by a structured commitment to the training and awareness of housing staff as a considered part of a community cohesion approach. An effective training programme can improve:

• housing staffs' awareness of diversity and cultural differences within their community;

- skills of staff to deal with individual needs of community members;

- staff knowledge of equal opportunity legislation and procedures;

- community cohesion within the organisation's area of influence;

- customer relations; and

- community participation in service delivery.

The Chartered Institute of Housing's publication *Community Cohesion and Housing: a good practice guide* (Perry and Blackaby 2007) provides further guidance.

Welsh Assembly Government Strategic Approach to Housing

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the challenges in ensuring everyone has access to affordable good quality homes where they want to live. *One Wales* sets out the vision for future housing, with a commitment to achieving 'Living Communities where all households in all communities irrespective of their means can afford a decent home'.

We are developing a long term strategic approach to meeting these challenges both in the future provision of housing and to support housing providers deliver good quality services for tenants. The main strategies and polices that are part of this approach are:

Sustainable Homes: A National Housing Strategy for Wales

The draft housing strategy has recently completed statutory consultation with the findings currently being reviewed. It aims to provide coherent direction for housing policy for both local government as the strategic housing bodies, and non-government housing providers including private landlords and social enterprise landlords. It is linked to the *Wales Spatial Plan*, recognising that any new housing developments be located near to services and jobs or where they can be easily accessed.

A key chapter in the draft Housing Strategy, 'Strengthening Communities', establishes how vital good housing planning is to community and physical regeneration. Any housing investment - public, private or third sector should improve places, support local jobs and skills and help strengthen community cohesion. New housing will be a central feature of creating sustainable communities, integrating mixed development within existing communities.

New housing developments also need to create public and community space so that people can meet and interact.

Preparing Local Housing Strategies (2007): Revised guidance to Local Authorities in Wales from the Welsh Assembly Government

This guidance outlines clear steps which should be taken to promote community cohesion. It states that "tackling social disadvantage and creating an inclusive society where everyone has the chance to fulfill his or her potential is at the heart of the Welsh Assembly Government's vision for housing". The guidance contains a number of provisions, which local authorities and housing providers should follow in order to promote and maintain community cohesion.

Regulatory Code for Housing Associations Registered in Wales (2006)

This code sets out a number of key expectations on how the Welsh Assembly Government expects housing associations to operate, including the promotion of good relations.

Anti-Social Behaviour: Policies and Procedures - Code of Guidance for Local Authorities and Housing Associations (2005)

Anti-social behaviour covers a broad spectrum of behaviours ranging from what is mildly irritating to utterly devastating. It can have substantial negative impact on local cohesion. Although it is not just a housing issue, it is clear that the housing sector has an important role in preventing poor behaviour and dealing with it when it arises. This guidance establishes the role of social landlords in tackling anti-social behaviour, setting out social landlords' responsibilities in s.12 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

Race Equality Housing Action Plan 2008-2011

The aim of the Race Equality Housing Action Plan is to promote equality of opportunity and achieve social inclusion for all people in Wales through the delivery of responsive and accountable housing and related services. A number of the actions within the plan and desired outcomes will impact positively upon cohesion.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to:

- giving direction on the role housing can play in strengthening communities;
- providing guidance on the need to engage all sections of the community in local housing strategies;
- giving guidance to social landlords to take action on anti-social behaviour.

Chapter Three: Learning and Cohesion

Learning has the potential to be a very powerful tool in promoting integration and mutual respect. Participating in learning can take place at different times in our lives and there are a host of settings in which it can be accessed. There are invaluable opportunities for positive cohesion messages to be promoted through learning experiences, reaching people across all age groups and backgrounds.

Learning not only brings the benefits of increased skills and building confidence, the act of simply participating in learning can have very positive benefits in helping to promote cohesion. Learning activities take place in many different situations including pre-school learning, schools and colleges, universities, the work place and community settings. This variety offers important opportunities to promote community cohesion in different ways, at different stages of life and can bring people together who may not usually come into contact with each other.

School and college buildings and facilities not only provide centres for education, the facilities can also be used by community groups to meet and they can be used for recreation, such as sports and evening classes. These facilities are particularly valuable in deprived areas or in rural communities where alternative centres may not exist or where residents are unable to take up opportunities outside their immediate areas.

Basic Skills and Community Cohesion

There is a clear link between having basic skills in literacy and numeracy and cohesion. The ability to read, write and use numbers is an essential skill in modern society. It underpins nearly all the other skills that people need to engage in family, work and community life. Research shows that low literacy and numeracy correlate to low income and unemployment. The *Living in Wales Survey 2004* found that fewer people with low literacy and numeracy participate in social, political, cultural or community activities when compared with people of above average incomes.

The need to ensure everyone is equipped with good skills in literacy and numeracy is recognised in the Welsh Assembly Government's *Basic Skills Strategy*. The second phase - *Words Talk-Numbers Count* was launched in 2005, and reflects the need for a co-ordinated all-age response to breakdown the circle of persistent inter-generational disadvantage for those with lower basic skills.

Learning in Schools and Cohesion

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the key role of schools in promoting positive relationships within the community. *One Wales* sets out the links between community cohesion and learning.

Schools directly support local community cohesion by providing children and young people with strong and positive messages to encourage mutual understanding and respect. This is not only through the curriculum but also in creating a positive ethos in the community life of the school. Schools can promote respect for local cultural history and work to build respect for cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity amongst the school community. They have an important role in developing active citizenship amongst children and young people. Children and young people are citizens in their own right, being supported through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Schools have an important role in encouraging participation by encouraging parents to play a full part in the life and development of the school. Closer involvement of parents and the local community can help encourage people from diverse backgrounds to become school governors so reflecting the diversity of the school.

Working with ContinYou Cymru (a community learning charity) and the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW), the Assembly Government has developed a detailed toolkit providing case studies and detailed guidance to help local authorities, schools and partners develop 'Community Focused Schools'.

British Red Cross - Peer Befriending Scheme

Working with Wrexham Council, we have been providing support to mostly Polish migrants who have come to the UK to work but have lost their jobs. Many are completely destitute and disconnected from the wider community. As part of this we set up a *Peer befriending scheme* at Ysgol Clywedog in Wrexham. Year 9 students are 'buddied' with children from migrant worker families to help integration and relieve tensions. Some quotes from the students:

" I think the project will help children who are new to the school and possibly new to the area to get used to the Wrexham area and the school, and a chance for them to make new friends. They will be given the chance to solve problems, make new friends and be given advice."

The National Curriculum has a particularly important role to play in terms of ensuring that children and young people in schools have a heightened sense of belonging to their local community and country. They also learn to value and respect other cultures and traditions outside their immediate experience. The *National Exemplar Framework for Religious Education for 3 to19-year-olds in Wales* focuses on developing an understanding and respect for world religions and the impact that they have on individuals and society in order to support community cohesion.

Personal and Social Education (PSE) forms part of the basic curriculum for all pupils aged 7 to 16 at maintained schools. Within the PSE framework, a community cohesion approach can be incorporated by individual establishments. The Curriculum Cymraeg gives learners aged 7-14 the opportunity to develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the cultural, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales whilst learners aged 14-19 should have opportunities for active engagement in understanding the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of Wales as part of the world.

The provision of Welsh language medium education as part of the National Curriculum is also central to the development of the Welsh language in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to a bilingual Wales, and the teaching of Welsh as part of the National Curriculum, plays an important role in ensuring that pupils have an understanding and knowledge of both languages of Wales.

For many minority ethnic pupils language acquisition is crucial both to their development and for social integration. Recognising this, the Welsh Assembly Government makes significant funding available, under the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant, which is divided amongst all 22 local authorities. The grant supports specialist teachers and bilingual teaching assistants who help pupils who have English or Welsh as an additional language with their social and academic language development.

In addition to Religious Education and PSE, *Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Strategy* both have an important role to play in supporting community cohesion and ensuring that pupils have an understanding of how their communities and traditions exist within a wider context.

Learning and Young People

The Welsh Assembly Government's policy for youth support services is set out in *Extending Entitlement* (National Assembly for Wales 2000) and the *'Direction and Guidance on Extending Entitlement'* (Welsh Assembly Government 2002).

The policy supports the aims of community cohesion by working to ensure that young people are supported as necessary according to their circumstances to participate in education, training and achieve employment.

Adult Learning and Cohesion

As adults there are many avenues open to access learning throughout our lives. For example, career development or personal development and leisure. Learning provision available within a community can be extremely valuable in bringing local people to come together, particularly those who may not normally interact with each other. Shared learning can build local relationships and develop shared interests.

Further Education (FE) colleges can provide a great variety of vocational and community education courses in their local areas, often working with Higher Education Organisations to provide courses up to degree level. Local FE providers working with people in the community are an excellent source of information and intelligence in identifying some of the cohesion issues that can be relevant in an area. FE Colleges are, in many respects, amongst the most inclusive and socially cohesive learning centres, welcoming entrants who come from a range of social backgrounds and academic achievement. They promote and achieve cultural, ethnic and social diversity. Similarly, work-based learning and the training sector as a whole play a major role in keeping young people in worthwhile activity and giving them a sense of personal and social responsibility.

Adult community learning has a long history of addressing learner needs, which might not be met through more mainstream learning activities. In summer 2009 the Welsh Assembly Government approved proposals from learning providers to become recognised adult community learning partnerships. This builds on our vision for reconfiguration of learning provision as set out in *Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales*.

Higher Education and Cohesion

The Welsh Assembly Government wants to support the Higher Education (HE) sector in Wales to become more directly aligned with the *One Wales* themes of economic development and social justice by increasing its contribution to economic life, wellbeing and performance in Wales. Through public investment we want to encourage the HE sector to strengthen its existing links with FE colleges and Sector Skills Councils so that more potential students from less well-off backgrounds can gain access to higher education. The Welsh Assembly Government is supporting the Heads of the Valley Initiative to create a permanent base for higher education

in the area spanning Ebbw Vale to Merthyr Tydfil. The initiative will lead a drive to transform the performance and prospects of an area which has one of the lowest skill levels in the UK. Addressing the important role HE can play in contributing to community cohesion will be an important element of the new HE Strategy to be published late 2009.

Welsh Assembly Government's approach to Learning and Community Cohesion

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the key role that learning has in promoting cohesion. It has established an Education Cohesion Programme Board and is currently undertaking a scoping exercise to take stock of the work already taking place and the arrangements that exist at a local level in the education sectors and wider community in Wales. A research programme has been commissioned to provide baseline information to enable us to develop learning provision that supports community cohesion.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to:

- breaking down the circle of inter-generational disadvantage of people with low basic skills;

- providing a first class education for all children, whatever their social origins or where they live;

- helping local authorities and partners develop community focused schools;

- encouraging young people from less well off backgrounds to access higher education.

Chapter Four: Communication and Community Cohesion

The ability for everyone to communicate using a shared language is very important in helping to promote shared understanding and respect within local communities. Shared language enables people to communicate and participate in every day community activities. In Wales there is an added dimension with the co-existence of both Welsh and English languages. The Welsh Assembly Government also recognises British Sign Language (BSL) as a language in its own right. In the wider context, in modern society we are constantly exposed to a huge variety of communication messages. The globalisation of news and current affairs can communicate information to millions of people within minutes via television, radio and the internet. Media messages can be powerful tools in shaping people's perceptions and in some cases they could fuel community tensions.

A Shared Language

At a local level the lack of good communication skills can be one of the biggest barriers to achieving cohesive and integrated communities. An inability to communicate in a host language can also affect an individual's opportunities to access their rights and public services, find employment and become and active citizen. The Welsh Assembly Government has also acknowledged that BSL users can have significant problems in accessing services. We have provided support to the BSL Futures project to increase the number of qualified BSL interpreters in Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that whilst it is important to provide key interpretation and translation services the ability to communicate in English is centrally important to help newly arriving people settle and integrate into their new communities.

Radyr and Morganstown Community Council - Village Plan

Radyr and Morganstown (R&M) are two villages in north western Cardiff. They have grown steadily during their long history but in the last ten years growth has been rapid with the building of three large housing developments on the edges of the existing community. The Community Council and the Radyr and Morganstown Association felt that it was important to bring together the older and newer areas through community activities, since there had been considerable local opposition to each of the three new areas during the planning stages.

By producing a Village Plan they were able to tell everyone about the community's facilities and at the same time ask what people wanted to keep and change. There was a need to understand what residents thought about the current available services, facilities and organisations; to identify gaps in their requirements; The steering group developed two community questionnaires for distribution to each household in R&M: one for adults and one for young people.

One in three households replied to the questionnaire and although this was predominantly from the older areas, the results showed where and how the new and old areas differed. Based on these results and the needs and wishes of the R&M areas, a list of possible projects is being drawn up that the community want to do over the next few years

Visit: www.radyr.org.uk

Welsh Assembly Government ESOL Provision

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision has a key role in the successful integration of new migrants into a community.

Policies which determine the need for ESOL in Wales are predominantly decided by the UK Government as immigration and naturalisation polices are not devolved. The UK Border Agency funds the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES), which is co-ordinated in Wales by the Welsh Refugee Council. RIES signposts refugees to English language training opportunities. The provision of ESOL as an element of lifelong learning is the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government.

We want to ensure that English language education is available to promote the social inclusion of vulnerable non-English speakers and to ensure that migrant workers can contribute productively to the Welsh economy.

The numbers of Welsh Assembly Government funded ESOL learners has grown steadily in recent years, however, demand for ESOL provision has outstripped supply in some parts of Wales, which has resulted in waiting lists for learners in certain localities.

The *Basic Skills Strategy for Wales* includes the commitment to supporting ESOL learners in Wales through early years programmes, family programmes, and support for ESOL learners in the adult education sector. ESOL learners are identified as a priority group in the strategy and the Welsh Assembly Government provides an Inclusion Grant available to voluntary organisations to be used (amongst other things) for signposting to language provision for refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers.

The Welsh Assembly Government provides significant funding through the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant, which is allocated across all Local Education Authorities for English as an Additional Language (EAL) provision in schools and through the National Planning and Funding System (NPFS) for ESOL courses for post 16 students in colleges and community learning provision.

Supporting Welsh Language Communities

Safeguarding and promoting people's right to speak Welsh, both to access services and to play a full part in civic and cultural life is important to maintaining local cohesion. The sustainability of Welsh language speaking communities may be of particular concern in rural areas where historically there has been little population change.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the need to preserve Welsh language communities and provide opportunities for its future development. It published *Iaith Pawb*, the National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales in 2003, which contains a range of projects and initiatives to promote and safeguard the Welsh language and the needs of Welsh speakers and Welsh-speaking communities. *Iaith Pawb* recognised that "population changes within Welsh-speaking communities are among the factors which undermine the position of the language in those communities" and that "in recent decades, the demographic trends in Welsh-speaking areas have been for young people to leave, to be replaced, if at all, by the in-migration of older, non Welsh speakers.

Written Information and Cohesion

In addition to sharing language, the provision of well thought out written material also has a great potential to support local cohesion. When new people arrive in any area it can often be difficult to learn and understand the way things are organised locally. People need to know simple things such as when refuse is collected, where to get help with community services and how to pay bills etc. The Welsh Assembly Government wants to support local integration by introducing a revised *Welcome to Wales* pack, which can be useful for anyone arriving in a new area.

The pack will be the initial point of information on all migrant issues providing reliable information, signposting users to relevant public sector, regulatory and government bodies. It will be available from Spring 2010. Local authorities will be encouraged to add local information to the pack to reflect the local services available, thus supporting integration.

The Media and Cohesion

The media can have a very strong influence on how people view their neighbourhoods and on how some groups are viewed by others. Threadgold's (2008) research *Immigration and Inclusion in South Wales* found that migrants often felt that they were misrepresented by the UK media, although the Welsh media was found to be less negative. Unbalanced media reporting reinforces unfair negative stereotypes and strengthens existing prejudices, potentially contributing to community tensions. Local cohesion partnerships may find it difficult to get positive messages of cohesion into the public arena. Given that local cultural events can sometimes be a focus for local media, helping to promote positive community images can often be achieved by keeping media informed of local cohesion activities.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to:

- supporting ESOL learners through the Basic Skills Strategy;

- encouraging newcomers to learn Welsh and integrate into Welsh-speaking communities;

- providing information on living in Wales through the *Welcome to Wales* pack;

- funding a pilot of the All Wales Translation and Interpretation Service. This is a co-ordinated Welsh public sector translation and interpretation service that is able to plan and organise services at a strategic level and better meet the needs of public sector bodies.

Chapter Five: Promoting Equality, Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion

Within any community there will be people who experience exclusion or isolation and there will be a variety of reasons to explain this. This may include exclusion caused by discrimination and prejudice relating to gender, disability, ethnic background, sexual orientation, age or religion/belief. The experience of poverty and deprivation also significantly contributes to ongoing disadvantage, particularly in relation to financial poverty caused by unemployment or low income.

Wales has always experienced outward migration and immigration particularly from other areas of Britain, however in recent years we have seen a faster pace of change in the diversity of our communities. The main recent contributory factor was increased inward migration into the UK following the expansion of the European Union in 2004. It is acknowledged that the pace of change may sometimes cause anxieties both within the settled communities and in the ability of new arrivals to settle and integrate easily. Recent research by Threadgold (2008) into immigration and inclusion in South Wales in working class and middle class communities describes a complex picture of migration into Wales, finding that:

- there was no evidence to suggest that community tensions are an inevitable consequence of new immigration;

- that minority ethnic groups were not any more segregated than host communities;

- there was no evidence that minority ethnic groups were any less well integrated than white working class communities.;

- middle class migration (particularly but not only white) is largely invisible in Wales;

- class differences affected the ways in which integration and community cohesion were experienced in every day life;

- minority groups reported experiences of discrimination, cultural ignorance or racism;

- social mobility was restricted by the deprived conditions and poverty experienced by some new migrants;

- the appearance of integration and cohesion in apparently successful communities can hide groups who are isolated, exploited or vulnerable;

- generational issues existed, attributed to the new forms of family or community, leading to isolation for elderly people or different levels of integration.

The research findings clearly illustrate the links between low cohesion and the experience of poverty and deprivation, with lower levels of integration being aligned with greater poverty. The social environment also has a great impact on local cohesion. In areas of social deprivation, in both urban and rural communities, tensions can develop as people see themselves competing for scarce resources. Recent UK Government research (DCLG 2009) also found there could be feelings of unfair treatment, for example around the perceived allocation of housing and services for new arrivals, taking precedence over established residents.

Wales has some very specific problems in relation to poverty and social inclusion. In Wales about 1 in 3 children live in poverty and the proportion of working age people living in poverty in Wales is estimated to be 3 percentage points higher than in the UK as a whole.

Whether we live in an urban or rural environment can also impact on perceptions of inclusion and local cohesion. Although urban areas are more likely to have community facilities such as shops and leisure centres, the larger populations could also be a factor in tensions developing around competition for resources. The issues in rural areas will be different, such as the lack of affordable homes and fewer community facilities, which could all impact on local cohesion.

When we consulted on the Strategy, we received feedback commenting that community cohesion in rural areas could be a particular issue for Wales. Community cohesion priorities may be very different in rural or urban environments. Local cohesion partnerships will need to consider whether their local area contains both rural and urban communities as each are likely to have different needs.

Distinctive rural issues might include:

- fewer community facilities as a focus for community life, where local people can meet and participate in activities such as learning;

- isolation, particularly experienced by older and young people caused by the lack of access to services and reliable transport to centres of population;

- fewer available local employment opportunities to sustain community life and problems associated with low income;

- the possible impact of new people arriving in rural communities that have remained the same for generations;

- young people moving out of long established rural communities because of factors such as the lack of employment or affordable housing;

- the high demand for affordable housing and its consequences such as overcrowding or people living in unsuitable accommodation;

- the need to sustain long established Welsh-speaking communities as local populations change.

The *Rural Development Plan* is the mechanism by which the Welsh Assembly Government delivers activities under the EU Rural Development Regulation. It supports locally developed strategies and projects aimed at sustaining and developing the socio-economic, environmental and cultural framework of rural communities. These are delivered through 18 local partnerships across Wales. The RDP could provide opportunities to address cohesion issues in rural areas if Local Partnerships consider them to be a priority for their communities.

When developing a local community cohesion approach partnership organisations should give careful consideration to how they will ensure that every person in a community has a voice and is being listened to. This is especially important for people who are already isolated and marginalised because of discrimination and economic and social disadvantage, including rural areas where people may feel geographically more isolated.

Where they occur, the prevalence of hate crimes can be one of the most serious consequences of low cohesion. These crimes are motivated by hostility or prejudice simply because individuals or groups are different because of disability, ethnic background, religion or belief, sexual orientation or being transgender.

The Home Office acknowledges the devastating impact that these crimes can have on individuals, their families and the community. It has recently published a Cross-Government Hate Crime Action Plan, which sets out how to tackle hate crime and improve support for victims. The development of an All Wales Community Cohesion Strategy is one of the actions in the plan.

Report Hate - Safer Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government is working in partnership with Safer Wales, an independent charity working to combat hate crime and the Welsh police forces to tackle the under reporting of hate crimes in Wales.

In July 2009 Safer Wales launched an on-line service to enable victims, witnesses or other third parties to report hate incidents. The hate crime reporting form can be accessed at www.saferwales.com.

Safer Wales will pass on the full details of the incidents to the Police and other support agencies (with the consent of the reporting person).

Equality and Cohesion

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) has recently published a research review of the composition of the Welsh population, summarising:

- around 2% of the population is from an ethnic minority group;

- women slightly outnumber men generally, with substantially more women in older age groups;

- by 2026 it is estimated that 29% of the population will be over 60 years old;

- disability and long term limiting health affects approximately 27% of adults and 5% of children;

- one in five of the population has no religious faith. Christians are by far the largest group of believers with Muslims being the second largest group;

- there is little data on sexual orientation;

- almost 30% of the population has some knowledge of Welsh, 18% can read, speak and write Welsh.

Local cohesion partnerships are encouraged to consider the perceptions and experiences of people from all backgrounds, including less visible groups. Partnerships that address equality and diversity as part of their approach to cohesion can help to promote equality and diversity, and this work can support public sector organisations meet the requirements of equality legislation through demonstrating good practice in their statutory equality schemes.

Welsh Assembly Government Strategic Approach to Promoting Equality

The Welsh Assembly Government has a duty to promote equality of opportunity for all. We recognise the need to address the impact of disadvantage and provide new opportunities for marginalised groups to access the same level of public services that the majority of people enjoy. We have done this by mainstreaming equality across policy departments and by tackling specific areas of greatest disadvantage.

Single Equality Scheme (2008)

The Welsh Assembly Government is subject to equality legislation in the same way as other public bodies in Wales, but we have additional responsibilities under the Government of Wales Act 2006. The *Single Equality Scheme* (SES) outlines how the Welsh Assembly Government plans to promote equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination by placing the promotion of equality, diversity and human rights at the centre of our work in policy making, service provision and employment.

The role that supporting community cohesion has in promoting equality, diversity and Human Rights is acknowledged in the Scheme. The community cohesion actions and outcomes will complement and contribute to the implementation of this strategy and action plan.

Welsh Assembly Government's Strategic Approach to Promoting Inclusion

The Welsh Assembly Government is firmly committed to supporting and including people who are marginalised from society. We are taking action through providing additional support for the poorest people in the community. Specific policy approaches are outlined below. Local community cohesion partnerships can consider how these policy priorities are benefitting their local communities or whether more can be done in local areas.

Refugee Inclusion Strategy (2008)

The *Refugee Inclusion Strategy* aims to ensure refugees are able to rebuild their lives in Wales and make a full contribution to society. The strategy highlights how the Welsh Assembly Government will work with service providers to realise the vision of refugee inclusion in Wales. One of the key areas which the objectives focus on is community cohesion. In addition the UK Border Agency funds the Refugee Integration and Employment Service to assist refugees to integrate into their new communities.

A Road Less Travelled - Draft Gypsy Consultation Strategy

The Welsh Assembly Government has produced the UK's first Strategy for Gypsies and Travellers which seeks to address the persistent inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers in Wales. The Strategy recognises the importance of promoting cohesion and recognises that relationships between Gypsies and Travellers and the settled community are not always harmonious. The Strategy presents a new deal to promote mutual understanding and foster respect between Gypsies and Travellers and the settled community.

Strategy for Older People in Wales

The *Strategy for Older People* is a 10-year Strategy set in the context of our ageing society. Over the 6 years of the Strategy's implementation each Local Authority in Wales has received funding from the Welsh Assembly Government to appoint a Strategy Coordinator for Older People, an elected member champion and support the establishment of local 50 plus fora. An *Intergenerational Practice Strategy* was launched in October 2008. The aim of the Strategy is to highlight the value that both older and younger people can bring to communities and themselves by fostering productive and mutually respectful relationships.

Communities First

Communities First is our programme for tackling poverty in the most deprived areas across Wales. In the eligible Communities First areas (which cover approximately 20% of the population) there are established local Communities First Partnerships. Their aim is to develop priorities for action in their areas, based on community need, and work with local service providers to achieve these goals.

The importance of engaging with Communities First Partnerships has been recognised in the guidance on the new Community Cohesion Fund. This sets out the need for Communities First partnerships to be strategically engaged in the decisions for local community cohesion action.

Community Safety

The Welsh Assembly Government is taking a proactive approach to supporting safer communities. Although crime and policing are non-devolved matters many of the factors that can affect community safety are devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government. We have strategies for tackling substance misuse, preventing youth offending and to tackle domestic abuse and violence against women.

Promoting Volunteering

Through the *Third Dimension, a Strategic Action Plan for Wales,* The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to working effectively with third sector organisations to ensure that the benefits of volunteering are adequately supported and that levels of volunteering continue to grow. Volunteering can help individuals develop a better understanding of other groups within their community and thereby strengthen community cohesion.

A key part of the UK Government proposals relating to Earned Citizenship includes an applicant moving more quickly down their road to citizenship by becoming involved in community-based volunteering.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to:

- partnership working to tackle hate crime;

- placing the promotion of equal opportunities at the centre of our work;

- taking action to support marginalised groups and encourage their full participation in community life;

- developing legislation and a strategy to provide a framework for action on child poverty;

- funding Communities First partnerships to develop priorities for local activity;

- developing higher levels of volunteering amongst all age groups;

- tackling the causes of anti-social behaviour through specific strategies for substance misuse, domestic abuse and youth offending.

Chapter Six: Preventing Violent Extremism and Strengthening Cohesion

The Welsh Assembly Government consistently promotes a democracy which allows for debate dissent and argument, but it is opposed to a message of division and hate from wherever those views may originate. We have a responsibility to provide safe communities in Wales and provide a duty of care to all people in Wales.

CONTEST

The CONTEST strategy was put in place in 2003 (revised in 2009) as a UK Government response to the threat posed by international Al-Qa'ida inspired terrorism. The Strategy has a four-pronged approach to tackling violent extremism, namely PREVENT, PURSUE, PROTECT and PREPARE. The PREVENT strand is concerned with stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism.

The PREVENT element of CONTEST has five main objectives:

- to challenge the ideology behind violent extremism and support mainstream voices;

- disrupt those who promote violent extremism and support the places where they operate;

- support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, or have already been recruited by violent extremists;

- increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism; and

- to address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting.

The Wales CONTEST Board was established in March 2008 and is jointly chaired by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Cymru and the Welsh Assembly Government. The Board includes the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT), Welsh Extremism & Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU), the Home Office, the Police Authorities of Wales, UK Border Agency and the Welsh Local Government Association. The Board is the main vehicle for liaising between the WECTU activities on counter terrorism and the Welsh Assembly Government on community cohesion.

The Welsh Assembly Government believes that the work on CONTEST is ultimately about ensuring community safety and community cohesion. Without these overriding cohesion priorities we would not be able to engage communities in these efforts. PREVENT promotes shared values and funding projects which involve cross-community activities that will strengthen community cohesion and develop capacity to resist support for violent extremism.

All Wales PREVENT Delivery Plan

Together with the Police, Home Office and local government, the Welsh Assembly Government has developed a PREVENT Delivery Plan to help the police, local authorities and other partner agencies, including members of local Community Safety Partnerships, to take this work forward. The Welsh Assembly Government's role in the Delivery Plan is focused on building capacity and resilience within Wales' Muslim communities. The approach centres around educating and empowering communities through a wide range of initiatives including those specifically aimed at supporting young people.

Al-Qa'ida inspired Extremism

The Welsh Assembly Governments takes its responsibilities to protect citizens from the threat of violent attacks very seriously. This includes protecting Muslim communities from prejudice they may experience and working with Muslim communities to strengthen resistance to radicalisation.
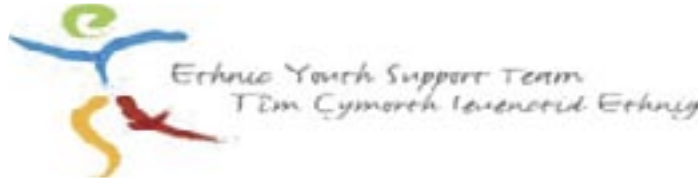
We are working in partnership with Muslim communities, local authorities, the police and other UK Government departments to provide a proportionate response to problems posed by the threat of violent Al-Qa'ida inspired extremism. This approach includes empowering local communities to tackle extremist ideologies and working with communities to reduce barriers to cohesion and integration.

Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board Wales (MINABW)

The Welsh Assembly Government is working in partnership with the Muslim Council for Wales in supporting the work of MINABW. MINABW will set a bench mark of minimum standards and provide good practice guidance for all mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations in Wales. Its aims are to develop good governance structures; transparency of operation; continuous professional development of staff; minimum language requirements for Imams; and tangible engagement between Muslim communities and government. Our Muslim communities are one of our greatest assets in tackling the threat posed by a vociferous and extreme minority element. Credible religious authorities are best able to build theological resilience to the distorted interpretations of religious texts promoted by extremists.

Positive Street Project : Is a three-year programme of activities focusing on a different theme each year. Year one focuses on tackling 'Street' issues including substance misuse, gangs and radicalisation. Year two focuses on 'Citizenship' issues, which includes working with schools and colleges. The final year focuses on 'Positive Expression' to support Muslim young people to have a positive vision of their place in society and a voice in their local communities.

The overall aim of the project is to engage with ethnic minority young people from the Muslim community living in and around Swansea in order to steer them away from factors linked to radicalisation and violent extremism and towards a positive understanding and expression of their Muslim as well as Welsh/British identity in society.

The project involves a lot of outreach work with young people as well as activities based at EYST's drop-in centre and will produce a number of resources aimed at the target group including leaflets and a DVD.

The work is delivered by EYST and co-ordinated by the Safer Swansea Prevent Board through partnership agencies, both statutory and non-statutory.

Contact: 01792 466980
Visit: www.eyst.org.uk

Far Right Extremism

In recent years there has been growing concern about the increasing influence of far right groups in some areas in Wales, who are communicating open messages of racial discrimination and prejudice. Most communities are resilient to these extremist views, however there are some areas where their influence may have increased. The reasons for this are complex but may be related to the experience of poverty and perceptions of unfairness, particularly related to competition for scarce resources within long established settled communities. Any economic change may also contribute to or exacerbate the risk of tensions developing within communities.

Local authorities and their partners have a role in monitoring where these unacceptable views are finding greater acceptance and taking action to support communities. Research published by the Runnymede Trust in 2009 suggested that white working class communities often felt that resources were allocated unfairly, in favour of ethnic minority communities. Developing grass root level links with communities can help with early intelligence gathering. Organisations such as Communities First who are working at this level are a useful resource of local information.

A local cohesion partnership should consider its role in supporting communities to reject racist messages. This includes listening to the concerns and fears expressed in the community, such as misconceptions around preferential treatment of some groups. There may also be a need to take action to dispel myths and to ensure transparency about decision-making. This can help local people understand and accept how and why priority decisions are made. There is also work to be done to bring different parts of the community from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds together to develop mutual understanding and respect.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to:

- working with a range of partners to deliver the All Wales PREVENT Delivery Plan;

- working with Muslim communities to increase resilience to extremist ideologies;

- working with all faiths through the Faith Communities Forum to promote shared understanding and respect.

Developing a Local Cohesion Framework

We want to encourage organisations to work in partnership to take a strategic approach to supporting community cohesion in their areas. A collaborative approach that aims to mainstream cohesion across policy and service delivery is all the more important in the current economic climate to make the best use of public resources.

Wrexham Council Community Cohesion Awareness Raising Toolkit

The Wrexham Community Cohesion Strategy has prioritised the development of education and awareness raising activities that build a common vision and understanding across all communities in the county borough. To achieve this members of the Local Service Board have come together in a partnership project to develop and share a range of practical training and information tools. These will be used by different staff groups within all LSB organisations in order to raise awareness of the diversity of Wrexham and to help promote good relationships between different groups within our community.

A wide range of existing and new resources are being brought together into a shared library of resources including locally produced DVDs, games, quizzes, information booklets etc. For more information about the community cohesion awareness raising toolkit please email: onewrexham@wrexham.gov.uk or telephone 01978 292535.

Community Mapping

The first step for any partnership convened to promote cohesion will be to develop an understanding of their communities. This is to identify who lives where in the community, what the residents' cohesion priorities are, to identify what community cohesion work is already going on at a local level and not least to bring local organisations together.

The need to undertake community mapping is acknowledged to be an important step in promoting community cohesion. It is a tool for public service providers to gather local intelligence and to identify and respond to the issues that are of greatest concern in their local communities. It can be particularly useful in areas where the population is rapidly changing, to help identify who is living in a local area and what their needs are likely to be. Useful information can include gathering intelligence on:

- the individual identities of people who live and work in the community including gender, age, social and ethnic background, religion and belief, their language, disability and sexual orientation;

- where they live, their neighbourhoods, their housing tenure and the quality of the local housing provision;

- what local residents' priorities and concerns are - are there local tensions?

- how residents perceive their local community - is it a good place to live, what could be better?

- existing shared activities and events in an area that can support and consolidate integration.

Newport Local Service Board Community Profiling Project

Newport Local Service Board has established a multi-agency community profiling group. The purpose of the group is to pool information and intelligence relating to the communities of Newport, within agreed protocols, with the aim of enabling the Local Service Board and its partners to better understand and meet the needs of these communities. This information will be used to produce a series of community profiles which will be kept regularly updated and reported to the Local Service Board bi-annually.

Information shared by the group includes 'hard' statistical information, measures of community perception and 'softer' community intelligence, with the aim of regularly 'taking the temperature of the city'.

Contact: Lead Officer Community Cohesion: Newport City Council 01633 656656

Establishing the composition of any community can be extremely challenging given the significant population and demographic changes that have occurred since the last *National Census* in 2001. There are known challenges in terms of producing population estimates - particularly in relation to international migration. The Office for National Statistics is currently leading on a cross-government programme of work to improve migration statistics.

Taking into account the lack of reliable and up to date national data, there is a range of published data sources that can help in developing local community profiles. Local sources of data and intelligence will be valuable sources of information. A wide range of data is already collected by organisations such as social housing providers, voluntary sector organisations and Communities First partnerships. Local Cohesion partnerships could consider providing support to enable third sector organisations to analyse the information they collect to assist community mapping.

We have compiled a list of available data sources which can be accessed at the Welsh Assembly Government's Community Cohesion web pages. www.wales.gov/communitycohesion.

Community Tension Monitoring

Sitting alongside community mapping, the need to undertake tension monitoring is an essential component of promoting and supporting community cohesion. This means looking at ways to find out more about current views and perceptions of local people in a neighbourhood. Its purpose is to understand what the most pressing issues are and if they could be leading to increased local tensions, for example if there has been a local incident that may have fuelled tension. A local issue can also be a source of community harmony as residents come together to campaign on a locally important issue.

Public service organisations with staff working at the community level are ideally placed to develop an awareness of local issues and directly talk to local people. These organisations can include local authorities, the police, third sector agencies working locally, Communities First partnerships, social housing landlords, councillors, town and community councils and established community groups and their representatives. Multi-agency tension monitoring will enable a real picture of local issues to be built up and local and appropriate responses to be co-ordinated. Detailed guidance on tension monitoring can be found on the Community Cohesion web pages www.wales.gov/communitycohesion.

A Partnership Approach

As we have emphasised throughout this Strategy, community cohesion isn't the responsibility of one organisation. The local authority is likely to be the lead organisation in a partnership of public service organisations who are working directly at community level.

The local action framework at Annex 1 is intended as guidance for local partnerships on how to gather information and support cohesion at a local level. It is not prescriptive, but highlights good practice. Partnerships can decide on what sections of the plan will be most relevant to their local situations.

It is worth noting that research undertaken by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion in 2007 found that individual factors alone have a relatively small impact on the perceptions of cohesion and therefore suggests emphasis should be placed on tackling multiple issues simultaneously.

Local Cohesion Framework

1. Establishing Local Community Cohesion Partnerships

A partnership approach to Community Cohesion may require formal agreements between organisations to ensure that a consistent approach is taken in a local area. This could include:

- agreed governance arrangements for community cohesion matters; and

- agreeing how the joint development and delivery of community cohesion issues within their geographical area is managed.

Several local authorities in Wales have placed community cohesion as a key priority of their Local Service Boards and this is very much encouraged by the Welsh Assembly Government in view of the cross-organisational nature of the issues.

2. Scoping existing community cohesion work

Conduct an audit of the following information for the local area:

- local activities and events that could have cohesion benefits (e.g.festivals).

- number of Local Authority funded projects which may have community cohesion benefits in an area by:
    - organisation;
    - description;
    - target groups (if any);
    - funding source; and
    - outcomes.

- number of Third Sector run projects that may have community cohesion benefits within area by:
    - organisation;
    - description;
    - target groups (if any);
    - funding source; and
    - outcomes.

- monitoring information provided by service providers which may be part of their contract monitoring requirements can be an excellent source of mapping data.

Local Cohesion Framework

This information could be used to:

- establish activities that currently contribute to building cohesive communities;

- establish where partnership working is already in place;

- identify gaps that currently exist and analyse where additional resource is needed;

- consider how resources may be better utilised and rationalise if necessary;

- share success and share information on tension monitoring;

- identify local cohesion priorities.

3. Community Mapping

To gain a better understanding of the make up of local communities, local authorities and partners could consider mapping the composition of their community in relation to backgrounds, demographic and socio-economic factors and change. These include:

- ethnic background;

- age (young and old);

- gender;

- religion and belief;

- disability;

- sexual orientation;

- ability to speak Welsh and English language;

- socio-economic factors; such as employment, income and housing tenure;

- whether the community is urban or rural;

- the level of hate crime and anti-social behaviour;

- tension monitoring information.

Guidance on where up-to-date information can be found is available on the UK government's community cohesion web pages www.communitycohesion.gov.uk

Local sources of data could be gathered through including relevant questions in a local residents survey, which for comparison monitoring could mirror information collected by national surveys.

Local Cohesion Framework

4. Measuring Progress

As local cohesion partnerships work together they will want to establish a baseline and then measure the impact of any work they undertake to further promote local cohesion.

There are a number of widely used indicators that measure perceptions of cohesion. The following are currently used in England as analysis of the Communities and Local Government Citizenship Survey has shown them to be good indicators of cohesive, empowered or active communities:

- the percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area;
- the percentage of people who have meaningful interactions with people from different backgrounds; and
- the percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood.

5. Mainstreaming Cohesion

One of the aims of the Strategy is to mainstream community cohesion across policy making areas, to embed cohesion in everyday service provision. Local authorities could consider reviewing if and how cohesion is integrated into relevant policy and delivery and in particular to look at how the local Community Approach supports cohesion. The DCLG guidance for local authorities provides detailed guidance on the benefits and provides an approach to mainstreaming cohesion.

The key service areas are identified as:

- social housing;
- planning and neighbourhood renewal;
- schools and children;
- services for young people, old people or vulnerable people;
- recreation and culture.

A mainstreaming approach can help to identify activities that are already in place that contribute to cohesion but are not labelled as such.

Local Cohesion Framework

6. Communication

Local cohesion partners could consider developing a clear understanding of the ESOL provision within their local area and if necessary could scope the ESOL courses currently provided to establish an understanding specifically of:

- attendance levels;
- drop out rate;
- flexibility of provision;
- demand for courses; and
- ability levels of participants.

Partners could consider the provision and availability of trained British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters to support BSL users participate in community activities and gain access to services.

Partners could also agree a joint approach to communication aimed at:

- tackling prejudice and discrimination;
- promoting understanding and respect;
- promoting community cohesion;
- promoting the benefits of managed economic migration;
- preventing violent extremism;
- positive images of Gypsies and Travellers, refugee and asylum seekers and migrant workers.

Partners may wish to consider developing a communication and media strategy to promote good citizenship and volunteering and to dispel myths and promote community cohesion within their area. Action could include the provision of myth busting leaflets which are relevant within their geographical area and contain information relevant to people from all backgrounds.

The Welsh Assembly Government will publish a *Welcome to Wales Pack* in Spring 2010. Local partners are encouraged to add local information to the packs:

- distribution venues;
- provision in suitable languages;
- provision of suitable support groups.

Local Cohesion Framework

Partners could consider producing a citizen's charter to be endorsed by local sports organisations and teams, private sector businesses and community groups.

Local public service providers could ensure that key public buildings reflect the diversity and good citizen message of the area. For example, ensuring that buildings have good disability access and facilities.

7. Staff Training

Ensuring there is a positive relationship between public service providers and the community they serve can help to enhance local cohesion. Conversely, perceptions about lack of transparency around the provision of services can also be an unintended source of community tensions. Staff at all levels within an organisation should be equipped to be able to understand the needs of people from all parts of the community. Partnership organisations can support staff by:

- establishing how many staff have received diversity awareness training within the past 12-36 months, including training provided at induction;

- ensuring that staff at all levels of the organisation, including elected members of Local Authorities have received diversity awareness training within the past 12-36 months;

- considering current staff training provision in relation to the following areas:

  - equality and diversity;

  - promoting understanding and respect;

  - community cohesion;

  - economic migration;

  - violent extremism;

  - Gypsies and Travellers; and

  - refugees and asylum seekers.

Partners could consider joint training provision in the above areas; this will also help staff share their knowledge and experiences.

Partners could identify opportunities to provide training seminars to promote good citizenship and volunteering within community groups and statutory agencies.

Local Cohesion Framework

8. Community based events

A key element in promoting cohesion is bringing different parts of the community together, particularly in circumstances where they would not normally meet. As a part of mainstreaming cohesion work these could be integrated into community-based events that are already planned, as well as specific cohesion events. Town and community councils will be a key partner as they are often involved in supporting local events, examples of events include:

• festivals (such as food, literary and jazz events);

• inter-faith events;

• multi-national food events;

• cultural celebration events (including Eisteddfodau);

• carnivals (reflecting area, history, change, diversity, future);

• library events;

• diverse musical shows/acts within prominent areas;

• Citizens Advice Bureaux promotion;

• parks and cultural areas of interest;

• inclusive sporting events and competitions to include diverse participants/teams;

• mentoring schemes for new arrivals to the area; and

• twinning of villages with significant groups from other areas.

It is important to ensure that all parts of the community are encouraged to participate in community activities and authorities should be careful about how they label events to encourage participation. People may be less attracted to a cohesion event rather than to attend a fun day, which could in practice be the same event. Partners could also establish/maintain a youth forum/young people decision-making forum to contribute/ give feedback.

From September 2008 every Local Authority should have a local participation strategy, which sets out how it will arrange for a wide range of children and young people aged 0-25 to have their voices heard in local decision-making. In due course this Strategy will become a statutory requirement.

9. Housing

Local authority areas and social housing landlords and relevant stakeholders could consider:

- the availability and access to affordable housing in areas of high housing pressure including rural areas;
- widening choice and opportunities for minority ethnic communities to live away from traditional settlement areas, building more mixed communities;
- ensuring all equality issues are mainstreamed within their housing strategies so that housing is provided to meet the needs of all parts of the community;
- establishing a forum for community and multi-agency engagement and consultation;
- identifying how existing local projects are already supporting local cohesion, such as tenant participation groups;
- training and awareness provision for staff in relation to community cohesion and tension monitoring within their area;
- publishing a communication strategy that addresses misinformation and myths, reducing associated community tensions;
- develop projects that support the community cohesion issues identified through community mapping in their areas;
- housing allocation policy - ensure allocation policies are transparent, to avoid perceptions of unfairness and unfair discrimination;
- use of powers to address overcrowding, health and safety and environmental health;
- applications for selective licensing where necessary for reasons relating to integration and cohesion;
- the development of a local strategy between existing homeowners, providers of affordable housing and the private rental sector to tackle low level community tensions and anti-social behaviour;
- ensuring that landlords have the information needed to understand the changes taking place within their area;
- promoting good landlord accreditation schemes;
- providing greater transparency about their thinking as to who will live in new developments and what the impact of the social mix is likely to be;
- ensuring that equality impact assessments are conducted in relation to integration and cohesion in the funding of affordable housing and area based regeneration.

Local Cohesion Framework

10. Learning

Local cohesion partnerships should consider:

*   the provision of school places and community facilities be planned to maximise community engagement and regard should be given to maximising opportunities for pupils in less populated areas by ensuring that smaller schools can form part of a cluster for community focused purposes;

*   ensuring that schools' Race Equality Policies are supported by action plans; the effect of which are regularly monitored; and

*   implementation of the National Standards for children and young people's participation in all schools and other educational settings for 0-25 year olds.

Partnerships should be developed with education providers in the local area, both Further Education organisations who deliver a wide range of vocational and community services and Higher Education institutions who will have a diverse transitory population.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to:

*   publishing advice on undertaking community mapping on our web site;

*   providing guidance to local partnerships on how to take forward cohesion at a local level.

Monitoring and Evaluating Community Cohesion

The main objective of this Strategy is to shape and support local efforts to improve community cohesion across Wales. One way we plan to do this is by encouraging organisations to work in partnership and to take a strategic approach to promoting community cohesion in their local areas. The aim is that service providers both nationally and locally have a better understanding of what the cohesion issues are in their communities and have developed a local cohesion framework. The framework will set out how partners intend to address local issues and promote local cohesion and will include plans for early intervention if community tensions develop.

In preparing this Strategy we have drawn on evidence from the Welsh Assembly Government's *Living in Wales* Survey. Proposals for the format of future surveys are currently under consideration, including whether there might be questions in new survey vehicles to gather information at a national level about perceptions of community cohesion.

It is important that local cohesion partnerships develop appropriate measures of community cohesion locally, and develop a baseline so that the progress and impact of projects can be monitored and measured. The following guidance may be useful to local areas:

• Home Office guidance document *Building a picture of community cohesion: a guide for local authorities and their partners* (2003):

• Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (IDeA) website Measuring improving cohesiveness: http://www.idea.gov.uk/

Monitoring

Monitoring involves collecting appropriate data with regard to:

• the make up of the local community;

• indicators of community cohesion, such as responses to survey questions on how well people get on together;

• what actually happens in particular interventions designed to increase community cohesion.

There is a scarcity of up-to-date statistics and survey information that may be relevant to measuring cohesion, so local approaches to collecting this information are very important. The monitoring process should provide a means to bring together data by a range of bodies into a single accessible summary.

The Ffynnon system is a tool that can facilitate this. This is part of the Welsh Assembly Government's public sector Knowledge Management and Business Change Programme. At its centre is the Ffynnon system - a fully integrated performance, risk and project management software system that enables information-sharing within and across organisational boundaries. The Ffynnon system is available to all local authorities, fire & rescue services, and national park authorities. All their local community partners are able to make use of the system with the authority to support areas of joint delivery, including community cohesion. Wider public sector bodies in Wales are also able to acquire full use of the Ffynnon system. Further information is available at: http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/localgovernment/ffynnon/?lang=en

Evaluation

Evaluating the Community Cohesion Strategy involves finding out if:

• community cohesion has increased over a period of time since the introduction of the Strategy (discounting other factors, such as the impact of the recession). (To be done at both national and Local Authority level);

• if particular initiatives intended to increase community cohesion have been effective (Local authority level).

To measure the success of the Strategy we need to know what is happening at a local level, so it is important to be able to establish how local authorities and their partners have taken up the challenges of promoting cohesion. We also want to know how community cohesion work is helping local authorities to achieve statutory regulations, such as duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and in how they meet the priorities identified in their community strategies and participation strategies.

The Welsh Assembly Government will measure the success of the Strategy by establishing evaluation criteria and evaluating the Strategy within two years of the implementation. This will enable us to build a picture of the progress that is being made by local partners in developing a strategic approach to cohesion.

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