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Kirklees Community Cohesion Action Research

Interim Report

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Introduction

This report provides an interim summary of a collaboration between Kirklees Authority, Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing, and a research team from the University of Huddersfield. In this document, we report the main points arising from the project, together with summaries of some of the data. A full analysis of the very considerable amount of data gathered will be produced at the conclusion of the project. As it is not the final version of the report, the authors would be grateful if permission could be sought before drawing on the findings or making direct quotations.

Research Aims and Remit

The Project was commissioned from the School of Education and Professional Development at the University of Huddersfield by Kirklees Council in March 2013, as part of a suite of initiatives by the Council to explore the relationships and mutual perceptions of communities in various areas of the Authority. While the companion piece of research, also conducted by the university, and reported here (link), was based on more traditional house-to-house survey work, the Community Cohesion Project was conceived as a form of community-based participatory action research, closely involving members of the authority's workforce with day to day contact with communities. The aims of the research have been as follows:

- To gather views and experiences from a variety of communities within Kirklees about how the initiatives and approaches designed to build community cohesion have been progressing
- To achieve this through a participatory 'action' approach – University staff would not come into communities as detached outsiders who claimed ownership over the processes and results of research, but would instead work with LA workers to enable them to undertake the research themselves. The role of the university staff would be to train, guide and support front-line practitioners in carrying out research with communities during their normal, day-to-day activities
- To build capacity: the approach described above was designed to allow a larger group of staff feel clearer and more confident about being involved in community cohesion work, and a sense of ownership over the process, particularly in terms of their ability to be in touch with what was happening on the ground.

Kirklees sponsored the initiative by nominating staff from a range of roles to take part and attend a sequence of meetings that would form the foundation for the work over the project's lifetime. Staff were inevitably starting at very different points in terms of knowledge of and comfort around the topics under consideration, and this ultimately led to varying levels of

commitment to some of the core activities that arose out of initial meetings, but there was a core involvement throughout the 18 months-long process largely from the Authority's Community Engagement Team, Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) staff and the Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing (KNH) Engagement team. The group was a highly diverse one, representing many of the communities in Kirklees, and the nature of their experience and their work roles meant that they were also very well informed and articulate about the issues.

Participation at the initial stage was strongly encouraged by managers, though the university team were at pains to emphasise that the exercise was one which was designed to enhance the group's skills, and which they were facilitating rather than running. This message was received to varying degrees. However, participation in the actual work, and in the drop-in meetings that were conducted in between main meetings was entirely voluntary, and it was a smaller core group that eventually put in most of the work and took the project forward, demonstrating very deep commitment and producing some intensely analytic and reflective writing, which will feature in this report.

The timetable for the research was as follows.

- March/April 2013: Contract agreed

- 16 April 2013 – Scoping Community Cohesion, Council Training Centre.

- 9 May 2013 – Training Day 1 for participating staff, Council Training Centre, on Cohesion and Integration national and local policies and approaches and their implications for work in communities.
- 23 May 2013 – Training Day 2, Huddersfield Town Hall: on approaches to research and evaluation work within local communities, which involved discussing and testing proposed research tools developed by the University.
- Phase One – May to August 2013: data collection, and two drop-in sessions for participants, one in North and one in South Kirklees, where data could be handed over, and development discussions were undertaken.
- Feedback from Phase One to the Group and planning for Phase 2 – February 2014.
- Phase Two – May to August 2014
- Feedback from Phase 2 and Phase 3 planning
- Phase Three - ongoing

Initial Meeting – Scoping Community Cohesion

The aim of the university team at this meeting was to facilitate a discussion which would enable the group to identify common ground in terms of thinking about what the concept of community cohesion might represent 'on the ground' and what kinds of positive intervention in support of community cohesion might be regarded as both legitimate and effective. The session revisited the timeline from 9/11 which had given rise to the policy emphasis on community cohesion and the prevention of violent extremism, and explored some of the ambiguities and dilemmas in the concept of 'parallel lives' which had become central to public discourse on community relations. In particular, the discussion challenged the idea that separateness was the exclusive consequence of voluntary choice on the part of individuals or groups. When asked to draw a map of parts of Kirklees that they might consider to be 'segregated', the group identified complex patterns of segregation determined by income and wealth, class, housing tenure and age, and noted that the most highly segregated areas were 'white'.

As a further focus for the discussion group members were asked to identify events or activities that had either been successful or unsuccessful in terms of developing cohesion, and to cite the evidence for their opinion in each case. Discussions in the group indicated a continuum of views on what constituted community cohesion, from what might be called a minimalist stance, where cohesion was represented by communities being able to go about their own business without conflict with or interference from others, to those who felt that active engagement between communities was a vital element in staving off serious conflict and hostility. There was common agreement that some short-life commissioned projects drawing on targeted funding, which had raised expectations but then been unable to fulfil them before disappearing actually had a negative impact on community perceptions. Some publicly sponsored events were seen as being too 'top-down', and no matter how well meaning the agenda, out of touch with what local communities identified as being important and reflecting the reality of their everyday lives; others were seen as 'box-ticking', in the sense of meeting policy agendas on a short-term basis without forethought about what kind of follow-up (if any) was required. Some of these events were typified as 'sari and samosa' events, but more substantial criticism was levelled at the first round of projects associated with Prevent.

Projects that had been seen as more positive included those that either drew on common interests and experiences not specifically associated with any cohesion agenda, particularly when they were 'organic' or organised locally, notably some specific heritage events which

had involved sharing of memories and artefacts, the women's alliance, and sustainability week. These worked by emphasising shared experiences and needs, rather than differences. Inter-faith events were seen as potentially positive, especially when organised around significant dates in the religious calendars, and when food was available.

The final stage of group preparation was to identify the scope for members of the group to use opportunities presented by their everyday working lives to evaluate the state of community cohesion through adding a research element to their practice. It was recognised that the approach would need to be distinct from the purposefully more remote and 'objective' approach of traditional sociological research, and would also need to tap opinions, and approach the process of having difficult conversations, in a subtle way.

Methods and approach

The research training offered to the group in Stage One identified differenmt models and approaches to action research, and explored some of the dilemmas confronting the action researcher in this kind of field, including those of positionality (how someone's work role affected what they might see), authenticity (how possible it would be for members of the group to represent their experiences of reality) and ethics (in dealing with these sensitive issues, what would be the responsibilities of group members in terms of confidentiality, or the requirement to challenge as wel as record views). Examples of the materials used in the university team's previous work in Oldham and Rochdale were used as a basis for discussing the potential for, and difficulties in the way of 'measuring' community cohesion. Examples of materials used are given in Appendix One.

Observations	25
Questionnaires	159
Sentence Completions	63
Individual Interviews	31
Focus Groups	5

Table 1: Summary of data collection in Stage One

The methods were designed to provide a balanced approach to data collection for the teams. A possible use for the instruments that were susceptible to quantitative analysis, such as the questionnaires (and to a degree the sentence completion, though these were

more difficult to analyse systematically) was to provide a form of temperature gauge fro community cohesion in that the instruments could be used with the same or different groups in an area at different periods of time, and the extent of change could be assessed. On the whole though, workers were reluctant to use repeat measures, as they experienced a negative response from their groups when they attempted it: the feeling was one of bemusement that once an opinion had been sought on an issue it should be sought again in the same way. As a result, the tables can be read on their own terms as a cross-sectional view of emotions at opinions at a particular point in time, or in combination, to illuminate specific issues. As an example we will look at responses to two of the questions on the model questionnaire.

Definitely Agree	12%
Agree	45%
Don't know	27%
Disagree	9%
Definitely Disagree	7%

Table 2: Response to the Statement 'Different people get on well in .... (name of town)'

Number of respondents 120

On their own, this set of results is ambiguous – it could be presented as only 16% feeling that different people did not get on well, or that 43% didn't agree that people got on well, and reactions to the results would vary greatly according to which presentation was chosen. On the other hand, when read in conjunction with the table below the results might be more significant: a possible interpretation is that the higher proportion apparently keen to get to know others from different backgrounds, indicated in the table below, reflects a positive response to current uncertainty about the state of community relations

Definitely Agree	36%
Agree	31%
Don't know	21%
Disagree	4%
Definitely Disagree	8%

Table 3: Response to statement 'I would like to get to know more people from different backgrounds' : Number of respondents =100

Another point of interest is the large proportion of 'don't knows', also characteristic of responses to other statements, which might be alternatively interpreted positively as people who are potentially responsive to positive initiatives, or alternatively, as people who are reluctant to express more negative responses to other communities. There was support from our qualitative data for each of these interpretations.

Example 1: Discussion with a group of children from Z estate:

This group of children already knew each other, and the facilitator from KNH used the questionnaire headings to manage an open discussion between the children. Themes emerge from the summary which have remained current throughout the subsequent stages of the research. The estate is mixed, and the children identified some tensions and strains, although they also expressed the view that they were quite localised. They thought of the place as quite 'rough' and identified past notorious events such as 'shootings' as signs both of the roughness and the stigma that could be attached to the estate. However they expressed the view that it was neither better nor worse than other similar estates they knew or had heard of. They identified some prominent residents with pronounced racist views, and saw this in a rather fatalistic light ('it's always been the same' – 'that won't change'). They might mix with children from ethnic groups different to their own, but they were unlikely to identify with them or see them as 'friends'. Children with darker skins were likely to be called by the 'P' word, and these kinds of expressions of racism were seen as encouraged by the children's families who either explicitly encouraged this kind of abuse, tacitly approved it or refused to sanction it. However, there was a sense from the whole group that the diversity of the estate was one of its defining characteristics and that 'Z wouldn't be Z' if groups were either segregated, or the estate was mono-ethnic. The positive aspects of the estate were friends, family, small area/ close knit community, community activities: youth club, gardening club, play schemes, dance, gymnastics, football, while the negative aspects were the lack of parks and activities for teenagers, and the downside of living in a close community, the gossip and small mindedness "news travels fast on the estate".

The results from the questionnaires indicated that it was very common for community members to have friendships that bridged cultural and religious difference (Table 4), and this was borne out by data from interviews and observations, as was the case with this Afghan refugee woman: *I do have two close British friends but we have an honest dialogue in discussing religion and I know they respect that when we are together we do not attend places where there will be alcohol or dancing and that sort of thing.*

Definitely Agree	55%
Agree	23%
Don't know	10%
Mostly disagree	7%
Definitely disagree	5%

Table 4: 'I have friends who are from a different ethnic group or religion'

The following account by a white woman in her 40s demonstrated the capacity of close family ties to overcome deeply embedded prejudices while clearly indicating that the process was gradual:

I think social cohesion isn't static it moves as areas change -it just depends on where you live. I had preconceived ideas about Muslim men. I assumed they oppressed women and only wanted baby boys. My white British daughter converted to Islam and I made it my business to learn about her faith. She went to the Salafia mosque which has an upstairs for women and she talked to women about Islam and soon became a Muslim. I believe she is treated with respect and she is happy. Since my eldest daughter converted to Islam my youngest daughter has really changed in her behaviour and her teachers have noticed the calmness about her, I believe it's through the influence of having my daughter and her husband living in our house, it has rubbed off on her in a positive way.

One of my elderly relatives refused to come to the house since my daughter married a Muslim but as a man in his 70's his opinions have changed. I am a Christian and set in my ways so I wouldn't change my religion but I do support my family in their faith, we only eat halal in the house and I have been cooking every day for * and I won't eat in front of them while they are fasting. I don't have any friends that are Muslim but race or religion does not bother me and we have had interracial marriage within our extended family.

This account from a worker about an estate where she was involved in a consultation exercise also indicated that areas with a good social mix could work very successfully:

Spoke to one white family, whilst giving information on changes to the way the council will deliver its services in the future. They said that the area in which they lived was all the better for it being mixed. The estate was just under 8 years old so fairly new and all the homes privately owned. People had all chipped in together to pay for the cutting and pruning of communal trees.

However, there was a recognition that genuine and very deep seated cultural difference would provide boundaries that were difficult to cross:

Muslims don't like the British culture as it is very free and open and in Islam you are not supposed to be open about everything such as health, relationships and pregnancy for example. We don't discuss private matters. There is a difference in the way of life such as the British wear clothing that reveals their skin, drink alcohol, swear to their elders and go to bars and clubs. I guess that behaviour does not directly affect me but some Muslims feel if they associate with peers who behave like that then people might perceive they are not living by Islam and be corrupted.

The challenges presented by 'super-diversity' were a consistent theme of the feedback from various of the research exercises. This was exemplified in a number of ways. 'I'm OK with the Xs, it's the Ys that worry me' was one strand of thinking that recurred frequently, and tracing and interpreting inter-group suspicion and hostility required a multi-dimensional perspective that could accommodate understanding a range of differences that could include race, religion, appearance, social class, residence, ethnicity and recency of arrival. One example was given by a community engagement worker of Pakistani heritage:

"At a local shop 4 women were in a conversation. One group consisted of an Indian Muslim woman & Pakistani woman. The other group were two Indian Muslim Women. The Indian woman greeted the two Indian Muslim women and exchanged pleasantries, they were known to each other. The Pakistani woman didn't not know the two Indian women who had just been greeted. One of the women with the Pakistani woman explained ' there is a event on tomorrow at the Pakistani Community Centre in Batley pop along if you are free it's for a good cause'. The Indian woman replied 'we not going to that because its rubbish and we don't support what goes on in the Pakistani centres'. The Indian lady with the Pakistani lady explained 'this is my friend who is Pakistani and she's supporting the event and I am also going to it'. The lady continued to express how they would not support Pakistanis regardless of what work they were doing. The Pakistani woman said to them 'well Pakistanis support any event Indians organise, they don't have issues if its Indians organising or Pakistanis organising', but the women just refused to give their support and said they would not attend any event at PKWA. I was shocked they were so blatant in their prejudice against Pakistanis knowing I was a Pakistani. Felt worse that a white person being racist. Underlying prejudice is deep rooted against Pakistanis. They don't flourish as the Gujarati Indian Community do. They are perceived as not good practising Muslims, have too many issues to associate with them."

These nuanced relationships between co-religionists from different background were felt by many to be invisible to the majority population who over-generalised about anyone with a dark skin. This was felt to be particularly exacerbated by the aftermath of 9/11, 7/7 and the Lee Rigby murder, as noted by a 60 year-old Sikh man:

"I don't feel comfortable walking around certain towns and cities because of the colour of my skin. I feel sections of the Muslim community who have made public excuses of the murder of Lee Rigby just exacerbate the situation. If you are South Asian no one can determine if you are Sikh Hindu or Muslim and I feel new tensions when I'm walking around, that Muslims are thought of negatively and I'm being seen as Muslim because of the colour of my skin. I feel I'm still seen as a foreigner and I have lived here since 1962."

The following account from an Afghan refugee indicated both the sense that the environment in South Kirklees was perceived as more successfully cohesive and welcoming, but also that 'bonding social capital' in some communities represented a barrier even for co-religionists.

Now I have refugee status, I am working and am married with a family I feel so much settled in Huddersfield. It's a constant state of trying to survive however. I have been part of a community group and did a lot of community events but now everyone is so busy trying to survive and improve their English and employability we hardly meet. A refugee community is transient as people have to move to other areas to improve their prospects for work and education. I do feel accepted now in Huddersfield. I do have friends that are Pakistani and white but I think the Pakistani community are very closely tied to each other. I don't talk to my neighbours where I live though as we have had a few problems. People don't have time to mix even if they wanted to as they are busy trying to survive and raise their families.

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Barriers and issues

Ata time of shrinking resource in local government, it is perhaps not surprising that some ill-feeling should be expressed over perceptions 'they' are receiving either more special funding, or generally being treated more favourably in decision making regarding funding, or often, planning decisions. One worker reported on a local resident's group meeting in North Kirklees and noted:

There was a conversation around Pathfinder and the allocation of past funding and resources in the area. One resident commented that : "They used to come for funding for new toilets. They were accepted (meaning the grant was approved). I don't want to pick on certain people (meaning Asian community)".

That same resident made a comment about 5 minutes later (in reference to the current work of their group) saying "They back you, but don't get involved". (meaning the Asian community back the work of the group but do not get involved in the group). Later on in the discussions the rest of the residents said they were quite keen for more members of the Asian community to get involved in the group "We are actively trying to get more Muslims involved" .

There was an indication in the survey results that the majority of respondents from all communities rejected the idea of total separation of groups.   This can be seen as double edged: on the one hand an indication that people favour mixed communities – on the other hand that perceptions that some communities are inward-looking are widely held and the cause of some resentment.

Definitely Agree	8%
Agree	3%
Don't know	21%
Disagree	15%
Definitely Disagree	52%

Table 5: 'X (name of town or area) would be better if different ethnic groups and religions lived totally separate lives'.

The attribution of isolationism to the Pakistani community is reflected in the following comment: *I think the issues are actually around Culture and not Islam or religion. It's cultural differences that are causing divides not religion. I think Asians should not close themselves up and be scared but be open and challenge people's views. They should have open market days where they can speak with the public and they should make the effort to demonstrate who they are. This happened recently in Bradford at an event and it was really informative.*

There was a distinction between the responses in South Kirklees (Huddersfield) where relations were generally perceived as positive and North Kirklees, where there were negative comments both about the material infrastructure of the towns, and the relationships between the communities, and a sense that the two issues were interlinked. It was noticeable that some of the survey responses that might be thought of as more negative were highly localised, concentrated in one predominantly white area of North Kirklees.

Phae Two

Phase 1 provided helpful data about how people within a range of communities experience and feel about 'cohesion' and cross-community contact. Phase 2 was intended to be about developing a more action-focused and empowering methodology that explored ways in which communities might develop positive cross-community dialogue and contact, what resources they might think they would need to achieve this kind of change and what individuals, communities and public sector organisations like Kirklees Council and KNH could do to encourage stronger 'cohesion'. A summary of the approaches that were seen by the group as more or less productive is included in the bullet points below.

- *Commonality events that naturally bring people together to celebrate – Christmas lights, carnivals/festivals, Olympic torch, etc.*

- *Good fun events, especially involving families, food, sharing will naturally encourage people to visit 'other' areas and spaces*

- *Achieving a friendly, chilled, family tone to events is the key to success*

- *People want to be (and volunteer to be) more active in the process of making community-building events happen*

- *Participatory budgeting process works for that reason and provides good neutral space for people to meet*

- *There should be less 'forcing' of cohesion and less Local Authority red tape and control of processes*

- *Contact needs on the way to consistent/long-term*

- *Different inputs from public bodies in particular areas should be 'joined-up' more e.g. each working with different parts of same community and liaising over it to maximise impact*

- *Discussion of 'British values' is NOT helpful or productive way forward*

- *People of different ethnic backgrounds (including strong input from white young people, who speak out strongly against racism, lack of mixing and bullying) want more mixing and events/places that enable it – this includes specific desire to learn more about 'others'*

- *Behaviour by some people in 'other' communities (e.g. Niqab wearing; Asian male attitudes to white young women) remains a driver of resentment*

- *Parents needs to take more responsibility for creating successful ethnically-mixed schools*

As an example of the depth of reflection undertaken by the group, we are including as well some more substantial extracts from reflections and observations by one worker during this phase:

Best examples of people coming or working together?

Culture shares where participants are asked to bring objects or photos that depict an important aspect of their life help to create discussion followed by refreshments and further opportunities to meet have been good first contact encounters.

One offs are not successful and can actually reinforce stereotyping.

The best places to meet are always in less clinical venues. Times depend on the groups and their family or work commitments. Opportunities to be curious.

People enjoy learning and experiencing other cultures especially music, dance, food, art and fashion, but sometimes people will only be voyeurs of the exotic and not interested in forging relationships. So active contribution before, during and after events are very important.

Muslim individuals tend to be more wary of participating due to their own interpretation of religious restrictions and what is understood as haraam and I believe people have tightened their religious beliefs in what is forbidden rather than loosened them over the last 15 years. This can cause difficult issues when thinking of ways to bring people together. Where men and women have to be separated or alcohol is present etc.

Community Events sharing a celebration of difference versus celebrating similarities?

Events that celebrate the religious and community festivals calendar such as Diwali, Eid, Vaisakhi, Holi etc and interfaith initiatives are good ways to introduce a community to others. These used to be delivered at Kirklees museums in partnership with community reps as part of well established education programmes and offered free to residents. They were successful as education was key to the delivery in a safe and neutral learning environment as part of holiday activities for families.

Other events such as those celebrating the lunar calendar such as Chinese New Year were tremendous in increasing the understanding of the Chinese community. However what happened afterwards? We have moved away from this approach.

Finding opportunities to discuss our commonalities brings people together to focus on similarity rather than difference, be it around health or schooling, ASB or play opportunities in a local area has had a lot of success.

There were several accounts of projects which involved participatory decision making processes which commented on the capacity of these to generate more cross-community activity.

I recently held an event in * in relation to 'It's up to You'. Also, known as participatory budgeting. This involves a small pot of money and the residents vote for their favourite projects at the event. It was good to see different groups of the community coming together on the day. I was coordinating the event but I had engaged and enthused residents leading to the event and so on the day it was resident volunteers who were involved and taking part in the roles. . This event was held in the estate and brought people together to enjoy and share conversations with people who live in their community and how to improve their community.

The perceived success of similar participatory budgeting events supported some of the conclusions reached at the end of Phase 1 of the Project, and opened up opportunities for thinking of ways in which the tightening of resources could be used positively to develop dialogue between communities.

Phase 3 of the Project – in process

This phase has been designed to focus on the process and outcomes of policy development, and the focus has shifted from the communities of local residents to the communities of practitioners and policy makers who work with them. A key issue has been the fact that the project has coincided with the impact of austerity measures on the capacity of local authorities to support new initiatives or meet any of the resource demands that might arise from attempting to be responsive to communities. Consequently, the focus of much policy discussion has necessarily been about how to make the most of the available assets, and how to address the dilemmas created by attempting to respond to community need and demands with a shrinking resource. During Phase Three of the project, the university team facilitated reflection and discussion of what participating staff gained from the action research process, professional and community perceptions of community cohesion issues, the barriers to success that were most significant, ways of harnessing under-utilised staff capacity and the potentially most fruitful ways in which the local authority could develop their cohesion strategy.

Participating staff greatly valued the thinking space and detailed discussion of the meaning/s and practice and community cohesion that the action research project process had enabled. They also felt more confident to engage in cohesion dialogue and practice within communities. A range of barriers were perceived a standing in the way of other local authority staff addressing some of the issues that had arisen in communities. Participants identified the fact that many authority employees with the most day to day contacts with community members might not be trained, or have the experience, to take on some of the difficult conversations that might arise when they were confronted with opinions or statements based on myths or stereotypes. Under these circumstances it would be difficult for them to find the confidence or motivation to take the necessary responsibility. This was even more the case when it came to creating and organizing or supporting an associational communityevent, . This led to calls for wider groups of front-line local authority/KNH staff to go through similar training and capacity-building processes to enable them to contribute to cohesion and myth-busting more effectively than they currently do – this is about helping wider groups of staff to understand that cohesion is everyone's responsibility.

Engagement and effective work with some communities in the authority can be hampered by language and cultural barriers, made more difficult by unhelpful media representations of communities and relations between them. The discussion in this instance reflected the sense in the project overall, that there was a need for a nuanced practice understanding of ideas of separateness, difference and 'segregation'. The unhelpful structure of public

discourse around Muslim populations has encouraged the development of an image of a global conflict between Islam and the West which can be a frame for perceptions of events at a local level: It was felt that some of the Prevent activity has helped to support this perception. This had reduced the enthusiasm of some local activists for involvement in some of cohesion activities. Participating staff felt that there should be a closer relationship between the cohesion and Prevent policy strands and that educational programmes and resources that address both international events and local tensions should be developed and operationalised as a matter of urgency – genuine programmes of anti-extremism education need to be more of a priority than they currently are, and some participating staff were keen to be involved in such a development.

Connected to this approach to staff involvement was a sense that the local authority and partners need to become even more effective at 'myth-busting' – rapidly and successfully countering unfounded, racialized rumours about specific events or decisions with genuine facts, arguments and information. The current development of social media apps to rapidly convey such facts to large groups of staff could prove to be a very helpful tool.

Much of the required 'myth-busting' activity relates to continued perceptions of 'unfairness' in different communities and particularly in some majority white communities. Here, there needs to be dialogue between different communities and between professionals and communities but dialogue and the expression of honest views are made more difficult by the fear of getting it 'wrong', or of being misunderstood. The terms of such dialogue are often influenced, unhelpfully ,by media and political pronouncements. Equally, practitioners have concerns about ethical correctness i.e. what responses are morally appropriate and 'should' be made.

Schools are one of the key sites for perceptions of unfairness but schools do have limited time and space to address such issues. It was acknowledged that this is a difficult subject for schools to tackle and that it may be better to focus strategic work on primary schools as by the time young people start high schools, attitudes have become more entrenched.

A key concern of practitioner reflection was how cohesion work can be sustained and developed in a challenging budgetary situation, and in ways which also don't 'force' cohesion. Here, the goal is creating opportunitiess for communities to have contact at shared events and devising services/projects which don't put cohesion at the forefront. The local strategy needs to get people to be involved/participate and toget ideas from them.This has worked well in initiatives such as participatory budgeting. For other possible initiatives , it is vital to get partners from communities involved early in a plan, where they come up with ideas.. It was acknowledged though that cohesion is a complex issue: some overseeing and

initiating by the authority will be required, while other activities can be set by the community. The strategy needs to set a framework for this approach. The local authority itself needs to identify opportunities for cohesion across services even where resources are stretched. Above all, the Cohesion strategy needs to continue to bring people together on common interests not differences, and should focus on what communities are interested in.

Building on the community research element of the action research project, practitioners considered how we can continue to effectively monitor and evaluate cohesion activity- how do we measure the distance travelled by individuals and communities?-Here,measures are qualitative in the long term. Practitioners felt that the local authority should share this in-depth study and the findings from the associated strand 'Understanding concerns about community relations' with wider groups of practitioners. Looking forward, it was felt that case studies are a good way of measuring outcomes- plus measures of perceptions and attitudes within communities. Important here is measuring or demonstrating value from what would have happened if the cohesion work practitioners currently do **wasn't** there. Cohesion activity makes a vital contribution to individual and community resilience.

This report represents the work in progress, and further development of the analysis of findings, and discussion of potential policy responses is part of an ongoing dialogue between the collaborating partners.

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Appendix One: A selection of suggested research tools used by the participating group

    A) Kirklees Cohesion Evaluation Project:

    Sentence completion exercise

    1) I think of myself as living in ..

    2) Dewsbury would be a better place if ..

    3) Most people I meet and talk to are ..

    4) Communities in Dewsbury ..

    5) Dewsbury town centre is ..

    6) I think that people from different communities in Dewsbury should ..

    B) Kirklees Cohesion Evaluation Project: Individual/Group Interview

Local area interview carried out in:

Ethnic background of Interviewee/s:

Living in Dewsbury

- How well do people from different ethnic/religious backgrounds get on together in Dewsbury, in your view?

- What's stopping different groups getting on together better or mixing more than they do in Dewsbury?

- Do you think different groups and communities will get on better together in the future?

- What's good about living in Dewsbury?

- What's not so good about living in Dewsbury?

Friends

- What are your friends like? (Backgrounds – ages, gender, ethnic background??)

- Do you have any friends of a different ethnic or religious background to you?

- If 'yes', where do you see them or meet them? Have you ever been to their house?

- If 'no', why do you think that is? Would you like to get to know people of a different background to you? What's stopping that happening at the moment? (Opportunity? Attitudes of friends and family?)

- Do you think that different ethnic groups/religions mix ok together in Dewsbury? If not, why not?

- What was the last thing you said to a person of a different ethnic background to you? (and when and where was it?)

- What was the last thing a person of a different ethnic background said to you? (and when and where was it?)