

Government Approaches for Community Cohesion

Susan Scholefield CMG
Director General
Communities and Local Government



<p>We are responsible for...</p>	<p>...these areas of work which relate to resilience...</p>	<p>...and these community and equality issues – making communities more resilient</p>
<p>Strategic priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling disadvantage • Regional economic performance • Better local services • Balancing supply and demand for housing • Decent homes and neighbourhoods • Reducing inequalities 	<p>including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire and resilience • Housing • Planning, building and the environment (including sustainability) • Local and regional government 	<p>on communities and equalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesion • Faith Engagement • Race Equality • Gypsies and Travellers • Preventing Violent Extremism • Civic Engagement

These issues covered in this conference – reflecting the wide scope of Resilience

Key challenges facing us

- relating to CLG’s responsibilities
- affecting communities and cohesion
- demanding a resilient response from communities

Building trust and empowerment

- Turnout and trust are falling; political party membership is down and there is a growing “depoliticisation” of the public sphere
- Feelings of an inability to influence local decision making can affect cohesion

Building stronger communities in the face of globalisation

- We face rapid increases in the pace and scale of demographic and economic change, putting pressure on community relations in some areas and threatening trust.
- Rapid demographic change can leave communities feeling vulnerable and can present a challenge to cohesion

External and environmental challenges

- Global warming, extreme weather and flooding
- Public health
- Terrorism
- Lack of shared identity and belonging means individuals may be unwilling to develop stronger, shared responses to crisis

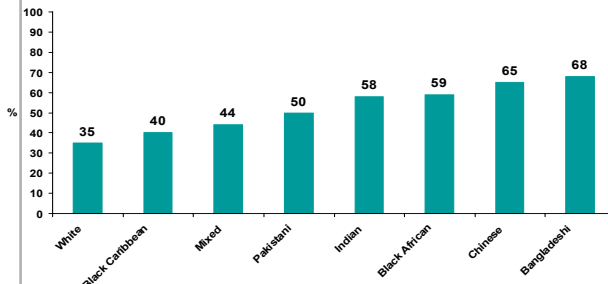
BUT...

Resilient, cohesive communities are key to addressing these challenges

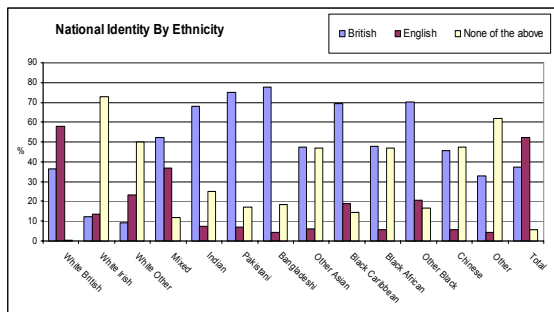
Looking at the challenge of building trust, empowerment and shared identity in more detail...

Political trust and identity

Trust in Parliament is lowest among White people

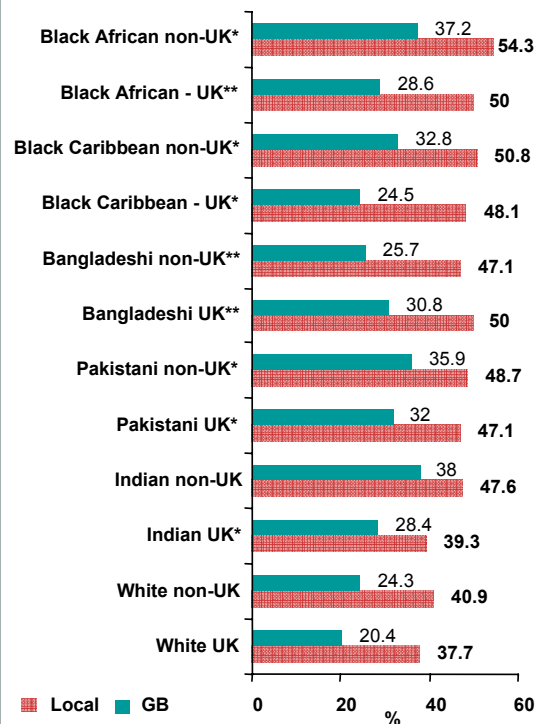


BME groups are more likely to identify as British than English. An increasing number of white people feel "English"



White people feel less connected to influencing decisions

Agree that can influence local/GB decisions (Warning: small sample sizes)



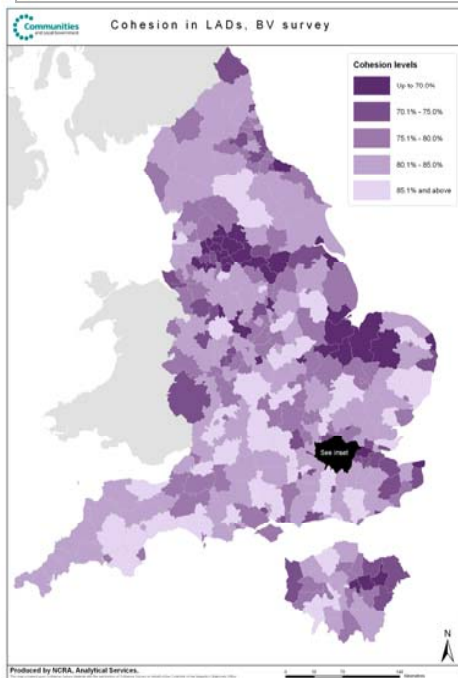
This matters because:

- communities lacking trust in and engagement with institutions are more likely to be prey to the messages of extremists
- but engaged communities can articulate their needs, making service delivery better

CLG's business:

- *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* sets out the Government's strategy on race equality and community cohesion
- building empowerment and Local Govt. performance through the new Local Govt. performance framework and the LGWP

- Arrival of A8 migrants caused rapid demographic change in some areas - particularly Eastern parts of the UK. There is some, but not complete, correlation between lower cohesion and areas affected. (Some areas have not seen significant impacts on cohesion.)
- So demographic change is a driver of, but neither necessary or sufficient for, lower cohesion
- This has affected rural, previously homogeneous, areas



- As the map shows, some of the areas where positive perceptions of cohesion are lower than 70% are rural.
- Analysis carried out by DTZ consulting for the Commission on Integration and Cohesion found that alongside areas such as deprived urban areas where cohesion might be expected to be lower, deprived rural areas which have experienced recent migration have the lowest average cohesion scores.
- A MORI opinion poll carried out for the Commission included a booster group made up of people who lived in rural areas with high A8 migration, 75 per cent of this group agreed that there are 'too many immigrants in Britain' compared to 69 per cent of all respondents.

This matters because:

- **there have been cohesion impacts as a result**
- **has led to a sense of discomfort for the settled population,**
- **manifested in some cases in an increase in racist incidents**

CLG's business:

- The Commission on Integration and Cohesion addressed these issues in its recent report, *Our Shared Future*
- As the report itself indicates, there are vital roles for leadership both from central Government and from Local Government
- These include the need to provide effective welcome/induction for new arrivals and also to challenge the myths and misconceptions that can arise amongst the settled population
- The Government plans to respond to the report this Autumn

* Maps of unitary/lower tier local authority areas (unitary/districts)

Resilient, cohesive communities are key to addressing external challenges too...

Communities have different roles at different points in the major incident process:

BEFORE: prevention where possible and putting the social structures in place to make recovery easier

DURING: working together and with local providers to react to situation

AFTER: rebuilding sense of community, work with local providers on recovery and engaging with other communities

To be effective in doing these things, communities need to have the following characteristics:

Characteristic	Why it is important
Good governance arrangements	Vital to involve local people and to provide joined up response
High levels of bonding social capital (strong relations with family and friends)	Highly bonded communities (e.g. Bangladeshis) experience welfare benefits. May be pre-requisite to bridging
High levels of bridging social capital (strong relations with distant friends, colleagues)	Raises awareness and understanding of other groups. Can therefore build and reinforce cohesion, minimise community tensions and build common identity
High levels of empowerment, political activism and participation	Political activity contributes to sense of collective efficacy and for ethnic groups, identification with Britain. Provides platform for involvement in recovery work.
Sense of belonging and that identities are accepted	Sense of belonging reduces extremism and necessary for individuals to get involved in recovery
Strong life chances	Poverty may lead to resentment and validate extreme actions

These are also characteristics of **cohesive** communities. Currently, not all communities exhibit these characteristics. A challenge for Government is supporting their development.

... and resilience is an essential factor in supporting communities to recover

Where it exists, recovery needs to harness it....

The Government approach on flood recovery is enabling communities (led by strong local government) to help themselves :

- Local recovery initiatives framed around keeping communities together while homes are repaired (e.g. Toll Bar Caravan Park)
- Recovery priorities and plans set in consultation with the local community (e.g. Lichfield and Wyre Forest used community meetings to set priorities for spending Recovery Grant)
- Underpinned by quick Government support to ensure a start to recovery

... but where it does not, recovery needs to develop it

Work to help towns affected by disturbances in 2001 has included work to build social capital by bridge-building across communities, for example:

- **Oldham Peacemaker** – carrying out work to build respect for diversity where there has been conflict; working in schools and communities
- Work to build trust across communities particularly in the face of an extreme right wing presence, led by **Mediation Northern Ireland**

Building the characteristics of cohesive communities:

<p>Governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with Local Govt to deliver the right performance management framework – coverage of cohesion in new LAAs
<p>Bridging social capital Belonging Life chances</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting communities to improve service delivery outcomes and life chances, bringing different communities together and developing a shared sense of belonging are all aims of the Connecting Communities Plus grants programme. The third round of community grants opened for applications on 4 September. The Programme is administered by the Community Development Foundation
<p>Empowerment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing empowerment with a range of commitments in the Local Government White Paper Strong and Prosperous Communities, including for example more choice in service design and delivery, community ownership and management of assets and better information about local services.
<p>Participation</p>	
<p>Cohesion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working to improve cohesion directly in a number of ways: developing conflict resolution skills – allowing all people - the settled, existing population as well as new arrivals a voice to articulate the problems they face. Providing specific support to areas facing challenges – working with the media; developing leadership on cohesion

...achieving a double benefit, avoiding cohesion challenges and harnessing cohesion for better all-round resilience.

Cohesion - an issue to consider as a risk in itself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher cohesion (by definition) reduces the risk of tension and disorder arising from low cohesion and failures to bridge
Cohesion - a factor in responding to other risks/incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohesion enables a better response in the face of other threats and minimizes the risk of external pressures (e.g. flooding) being compounded by mistrust, tension, disorder and competition for resources

