

Building Community Interaction in Three Post Industrial and Multi-ethnic Northern ‘Cities’:

**Perspectives from Bradford, Burnley and
Oldham on Five Years of Learning following
the 2001 Disturbances.**

Report compiled by Martin Pearson, International Centre for
Participation Studies (ICPS), Bradford

ICPS WORKING PAPER 6
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Abstract

This report is a summary of the views of a range of practitioners working in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham on the challenges of building community interaction in these three northern 'cities' which experienced disturbances in 2001. Practitioners from a variety of professional backgrounds from each of the locations met in Burnley on January 12th 2007 to reflect together on the key challenges that they had faced since 2001 and the progress, or lack thereof, that has been made. Their observations were recorded and form the basis of this report.

Despite the significant differences between the 'cities' in their size, location and demographics, practitioners from the three locations seemed to broadly share the analysis of the progress made and of the threats to progress since the disturbances in 2001. Information-sharing between organizations in the 'cities' has improved. Some organizations are able to move more quickly to reduce/prevent tensions building. More young women, particularly young Muslim women, are becoming involved at a community level bringing new perspectives and ways of thinking.

Yet practitioners also identified a variety of conditions which continued to make the 'cities' vulnerable to fresh disturbances in the future. Perhaps chief among these was the concern over the high levels of discontent expressed by young people in each of the locations. The relatively low levels of educational attainment and engagement, high levels of crime which young people can get 'sucked into' and the low level of mixing between young people from different ethnic groupings were all seen as underlying factors which could lead to fresh disturbances. Added to this were serious concerns about the levels of racism in each of the 'cities', a lack of equal opportunities and the pressures on particular communities from the press and the police.

One participant articulated the basic question running throughout the practitioners' discussions, "We are probably ready to deal with the 2001 disturbances now, but are we ready for 2007?"

The Author

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Introduction

(This is the Introduction delivered by Professor Jenny Pearce of the International Centre for Participation Studies in the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, to what was originally called the Three Cities Workshop. Given that only one of the urban areas represented is in fact a City, this report will now talk about the Three 'cities')

Our three cities are very different. They are, of course, not all cities! Bradford is very different in size to the others.¹ We were also on different sides of a war in the 15th century, I believe! But we also share many things - apart from a series of disturbances between May and July 2001. These disturbances resulted from particular triggers in certain contexts. The story of the triggers is important, but it is the underlying conditions and preconditions that mattered. And in this, the common patterns between the cities stand out:

- Race, class, gender and generation intersect in complex ways in all three.
- They share the fact that they were once important centres of the global textile industry; and they are also victims of global boom bust cycles, and the decline of that industry
- The decline of manufacturing industry has had catastrophic effects on families whose male breadwinner depended on that industry, disproportionately so on the families from Bangladesh and Pakistan who had migrated to provide labour for that industry.
- These are also cities with histories of migration that go a long way back: Irish, Polish, Ukrainian and African Caribbean, and they share histories of racist attitudes and discrimination towards immigrants.
- In all the cities, second generation Asian men are prepared to resist any form of denigration in a way their fathers were not.
- None of the cities have recovered their economic dynamism. They all have wards which are amongst the most deprived in the UK. At the same time they have pockets of wealth and even great wealth, which tends to be very 'white' in its ownership. Ilkley in Bradford sold its first million pound house not so long ago
- At the same time, economic survival has forced many Asian families inwards, to look after their own, often reinforcing traditional social structures, not always helpful to women, youth and lower caste community members. Cohesion has been strengthened within minority communities as Muslim religious identity, in particular, has felt to be under attack, following the Iraq war.
- By contrast, poor white communities do not have strong family structures that forge cohesion. Men have found it hard to lose the dignity of guaranteed work, while women often struggle alone to bring up their children. Their young men have been subject to intense

¹ Bradford is technically a 'city' whilst Burnley and Oldham are technically classed as 'towns'. For ease of reading in this document we will refer to Bradford, Burnley and Oldham as the three 'cities' rather than the more accurate city and two towns.

labelling as the source of anti-social behaviour. Educational attainment is often low, as it is also among Asian young men.

Whether the term 'segregation' describes the distinct lives people have along the fractures of race and class is controversial, but it is difficult to escape the idea of communities living 'separate lives' to some extent. This is not the 'fault' of one or other community, evidence shows that white people are less likely to have black and minority friends than the reverse. The sense of a community being 'blamed' for segregation, rather than the explanation being found in social and economic dynamics has made that a difficult subject to discuss, and the evidence of lack of interaction less easy to address. And in situations of deprivation, the issue of distribution of resources and services becomes acutely political. Economic inequality fuels a lack of sense of equal worth; economic insecurity fuels fears. They impact on political equality and political participation. For example, lower middle class white communities are easily persuaded to blame the black and minority ethnic communities for insecurities; some Asian young men, not necessarily amongst the poorest, can be persuaded to blame the West for the sense of denigration they feel by the majority communities.

All three cities have made huge efforts to deal with these problems since 2001 and much progress has been made. Speaking from Bradford and after reading the Oldham Cattle report and attending Burnley's 'the Real Story' on the anniversary of their disturbances last year, the great creativity in different forms and at different levels is clear. Each city has shown different strengths and ways of approaching their problems, and each could help the other.

At the same time, much is pending. Economic regeneration is under way but will take time, and it is always possible that winners and losers will emerge. Housing, health and education remain key sources of friction given the segregated nature of many schools and the way school children pick up on tensions in and between their communities. Small scale tensions might be containable, but we in Bradford continue to worry about them. We still find it difficult to talk about sensitive issues, how do non-Muslims talk about Islam without offending Muslims? How do Muslims raise their concerns about Western lifestyles without annoying young non-Muslim girls who want to walk around half naked in the freezing cold?! We all have something that annoys us about our neighbours. For instance, I sometimes resent Christians and Muslims suggesting I have no values because I am not religious. No matter what the origins of our problems, these small tensions and differences can end up fuelling larger conflict. And time is not on our side as extremist groups within and outside the cities, manipulate small and manageable differences and threaten actions which could trigger bigger trouble.

Local problems, for instance, have been conflated with national and international ones, and potential triggers have increased. Wars in Asia (Pakistan, India, Kashmir), Middle East (Israel and Palestine) and Africa (Sudan and the Darfur region) for instance, have impacts in our northern regions of the UK. I see the US bombing Somalia, and I think, what impact might that have on Bradford? The character of communications has changed

the way we get our news and information, internet, videos, mobile phones has accelerated access to information, but not necessarily our capacity to analyse and deal with that information.

Into this picture, have come the national debates on multiculturalism, integration, cohesion. And what makes life very difficult for practitioners is that there is no agreement on the framework for addressing the issues above. For many, the emphasis on 'cohesion' takes away from the social economic situation described earlier and the racism which has grown from deprivation and inequality. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion is misplaced, and misdirecting its attention. Integration conjures up ghastly pictures of the 'melting pot' where people lost their identities to become part of some hegemonic white Englishness. Gary Young wrote in the Guardian 19/9/05.

'This is fine as far as it goes. The trouble is, unless integration is coupled with the equally vigorous pursuit of equality and anti-racism, it does not go very far. Rwanda had plenty of inter-ethnic marriages before the genocide; Jews were more integrated into German society than any other European nation before the Holocaust. Common sense suggests that the more contact you have with different races, religions and ethnicities, the less potential there is for stereotyping and dehumanising those different from yourself. But even that small achievement depends on the quality and power dynamics of the contact.'

For others, the idea of strong but distinct cultural groups existing but not interacting positively prevents the search for common solutions to social economic issues and reinforces ignorance and stereotyping, and we may not find solutions to those solutions that work before the stereotyping kicks in.

But, there are other ways of seeing the discussion. Distinct cultural communities clustered around traditions and patriarchal social structures or around a sense of exclusion and targeting by the welfare system and who never get to see the common nature of their problems and to learn and evolve and change together, can lead communities to look inwards and allows the malicious or politically motivated to exploit the growing differences. Culture is not the same as tradition, as my Mayan women friends in Guatemala have told me. It is possible to have vibrant multicultural communities which fuse at different points and learn from each other, adapting to change at a pace which suits them and allowing young people to have a say in the future of their cultures. These may involve challenge to time-honoured traditions, but in the end may enable the culture to evolve and prosper in new contexts.

The reality for people working in schools, the health service and the community is that they have to respond on a day to day basis to tensions and problems that could spark deeper problems and they do so without an agreed framework for acting, without safe and open spaces for discussing and sharing their experiences. This is the purpose of today's event. The catalyst is the Commission on Integration and Cohesion and the submissions it is asking

for. With Sam (Tedcastle), Abdul (Rahim) and Lili (Rushton) we began a process of adapting the questions the Commission had posed to our reality in the north, taking into account the differences in our contexts. We are not expecting everyone to agree with the way the Commission is posing the questions. What we want is for practitioners with experience of working in the socially diverse contexts of our three cities to have an opportunity to decide what messages from their practice should go to the Commission. Building a framework 'from below', drawing on distinct approaches to each city's efforts to recover from 2001, discussing what has worked and what has not. The aim is to produce a submission to the Commission, which reflects our experience and knowledge rather than the confusing and often highly contentious messages that come from government. If practitioners learn to systematize and look critically at their practice, they can ensure that clear information goes to policy makers so that policy is rooted in complex social realities rather than simplified models.

Methodology

This document is a summary of views of a range of practitioners on the challenges of building community interaction in the three northern 'cities' which experienced disturbances in 2001: Bradford, Burnley and Oldham. There are many differences in the size and character of each of the 'cities' (and Bradford is actually a city and Metropolitan District). However, it was felt that there were sufficient commonalities to merit an exchange of experiences between people involved in the practice of building community interaction, addressing the factors which led to the 2001 disturbances and working to prevent any further serious conflict. Although the impetus was provided by the request for submissions to the Commission for Integration and Cohesion², a discussion and exchange of experiences was felt to be useful in its own right.

The event took place in Burnley on January 12th, 2007.³ Individuals were invited on the basis of their role and experience as practitioners during the post-2001 years. It was felt that too often policy makers did not take account of the experience of the people who work everyday to address social problems. On the other hand, practitioners rarely get the time and space to reflect on their practice. Following an initial brainstorm on key themes of importance in the 'cities', each city was asked to invite a maximum of 15 people and to provide facilitators for the discussion. The facilitators met on the Monday, 8th January, before the open meeting on the following Friday,

- to discuss the process to be used;
- how the meeting should be facilitated;
- how notes were going to be taken;
- the agenda.

Tasks were then divided between the different organisers to prepare for the Friday.

On Friday 12th January, 42 participants met at the Daneshouse and Stoneyholme Community Centre in Burnley.⁴ The practitioners were briefed on the two objectives of the day:

² One of the Commissioners, Sam Tedcastle from Burnley, was one of the organizers of the day and was present throughout the whole workshop. Another of the Commissioners, Ed Cox came for the plenary session at the end (see timetable) to hear the recommendations that practitioners decided upon. The two Commissioners then took these recommendations with them to a meeting of all of the Commissioners later on in the month.

The Commission is chaired by Darra Singh, Chief Executive of Ealing Council and is due to report to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in June 2007.⁷

Website of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion,
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501520>

³ Sam Tedcastle, Joanna Williams, Abdul Rahim, Naveed Ahmad, Lili Rushton and Joanne Elliot were involved in the organization and facilitation of the day and in inviting practitioners from Burnley. Lisa Cumming and Bruce Penhale were responsible for coordinating the invitations of the Bradford and Oldham contingents respectively.

⁴ For a list of participants and timetable followed see Appendices.

- i) To explore the similarities and differences in the progress, or lack thereof, of the community cohesion agenda in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham and to forge new relationships of benefit to practitioners between these northern 'cities'.
- ii) To enter into discussions about priorities for action from the perspectives of the practitioners and from this discussion to come up with five recommendations to make to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion.

Each participant was able to choose (subject to the free places on that table) on which of the seven discussion tables they would like to participate:

Table 1: Complexity, Community and Cohesion

Table 2: History, Triggers and Patterns

Table 3: Extremism and Insecurity

Table 4: Capacity to Resist Shocks and Triggers

Table 5: Bonds, Boundaries and Bridges

Table 6: Positive and Negative Drivers

Table 7: Gender, Age and Change Agents⁵

Each table also had a facilitator, who was present solely to facilitate the discussion, and a note taker⁶ who took detailed notes of the discussion. Participants were asked to discuss the suggested questions⁷ and by the end of the hour to come up with a summary of their main areas of discussion, written on flipchart sheets.

After a break participants then had to move to another table to discuss one of the other issues and the same process was followed. At the end of this hour the flipchart sheets from both of the discussion sessions were hung around the room and participants were invited to read all of the flipcharts, noting down what they thought were the key issues.

After a break for lunch, participants were then given time to write up and prioritise a list of 5 recommendations to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion. These five recommendations were arrived at by going through the following process of whittling down the recommendations:

- 1) An individual decided on the five most important recommendations;
- 2) Participants share their recommendations with a partner and then work to whittle down their collection of recommendations to five recommendations;

⁵ There was also the option of the creation of an eighth table should participants have felt that there was a major theme that was not covered by the chosen themes. This option was not taken.

⁶ Five of the seven note takers were Masters degree students from Bradford University, the other two were University staff

⁷ See Appendices for a copy of these questions.

- 3) Groups of four share their recommendations with their group and then work to whittle down their collection of recommendations to five recommendations;
- 4) Groups of 8 share their recommendations with their group and then work to whittle down their collection of issues/recommendations to five recommendations;
- 5) The recommendations from these groups of eight were then submitted to facilitators who wrote them up under basic group headings⁸:
 - Media
 - Equality
 - Young People
 - Safe and Open Communication Spaces
 - Long Term/Short Term Strategies and Funding
 - Conceptual Understanding
 - Responsibility Partnership Embedding
 - Identity
 - Engagement

Participants were then given 5 dots which they could place next to the recommendations which they thought were most important;

- 6) The five recommendations with the most dots were then discussed in the plenary to give a chance for editing.

All of the notes taken from each of the discussion tables and the recommendations made from the individuals through to the groups of eight were then taken by a researcher from the University of Bradford to read all of the notes, identify the main themes that were brought up on each of the tables and to write up a basic overview of these discussions, which follow this section on methodology.

Limits of the Methodology

In reading the following document it is worth considering some of the limits to the methodology used in the process:

- Those invited to the event were not selected on a strictly representative basis. The meeting brought together a very wide range of practitioners, but it should not be seen as representative of all potential views;
- Note takers were not able to record everything that was being said;

⁸ See Appendices for the full range of recommendations that were made by the different groups.

- Some groups were much more guided by the preset questions than others;
- In the afternoon when the groups were whittling down their recommendations the groups were not facilitated and so dominant personalities were more likely to have their recommendations included.

Summary of Table Discussions

Table 1: Complexity, Community and Cohesion

1.1 Lack of clarity

The term 'community cohesion' presented a great many challenges for those working in the three 'cities'. Much of the practitioners' discussion seemed to be occupied with the many problems that they have with the term 'community cohesion' and the accompanying agenda:

- What is 'community cohesion'?
- What does a 'cohesive community' look like?
- How cohesive do we want a community to be? What would the indicators of this be?
- Is community cohesion mainly concerned with i) assimilation or ii) integration of minorities?
- Whose responsibility is community cohesion?
- Is a lack of community cohesion and segregation the same thing?

This perceived lack of definition of 'community cohesion' was evident in the discussions as participants used the term very loosely and with multiple meanings. Some participants used it to mean a state of good relations in a community across ethnic, racial, cultural, class and religious differences. Other practitioners used it as another way of talking about a shared civic pride; while others talked about community cohesion more as just a state of 'no riots' or obvious disturbances.

1.2 Measurement and direction

There was broad agreement that without more rigorous discussion of these questions the community cohesion agenda would continue to be a confused one. The lack of a perceived definition also affects focused and meaningful evaluation of projects as their aims are not clear and it is therefore difficult to evaluate whether they have been achieved. Without meaningful evaluation there is also less guidance for the development of future practice.

1.3 Realism

Many participants questioned what was actually realistic to expect from people both in terms of motivation and in terms of the time they have to give to 'community cohesion activities'. Any meaningful conceptualisation of community cohesion needs to be realistic about the limited amount of time that people in the communities have to participate in events/meetings/initiatives. There are people in a community who are motivated by an opportunity to meet 'the other' as an end in itself. However, the majority of the community will not meet each other on a regular basis unless in the meetings a specific need or needs are met. In defining

community cohesion there should be a greater discussion and awareness of what the shared needs are of people at the local level and what would stimulate groups to come together around those needs despite other differences.

1.4 Community cohesion in relation to other local priorities

Community cohesion, however people define it, is a concern in each of the three 'cities'. However, community cohesion cannot be viewed in isolation from those issues which are often perceived as more pressing by large groups of people i.e. employment prospects, educational provision for children, security, racist prejudice and stereotyping. All of these reduce opportunities and quality of life. Thus, participants emphasised the importance of considering the priority and scope of the community cohesion agenda in tension with other agendas.

1.5 Role of practitioners versus the community themselves

If all of the above questions were answered there would still be the question: 'what should be the role of a professional practitioner? Two roles that practitioners saw as useful were i) 'planting seeds' in the minds of people; ii) encouraging and supporting any ideas that come from these 'seeds'. However, beyond these roles practitioners felt that the community cohesion agenda is much more likely to be meaningful, useful and sustainable if projects, meetings, initiatives are initiated and progressed by local people rather than by practitioners or by regional or central government in one-size fits all solutions.

1.6 Issues for further discussion

Practitioners agreed that there were a number of questions that needed further reflection and discussion:

- i) How much of an effect can practitioners realistically hope to have?
- ii) How much of the community cohesion agenda has to be driven and owned by 'the community' itself?
- iii) What are the implications of these questions for how much power communities are given in community cohesion initiatives?

Table 2: History, Triggers and Patterns

2.1 Vulnerabilities

There was a shared feeling in all the three 'cities' that prevailing conditions were vulnerable to triggers which could potentially lead very quickly to fresh disturbances or even riots. Practitioners put different emphases on the underlying currents which most vulnerable to triggers. These currents can be best summarised under the following headings:

1. **Extremism** – This was the most widely cited trigger by practitioners from each of the three 'cities'. There were particular fears about the threat that the British National Party's (BNP) activities pose to the stability of each of the 'cities', particularly – i) the BNP's targeting of young people on 'poor council estates; ii) the BNP's apparent growing support in 'more middle class areas' in the three 'cities'. Practitioners were concerned that there is always the chance of the BNP and those that support their views mobilising and clashing with their opponents in any of the three 'cities'. There were fears in all three urban areas that this could result in further serious disturbances.

There were also concerns that other extremists also use divisions in the society to their advantage. Criminal elements within the different 'cities' were also seen as creating conditions of fear which can lead to instability and the potential for disturbances.

2. **Misinformation** – Misinformation was seen as key in creating conditions which could very quickly lead to disturbances. The local situations are very much affected by government statements and policy and its reporting in the national, regional and local media. Further to this though is the potential effect of much more localised misinformation on community relations. Examples of BNP leaflets distributed on housing estates in Bradford, which only present a partial truth at best, are used to stir up ill feeling towards other communities. The lack of communication between the different groups in 'cities' also creates conditions where community gossip and rumour can become established fact and can create the conditions for groups or individuals to exploit the gulf between groups at a later date.
3. **Ethnic tension** – For a host of complex reasons there is a relatively high level of ethnic tension between different communities in all three 'cities'. As noted above this tension is both heightened intentionally by those trying to make political gains from it but also because in many cases, different ethnic groups feel that they are not being treated equally by statutory organisations, employers, educational institutions *et cetera*. This ethnic tension manifests itself in a variety of ways and has the effect of leading to many contentious issues surrounding ethnic identity being 'brushed under the carpet' as it is seen as too divisive to deal with. While in the short-term

this may lead to 'peace' in the long-term it often means that frustrations build up and then are vulnerable to triggers.

Of particular concern in all three 'cities' was the way that these tensions between different ethnic groups manifest itself in schools. Many of these schools are divided along ethnic lines. There are few instances of inter-ethnic friendships within the schools. This often means that school children have very little meaningful contact with children from different ethnic groups, making them more reliant on stereotypes to understand and interpret the actions of others from different backgrounds to their own. Practitioners thought that this made the children more open to negative stereotypes of 'the other' and therefore more likely to actively oppose those from a different ethnic group, particularly during times of social pressure.

4. **Lack of support and hope for young people** – Despite much being done to listen to young people and meet their needs, many concerns remain about the level of disengagement and discontent that the practitioners see in the young people in all three 'cities'. Although complex in nature, the relatively low levels of educational achievement and levels of education, the high levels of crime, particularly drugs-related, the fragmentation of the family and the lack of job prospects generated relatively high level of discontent amongst a sizeable proportion of young people across the three urban areas. While this discontent is often left unexpressed in any meaningful way, it creates conditions which are vulnerable to triggers.
5. **Continued and rapid change** – As the globalized world changes so quickly, service providers, statutory organisations and government are often left *reacting* to change rather than developing capacity for supporting people in change (such as in movements of people, changing ways of accessing information, the effects of new technology on the local economy and social cohesion). Without being supported, some residents struggle with this rapid pace of change and often want to find scapegoats to blame for the way they feel. These frustrations can easily become expressed in antagonistic ways to others in the community.

2.2 Triggers

One of the practitioners described their city as a volcano which was vulnerable to small movements leading to an eruption. While many practitioners felt that progress had been made they still felt that there were conditions which only needed a trigger to set off a train of events which could lead to serious disturbances once again. The two most cited triggers for fresh disturbances were i) new hate crimes which get wide and adverse publicity; ii) new campaigns started by the BNP which heighten anxiety in BME communities and tap into the discontent felt amongst the white populations.

Table 3: Extremism and Insecurity

3.1 Definition of extremism

There were a number of questions raised about the definition of extremism:

- What makes someone's views 'extreme'?
- Is an animated person or a person with strong views an 'extremist'?
- Are you only an 'extremist' if you act on those views?

It was felt that the way the term 'extremist' and 'radical' are used often serves to cloud the debate by being a catch-all phrase. While it would be very difficult to influence the national and international media's use of this term many of the practitioners felt that there needed to be further discussion about the questions raised above and the labelling of individuals/groups as 'extremist' within the local context.

3.2 Types of extremism

The types of extremism that were mentioned in the discussions were limited to nationalist extremism, namely the BNP and extremist groups acting in the name of Islam.

3.3 Role of government

All practitioners recognised the importance of the role that central government plays in both combating extremist groups and in reducing the conditions which are known to lead to extremist views. While there were a number of questions raised about central government policy two main concerns were consistently raised:

- It was felt that the government was nurturing a climate of fear to further their own policy ends, something which was very unhelpful and had consequences at the local level;
- In seeking to develop solutions there was criticism of the short-term funding which has been adopted by governments. Working to combat extremism at the local level requires long-term work and it was thought that the funding strategies should support this with longer term funding agreements. Once the government has said that it has prioritised this work practitioners felt that the government needs to commit to this aim *over the long term* in its resource allocation.

3.4 Information

Information, given out by the police and the media surrounding extremist groups' activities and the threat that they potentially present needs to be

responsibly and sensitively handled. Many practitioners saw the media as central to generating understanding about the issues of extremism at all levels – international, national and local. However, practitioners said that too often the national and local media was seen to deal in stereotypes and did not appear to think about the implications of the stories that they ran.

There was also the feeling that the Police in particular could improve the way that they communicated with Muslim communities when investigating possible extremist groups. While there was acceptance that these raids were in most cases necessary, there is a need within these communities for clearer messages about the purpose of the raids and a need for this to be communicated in a way so as to show to the targeted community as well as others that the raids are not concerned with targeting certain communities unduly.

3.5 Spaces and skills to engage with different groups

It was generally accepted that extremists are difficult to engage with once they have developed their views. The emphasis therefore needs to be placed on helping people, particularly young people, to develop confidence in interacting and understanding people from different backgrounds. To this end, practitioners prioritised three main areas of work of prevention:

- Education – Places of education as places where children come into meaningful contact with children from other groups and are educated about difference were seen as key places on which to focus. If children learn to mix from a very young age and learn formally and informally about their differences they are much less likely to develop extreme views later on in life. Teaching children how to think through ideas rationally also will help children to question and challenge extremist views.
- Spaces for dialogue – Facilitated places where people can speak about their differences openly and honestly are needed for all ages in each of the ‘cities’. More spaces are needed where people can develop trust to speak openly and honestly without an agenda and without fear, particularly at times of tension.
- Developing skills – As well as developing spaces for dialogue it is also necessary for people to be helped in learning some of the skills that are useful in such spaces i.e. listening skills, speaking skills, disciplines needed in disagreeing. It is often assumed that everyone has these skills but practitioners have found this not to be the case. Once such skills are learnt they are transferable and can be used by individuals in many areas of their lives.

3.6 Engaging with extremist groups

Although in many instances it was accepted that it was extremely difficult to get extremist groups to engage, most practitioners thought that it would be

helpful to engage with extremist groups and bring them into dialogue with other groups with different ideologies. Many of the practitioners had questions about how you would actually achieve this or whether it was actually possible but they accepted that as long as there were ways of facilitating a dialogue, extremist groups should be invited to participate in the dialogue.

Table 4: Capacity to Resist Shocks and Triggers

Practitioners were significantly divided about the degree of change in capacity created since the disturbances in each of the 'cities'. However, there were some areas of agreement:

4.1 Intelligence and networks

Community intelligence and community networks were seen by all practitioners as crucial in resisting shocks and triggers in the three 'cities'. Good, reliable and quickly shared information has helped to head off a number of incidents turning into something more serious.

The strengthening and widening of cross-sector networks has definitely been one of the ways, in all of three 'cities', that capacity has developed since the riots. There are more meetings between different organisations focused on sharing information and discussing issues of concern related to community cohesion. The Police in particular have improved their networks at grassroots level in many communities. They have also developed new ways of systematising community intelligence which has helped in anticipating tension or trouble in/between communities. There was a general consensus in the three 'cities' that this improved intelligence and networking has created extra capacity to anticipate and react to shocks/triggers (the response in the cities to the bombs in London on July 7th, 2005 and their aftermath was cited as an example of this).

However, there are still a great many areas where practitioners see there is need for improvement. Although many of the organisations have developed more community contacts in the years since the disturbances there are many more contacts which need to be made with groups that are not or poorly represented in these networks. There was also broad agreement that much more capacity is needed to effectively coordinate all of the agencies that could contribute intelligence and information regarding the latest state of community relations at grass roots level. Not only would greater coordination aid the gathering and use of intelligence but it would also help to identify the significant amount of duplication and overlap that exists in different organisations. Greater coordination could also help organisations think about how their policies and actions could be harmonised with others, therefore reducing the potential of undermining the work of other organisations.

4.2 Building capacity with youth

One of the greatest cross-sector challenges is how to engage with the large groups of young people that are disengaged from society and how to build the capacity and confidence of young people to face the many challenges that they face living in the three urban areas. This poses an ongoing challenge for most services trying to engage young people. There have been huge efforts in each city to engage with youth, to hear their opinions and about their

struggles. However, this has often proved difficult because of the limited capacity of the organisations working with the youth and the low self-esteem of many young people. If meaningful engagement with young people is to occur greater resourcing (in the form of training, personnel and physical resources) of this work is needed.

4.3 Unpredictability

There seemed to be some confidence in the groups that there have been some growth in capacity which would help in withstanding some shocks and triggers in the future. However, as one of the participants said, “We are probably ready to deal with the 2001 disturbances now, but are we ready for 2007?”. Although much work has been done, many practitioners agreed that the local social fabric still remained vulnerable to unpredictable developments which are largely out of the control of the practitioners working on issues of community cohesion. Of particular concern to practitioners were:

- Central and regional government statements and policy triggering very localised reactions. For example, the Cabinet debate of the hijab in full glare of the media led to increased tension locally;
- New migrant groups seen to be diverting resources away from more established groups in the city;
- BNP activity;
- Media sensationalism or irresponsibility in reporting sensitive issues.

Table 5: Bonds, Boundaries and Bridges

5.1 Existence of boundaries and territories

There was agreement in all of the 'cities' that there were quite clear examples of boundary building and marking of territories. Many of the practitioners thought that these boundaries were forming mainly around ethnic, class and religious identities although different practitioners put different emphases on these identities.

5.2 School- a critical point where bonds and/or boundaries are established

School, as a natural site of meeting, is viewed by practitioners as critical in establishing cross cultural bonds and reducing the boundaries between children from different groups (class, ethnicity, religion). However, too often this process of meeting at school is not managed and children often stay within the groups in which they are most comfortable, so that their bonds are single-identity. For schools to become a place where cross cultural bonds are established, more resources need to be prioritised i) for the training and continuous support of front line staff working with children; ii) for more staff charged with thinking through many of the local issues and working with teachers and school administrators to implement solutions which make schools a more positive experience of interaction with difference.

5.3 Funding

Helping people to establish bonds with people from different identity groups is a time-consuming and long-term process. Much of the short-term funding therefore does not lend itself to this end. Short-term funding often means that only superficial linking work can be done - meaningful relationships cannot be built in the short time periods for which projects are funded.

It was recognised by the practitioners that this propensity for short-term funding for projects is in part due to the difficulty of evaluating the progress and success of a project. They accepted that longer term contracts can lead to a lower level of accountability and less pressure to deliver results. Therefore, practitioners felt much more collaboration is needed between government and practitioners to develop measurements for, and effective means of, monitoring the progress of projects aimed at building cross identity bonds and changing attitudes.

In funding projects it is also important to be seen to be as fair as possible. To be seen to be giving too many resources to one community at the expense of others has often created even more obstacles to building community cohesion.

5.4 Greater thinking about engineering bonds/cohesion

The practitioners were concerned by the assumption made at all levels that 'anything that brings people together to meet and talk is a good thing'. In some examples of past work there has not been enough thought about what the aims were of bringing people together. Greater thought needs to be based around gathering people from different backgrounds, *recognising common needs* and then working on these needs together. It was thought that this would not only lead to the building up of relationships between people from different backgrounds in the 'cities', but it would also be natural and thus more sustainable.

5.5 Importance of equal opportunities

Many of the practitioners still working on creating more bonds and bridges between people from different backgrounds are still very conscious of the relationship of their work with equal opportunities work. Most of the practitioners felt that ensuring equal opportunities for all in the city was of primary importance. Without equal opportunities, there seemed to be resistance to get involved with 'bonding and bridging' work because it can lead to the impression of equality when it does not exist.

Table 6: Positive and Negative Drivers

6.1 Working locally

Practitioners agreed that it was difficult to always identify what really drives positive and progressive change. As there are so many different organisations involved in driving and supporting change and are very much dependent on each other it is difficult to analyse accurately what the keys are in stimulating the change that people need and want to see. However, there was agreement that focusing on the local, encouraged in local area agreements and work focused on neighbourhoods has been useful in identifying and meeting many of people's real needs and the change that people wanted to see. Practitioners agreed that more resources should be dedicated to working on a very local level as it is many of the localised issues such as littering, parking, youth gangs in the locality which are of most concern to people.

6.2 Increasing and widening participation

Many of the practitioners saw the need for those working on the community cohesion agenda to become more participatory, engaging more of their service users and local people who have much more experience of the locality than policymakers or those who live and work outside of the locality. If organisations are going to take this seriously it has significant implications for the organisation's:

structures - more staff out of the office developing relationships with local people, more power devolved to local people, developing fora where staff of an organisation and local people can meet together to discuss and plan;

management – this needs to reflect the shift of power toward local people. Many of the practitioners agreed that it was often the middle managers/workers (between the local people and grass roots employees and 'top-level managers' and policy makers) who were critical in the process of developing good policy as they mediate between grass-roots and policy makers;

location and access – some of the practitioners had been told that people found their organisations inaccessible both because of the complex systems they used but also sometimes because of location. If participation is to be encouraged then it is important that local people can easily get to the offices and can navigate the organisations/institutions once they arrive.

6.3 Funding

As well as the need of local organisations to recognise the implications of adopting a more participative approach, regional and central government and other grant-making bodies also need to recognise that funding structures need to change. One of the greatest challenges was working to make funding processes clearer so that local people can understand and be involved in the

funding process. Practitioners also said that greater participation would be easier to guarantee from local people if longer-term funding was offered rather than very short-term funding.

6.4 Questions concerning participation

There were a host of questions and challenges which practitioners felt needed more thought:

- How to get more youth and women involved in decision-making and implementation?
- If it is not possible to get good representation from a group, how should they be represented by others?
- How to structure participation around the schedules of people with very busy lives?
- What is the best way to communicate with local people and to encourage them to get involved?
- Is it possible to develop a set of common values which could be agreed upon which would help guide future policy and action?

Table 7: Gender, Age and Change Agents

7.1 Pressure of gender role

In all of the 'cities', young men were seen as a particular challenge to the social cohesion agenda. Not only in many cases were the young men very difficult to engage but it was often the case that their actions are, consciously or unconsciously, in opposition to efforts to build trust between different groups. While many of the practitioners said that they could not understand all of the factors that led to this opposition, the practitioners did think that the young men in the city were under great pressure because:

- **of the lack of economic opportunities.** Many young men find it difficult to get a job. Without a job many struggle with their levels of self-esteem. Often young men have to find other ways to improve their self esteem – involvement in the drugs trade, acts of violence, aggressively marking their territory are all ways in which practitioners think some young men become involved as they serve to empower themselves;
- **young men are viewed with suspicion** just for being young men. Being viewed in such a way means that young men's behaviour can often be misinterpreted to be more aggressive or confrontational than was meant;
- **the role of men in society in general is changing** and leads to new pressures as men have to work out new identities. For men who have less components of an identity of which they are proud (professional identities, educational identities, identities from their leisure pursuits), there is more pressure on their working out and performing of their male identity.

Practitioners felt that there was a need for a greater understanding of the pressures that many young men in urban areas are under so that they and their organisations are better able to reach groups of marginalised young men.

7.2 Media images

The media is seen to intersect with questions of gender in our society in a variety of complex ways. The media (particularly films and computer games) make strong links between proving one's masculinity through the use of violence. A number of the practitioners said that there are some clear examples in their 'cities' of how young men are copying what they see in films, particularly American films, which depict ghettos in the USA, and copying some of the attitudes and the behaviour of the gangs depicted in these films. But further to this proliferation of violence-affirming media, there is very little media, particularly popular media, which explores the consequences of

violence and helps to give a more balanced picture of its effects both on the lives of the victims as well as the perpetrators.

Practitioners also felt that the media was in part responsible for the expectations that it creates. A number of the practitioners could give examples of young men with whom they had come into contact who were not prepared to take on a 'boring' job, a job in a hierarchy, or one where they were forced to settle. Rather these young men were looking for 'excitement' in their jobs, something which many of the practitioners feel is, in part, media-fed.

The media were also seen to perpetuate the stereotype of young men as a problem. Rather than affirming the role that they have to play in society and recognising the difficulties that they face in today's society, media coverage of young men was often negative and condemnatory. There were not many presentations within the media of positive role models of young men, a fact which cannot be helpful in nurturing young men's self esteem and sense of worth.

7.3 The role of women

Although it is clear that women are playing an ever greater role in the civic life in each of the three 'cities', there are still major questions over the degree of equality that women have in relation to their male counterparts. There was a lack of formal progression for women working on the community cohesion agenda. Many of the practitioners stressed that, as has been outlined above, the continued pressure for greater equal opportunities, in this case between men and women, is intimately linked to the social cohesion agenda and its advancement. Where equality of opportunity has been progressed there are a number of examples of women taking on exciting, new leadership roles. However, there are also many patterns in 'cities' which need to be broken, the relatively high number of teenage pregnancies being one of the most often quoted patterns.

One oft-cited positive pattern though, is the changing roles of women within the Muslim community. Practitioners noticed that in recent years Muslim women, particularly younger Muslim women, are becoming more visible and confident in representing their communities in different public arenas. This was seen as a positive development and one which practitioners would welcome further research on so that they can understand and support this development.

Appendices

Participants and Note takers

Participants from Bradford

Dave Allport	REWIND
Yolande Armstrong	Schools Linking Project
Paul Bunting	Programme for a Peaceful City – Bradford University
Lisa Cumming	Programme for a Peaceful City – Bradford University
Zoe George	West Yorkshire Police
Steven Kingston	Bradford Vision
Mark Leighton	West Yorkshire Police
Liz Hanney	Diversity Exchange
Jani Rashid	Education Bradford
Andy Sykes	Bradford Resource Centre
Olau Thomassen	Community Accord
Mike Waite	Bradford Resource Centre

* From Birmingham but has done a lot of training in Bradford

Participants from Burnley

Zahir Ahmed	Burnley Borough Council
Shahida Akram	Building Bridges in Burnley
Mike Gaston*	Mediation Northern Ireland
Nasreen Hanan	Youth and community Service
Paul Hutchinson *	Mediation Northern Ireland
Riaz Mohammed	Lancashire County Council
Syed Naqui	Burnley Police
Barbara Norris	Youth and Community Service
Hamid Qureshi	Building Bridges in Burnley
Lilli Rushton	Burnley District Youth and Community Services
Martin Selway	Burnley Police
Sam Tedcastle	The Participation Works Ltd.
Jo Williams	Conflict Resolution Group

* Contracted to work in Burnley but from Northern Ireland

Participants from Oldham

Malek Ahmed	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Sohail Ahmed	Oldham Social Services
Kashaff Feroze	Oak Project
Richard Gore	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Pam Griffin	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Peter Hamon	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Shami Miah	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

Ustar Miah
Bruce Penhale
Fazal Rahim
Anna Shiels
Mark Simmons
Howard Sutcliffe
John Taylor
Steve Titley
Collette Upton
Karen Whitworth

First Choice Homes
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Oldham Sports Development Unit
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Inter-faith Forum
Greater Manchester Police
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Community Links

Note takers from Bradford University

Christy Bischoff
Donna Chung
Jenny Pearce
Martin Pearson
Kulvinder Brar
Claudia Torres
Sue Walley

Key Recommendations to the Commission for Integration and Cohesion

- ◆ Promote work with children and young people from an early age to address issues of identity and foster self esteem and positive regard for others e.g. citizenship in a meaningful and active way;**
- ◆ Develop long-term strategies not short-term projects - continuity of funding is vital;**
- ◆ Promote more and equal opportunities for all in education, employment and enterprise;**
- ◆ Encourage interaction, based on evidence of good practice so that it is effective, including opportunities for genuine open dialogue and debate with all communities, including extreme ideologies;**
- ◆ Engage with different sections of communities in a positive and proactive not reactive way. Includes all socioeconomic and generational issues;**
- ◆ Encourage partnerships with media to increase accountability and positive outcomes.**

Programme for Three Northern 'Cities' Workshop

**Friday 12th January 2007,
Daneshouse & Stoneyholme Community Centre, Burnley**

- 9.30 am** Coffee and Registration – Sign-up for tables
Ground rules for working – opportunity to read
- 10.00 am** Welcome & Introductions
Introduction to Workshop
Introduction to Commission and today's workshop
Checking ground rules for the day
- 10.20 am** Discussion groups around experiences and learning from three cities/'cities'. The aim of the discussions is to identify practitioners working in community cohesion field issues and what support they would like from policy makers at a national and local level.
- 11.20 am** Break
- 11.40 am** 2nd group discussion
- 12.40 pm** Choosing of 5 key issues – Market place - time to go round flipcharts which will be on wall.
- 1.00 pm** Lunch and time for Prayers
- 2.00 pm** Prioritising issues recommendations we want to take from today's workshop to the Commission.
- 2.10 pm** People work with partners and come to agreement of up to five issues/ recommendations
- 2.20 pm** Groups of 4 agree five issues or recommendations
- 2.50 pm** Groups of 8 agree five issues of recommendations
- 3.30 pm** TEA – students to write up the key issues arising from groups
- 3.45 pm** Plenary
- 4.35 pm** Next Steps

Working Table Themes

Table 1: Complexity, Community and Cohesion

The Integration/Cohesion debate assumes that terms like 'community' and 'cohesion' are commonly understood and unproblematic.

- What evidence is there from the three cities/'cities' of the way complex social relationships within communities help us understand the challenge of living together?
- What about the position of minorities within minorities? For instance in South Asian 'communities', caste and place of origin in the sub continent have a huge impact on social interactions.
- What prevents white 'communities' (poor, lower and middle class) from mixing with each other as well as with minority ethnic communities?
- Is there a genuine model of integration that means something other than assimilation into the dominant majority culture?
- Can there truly be cohesion without equality?
- Do we know what a community which is both integrated and cohesive would look like? How could we measure progress?

Table 2: History, Triggers and Patterns

Memories of past disturbances play a big role in the potential for new ones.

- How far do our three cities/'cities' have protracted histories of social conflicts?
- What kind of tensions lead to violent incidents? How are such incidents triggered?
- What explanations and narratives are constructed which then turn these incidents into potentially more damaging events, such as riots?
- What patterns are there in our three cities/'cities' which help us understand their vulnerability to renewed crisis?

Table 3: Extremism and Insecurity

We are interested in extremism and how it manifests itself in the three cities/'cities' (whether it be the BNP, terrorists who act in the name of Islam, or extremists of any kind), and the fear that is being generated.

- What is the basis of fear and the responses to fears?
- How can racism or extremism be addressed?
- What kind of security works in these contexts?
- What kind of activism and political responses work?

Table 4: Capacity to Resist Shocks and Triggers

Social organisations and networks need to be robust enough to withstand any future external shocks to our communities.

- How has this capacity developed since the riots?
- How much capacity is there?
- How can any gaps be filled?

Table 5: Bonds, Boundaries and Bridges

Our three cities/'cities' have many communities which are strongly bound together and have defined territories, but links between them are often weaker.

- Where are the bonds and boundaries in our three cities/'cities' and where are there points of connection?
- Is segregation an issue in every place? What leads to segregation? How can it be reversed?
- Do we have a range of activities which bring communities together, and bridge the boundaries? Do we understand what works best and why? Do we have safe spaces for this to happen?
- Do we have ways of supporting new people who arrive (e.g. as refugees or migrant workers)?

Table 6: Positive and Negative Drivers

There are forces at work in our three cities/'cities' which make improving cohesion more or less possible.

- What exists in each city to drive change forward, and what are the obstacles to change?
- Do local authorities and other public services (e.g. police, housing, NHS) play a benign and proactive role - or are they sometimes part of the problem?
- What is the state of health of local democracy? Can local people have a say in decision making?
- Can we achieve cohesion in a low pay economy with big differences in income and wealth?
- Can the local media play a positive role?

Table 7: Gender, Age and change Agents

We are interested here in the role of masculinity, femininity and youth in the problems confronting our cities/'cities'.

- Why do young men appear to be at the centre of much of the overt violence? Do other sections of the community bear responsibility too?
- How can the young men who are seen as part of the problem become part of the solution?
- What role can women play in bringing about change? Are there positive examples from other societies?

Recommendations Resulting from the Groups of Eight⁹

1. MEDIA

- Positive relationships with media to prevent sensationalism
- Encourage partnerships with media to increase accountability and positive outcomes.
- Media to be more responsible/balanced and more ethics in relation to community interest cohesion

2. EQUALITY

- Tackle economic disadvantage and inequalities as drivers for division
- No cohesion without equality of opportunity
- More and equal opportunities for all education/employment/enterprise. "No cohesion without equality."

3. YOUNG PEOPLE

- Working together especially with young people to define and to shape the society and so produce local leaders e.g. philosophy for children in Oldham.
- Increase capacity for work with young people so as to develop
- Promote work with children and young people from an early age to address issues of identity and foster self esteem and positive regard for others e.g. citizenship in a meaningful and active way.

4. SAFE AND OPEN COMMUNICATION SPACES

- Need for honesty, listening to peoples perceptions recognising there is a fear of how 'I'/communities are perceived (safe spaces)
- Honest and open information sharing, intelligent co-ordination and leadership
- Encourage interaction based on evidence of good practice so that it is effective including opportunities for genuine open dialogue and debate with all communities include extreme ideologies

5. LONG TERM/SHORT TERM STRATEGIES AND FUNDING

- Focusing resources and money to provide t long term funding/aim of sustainable economic regeneration
- Need for long term strategy and investment at local level
- Need long term strategies not short tem projects, continuity of funding is vital
- Long term funding take out duplication build on good practice

6. CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

- What is community cohesions –how have we achieved it
- Promote understanding of diversity and cohesion based upon common issues within a robust framework to enable all communities to be heard

⁹ See 2:50pm on programme in Appendices.

- Sell the concept of community cohesion based on commonality not just youth, religion or cultures.

7. RESPONSIBILITY PARTNERSHIP EMBEDDING

- Community cohesion to be recognised as a key measurable objective for service providers
- Working towards cohesion is an ongoing process which is the responsibility on all public services and agencies, which needs appropriate long term funding
- More equal opportunities for all

8. IDENTITY

- A shared sense of working and self esteem
- Understanding identities – Micro identities and macro multi relationships

9. ENGAGEMENT

- Government to engage in local authority, bottom up approach to dialogue in partnership with local communities on issues important to them even if controversial.
- Effective partnership and linkages between communities and regional work, local government bodies particularly re counter terrorism
- Engage with different sections of the communities, positive and proactive not reactive. Includes all socio – economic issues and generational

Photos of the Workshop

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