

**Kirklees Community Cohesion Strategy**

**'Shaping Our Future Together'**

**Foreword**

Kirklees has proud, diverse and distinct communities, and we all need to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate, contribute and be part of a shared future.

Divided communities and inequalities exist in Kirklees. A recent study undertaken by the Institute of Community Cohesion<sup>(1)</sup>, involving a wide cross section of our community, has helped us to understand what the underlying issues are and what needs to happen to improve cohesion across our community.

This strategy sets out what actions need to be taken to address the issues of concern, and to build on areas of good practice that have had a positive impact on community relations.

Our priorities are to make a positive difference to people's lives on a day to day basis and to create the circumstances to which a diverse but cohesive Kirklees can flourish. Practical steps will be put in place to ensure the communities' aspirations are met and progress will be closely monitored and shared with all to demonstrate and learn from what is and is not working well.

The overriding aim is to ensure everyone has a sense of belonging to their community and feels that Kirklees is a welcoming and enjoyable place to both live and work. Our focus will be on the issues that bring us together rather than those that divide us.

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### **What does Community Cohesion mean for Kirklees?**

The make up of Kirklees communities is complex and each local area has a distinct character and balance of communities. Some defined by geographical or social identities and some by faith and ethnicity for example.

This complexity and diversity is important to Kirklees as it brings a vitality that underpins economic, social and cultural strength.

The Kirklees Partnership has recognised these strengths in the Community Strategy:

“.....Communities are proud of their past, but enjoy diversity, are outward looking and face the future with optimism.”

The sense of belonging people have to their immediate locality is fully recognised and we will continue to improve the way we assist communities to positively develop the place they live and work in.

We are not complacent about the cohesion issues that face us all and we know that in some areas there is a high degree of separation in people's day to day lives.

Our goals for community cohesion set out below are crucial to the future of the Kirklees communities.

The priorities set out in our five themes pull together the practical actions that will make a positive difference to people's lives.

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### **The way forward for Kirklees –**

#### **What will be different in the future?**

The Kirklees Partnership will:

- Lead with confidence on community cohesion matters
- Ensure the delivery of the outcomes contained within the community cohesion strategy and action plan
- Contribute locally, regionally and nationally on the community cohesion agenda
- Enable the community to respond effectively to threats to community cohesion values
- Strengthen the bonds across partner organisations to deliver on community cohesion activities
- Respond proactively to challenge myths and change public perceptions

Local residents will:

- Be more involved in the development and provision of services
- Feel that services/resources are accessed and distributed fairly
- Feel safer living and travelling around Kirklees
- Increasingly get on well with and respect people from other communities
- Have empathy for those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable regardless of background
- Develop a greater sense of belonging within and across localities
- Feel that inequalities are being positively addressed to the benefit of all
- Maximise their opportunities to prosper and enjoy life in Kirklees

Our staff will:

- Understand what community cohesion means and apply the principles through their work
- Be able to talk confidently about community cohesion and make suggestions to improve and support it
- Understand the Kirklees vision for community cohesion and their contribution to it

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### **The way forward for Kirklees –**

#### **Supporting the communities of Kirklees:**

We will help to create opportunities to ensure that the whole community take responsibility for developing, building on and sustaining positive community relations.

Localities and communities in Kirklees will have a range of traditions which need to be respected. We will develop a common set of values and civic responsibilities resulting in a shared sense of belonging and greater mutual respect.

Everyone will have a say in how their locality is run which will enhance local identity and engender a pride in the place people live and work.

We will use our changing population as a source of strength and harness everyone's potential to contribute to the shared values and goals of the community.

The achievement of a more cohesive society will be a long term journey which will involve tackling underlying inequalities/tensions and require strong and effective engagement.

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### **The way forward for Kirklees –**

#### **What will be the implications for each locality?**

Having a strategy for Kirklees enables us all to focus on how our communities should work together and respect each others experiences and values. However each area/neighbourhood will have different needs and it is important that all communities in their localities develop shared actions that are appropriate to their particular circumstances.

To assist the process of developing actions for each area/neighbourhood we will strengthen the engagement with communities and ensure all views are taken into consideration. This approach is supported by the general move to a more locality based way of operating by relating more closely to the needs of our diverse communities, involving local people in shaping key services that are delivered at a local level and improve outcomes for all our communities.

By working in this way:

- the public will gain a greater identification with their local services and the perception of the council will improve
- services will work together more efficiently and effectively
- there will be better tailored services to meet local needs
- there will be improved community influence and empowerment for local communities
- local problems and issues will be addressed quicker and in a more joined up and sustainable way
- we will have a better understanding of the unique characteristics and priorities of each locality and share this across agencies

Locality plans will be developed to provide strategic direction in each locality, supported by local councillors and the community. These plans will incorporate key actions on community cohesion to specifically address issues of importance to each individual area.

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### The way forward for Kirklees –

#### How will we achieve our goals?

We have developed five themes where key priorities have been identified to focus efforts and appropriate activities to deliver practical outcomes. The themes are:

**1. Leadership and Communication:**

Strong leadership will be integral to maintaining cohesion as a priority and effective communication

**2. Young People:**

We will make sure that young people are at the core of bringing communities together and are optimistic about their future and value difference and diversity

**3. Community, Diversity, Faith and Voluntary sector:**

We will increase our partnership working with all groups and sectors to enhance the positive promotion of cohesion

**4. Shared Places/opportunities for all:**

We will assist all communities to develop a positive sense of belonging in the local areas and encourage people from different backgrounds to come together more on a day to day basis

**5. Preventing/managing tensions/high risk areas:**

All partners will tackle the underlying causes of community tensions at an early stage and take appropriate preventative measures

Each of the 5 themes will develop detailed actions to support the implementation of their priorities. The initial key priorities are outlined within this strategy but these and other complementary issues will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure we are addressing the real concerns of the community.

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### **Background to the strategy?**

The council and its partners have a long tradition of working alongside all communities with the commitment to involve people in decisions that affect their daily lives. We are aware that inequalities and separation across communities still exist and this was brought sharply into focus by the disturbances in the summer of 2001 in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham. Other global and national factors such as the impact of the conflict in Iraq; the effects of terrorism; and at times contentious national statements relating to identity and extremism have at times raised tensions in Kirklees.

The recognition of these issues led Kirklees to be selected by the Home office to become a pathfinder to pilot initiatives on community cohesion. While this approach has produced many successes it is important that a long term approach is developed for the whole of the Kirklees area in order that everyone is clear about what is trying to be achieved.

Present activities that are achieving positive outcomes, such as school twinning programmes, will be built on and expanded; however new actions and initiatives will need to be implemented to bring about positive change as a means of realising our vision.

### **Where we stand locally?**

We have a range of data and information from national and local sources. This data together with our local knowledge and the information produced by the Institute of Community Cohesion has helped us to identify local challenges. The challenges we face are also set in the context of the recommendations being proposed by national studies such as the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2) which require us reassess our approach to community relations.

Kirklees reflects the national picture of a significant change in the make up of its population, developing social needs/issues and economic conditions. These changes together with the information detailed in the recent study undertaken by the Institute of Community Cohesion highlight a number of significant issues for us to tackle. Some of which include:

- separation and isolation across communities

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- people living parallel lives within communities
- under achievement in education for certain groups
- the existence of inter-generational tensions
- concerns about extremism
- segregation by and standard of housing

The contribution of both the voluntary sector and faith communities to positive community relations is highlighted as a key area to build on. Along with other community groups we will provide increased support and partnership working across all sectors to ensure cohesion is integral to the work that all bodies and groups carry out.

The way in which resources are allocated to particular areas and initiatives continue to be a potential cause of community tensions. It is vital that we are open and clearly explain the reasons why funds/support are allocated to a particular part of the community at any given time.

The study was clear that there was not just one issue on community cohesion that needed to be addressed but rather there exists different issues in different areas. This key finding supports one of the principal aims of this strategy which is to develop appropriate priorities and actions for each local circumstance.

Additional local information and evidence on issues affecting different groups within the community has been incorporated into this strategy and its associated priorities.

### **Tackling inequalities**

We are committed to tackling inequalities and disadvantage that exists in our community in a fair, transparent and positive manner. The emphasis will be as much on raising achievement and aspirations as it will be on endeavouring to narrow the gap between those who are disadvantaged and the rest of the community.

We will monitor, encourage and influence the work that is being carried out across the council and partners designed to address the issues of disadvantage and inequality in areas such as early years and education, employment, health, housing, crime and criminal justice.

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We acknowledge that by increasing equality within our community we will help to strengthen our local economy, bring greater social cohesion and improve well-being and quality of life to all.

### **How this strategy and priorities have been developed**

The commissioned piece of work undertaken by the Institute of Community Cohesion involved a wide range of consultations with partners, voluntary and community sector organisations, white and black and minority ethnic communities plus faith groups. Over 20 focus groups involving more than 400 participants gathered views and perceptions from a cross section of local communities incorporating both north and south Kirklees, urban and rural areas and communities of interest.

The key issues resulting from this consultation have directly influenced the strategy and the developing priorities within the thematic areas. Building on this process engagement with networks representing the following communities: Black and Minority Ethnic, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People, Disabled People, Young People, Carers and a range of voluntary sector organisations has continued. Everyone has put forward issues and ideas that have been included in the strategy and its priorities which will be managed through a comprehensive action plan.

### **Ongoing involvement**

This strategy and its priorities will evolve over time and it is vital that all those that have been involved in its development play an active role monitoring progress and shaping its direction in future years. Representatives from all groups, partners and voluntary/community organisations will be brought together on an annual basis to assess progress and be given opportunities to help set priorities.

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### Key themes, priorities and actions:

#### Theme 1 – leadership and communication

Positive community relations are vital to support and sustain all communities and their development. The council and its partners will help to achieve this through strong leadership and ensuring that all decisions take account of cohesion issues.

We will also support councillors in playing a prominent leadership role in communities, in partnership with other agencies and the community itself.

Effective communication is essential in providing everyone with accurate, up-to-date information on developments that may affect their lives. A communication plan will be developed providing factual information to communities, helping to dispel myths and negative stereotypes. It will also make sure that any proposed actions we intend to take are clearly explained.

#### Priority outcomes -

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#### Actions -

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#### Theme 2 – young people

Investment in young people is key to influencing how are our communities work together positively now and in the future.

In future years schools themselves will undergo a significant improvement programme, which will address the issue of segregated schools, and they will also have a duty to promote community cohesion.

Education itself will continue to help improve understanding of different cultures and the experiences of other communities. The citizenship part of the school curriculum will also be expanded and community projects will help to facilitate cross community engagement.

We have a strong commitment to help young people have a say in decisions which affect their lives, including having an equal say in what happens in the places they live.

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Priority outcomes -

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Actions -

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### Theme 3 – community, diversity, faith and voluntary sector

The contribution made by community organisations, the voluntary sector and various faith communities to cohesion initiatives is vital.

The council and its partners will work alongside the wide range of community groups to increase activities that enhance a shared sense of belonging amongst communities.

There will be an expansion of inter faith networks and more frequent engagement with all faith groups.

The council and its partners will work with communities to create opportunities for everyone to realise their potential and maximise all contributions to community cohesion. There is strong evidence that there is a good deal of untapped potential within and across all communities; for example, increasing the opportunities for women both in communities and in employment.

Priority outcomes -

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Actions -

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### Theme 4 – public arenas/shared places

Positive identification with your local area and how everyone uses facilities within it is vital in creating a sense of pride and belonging. Local communities will be helped to have ownership of their shared places and facilities by giving people more say in how they are developed and managed.

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All places that people use day to day whether it be for work or recreation should be positive environments where everyone feels comfortable and can enjoy the surroundings.

Priority outcomes -

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Actions -

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### Theme 5 – preventing/managing tensions/high risk areas

We recognise that community tensions do exist. The council and its partners are committed to proactively monitoring these tensions and, where necessary, we will respond decisively to address the underlying causes and issues that put community relations at risk.

In partnership with the community we will encourage the sharing of information, fostering positive links to help build communities that value each other and tackle problems collectively.

Priority outcomes -

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Actions -

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### Legal framework/responsibilities:

The cohesion agenda is directly linked to that of equality and diversity. Evidence demonstrates that we must tackle the inequalities within our communities in order to affect real change on community cohesion.

Local authorities and partners, as community leaders, have a crucial role to play in making sure that the principles of equality and cohesion form a fundamental part of all structures, programmes, projects, policies and strategies. In the same way, recognising and valuing diversity must be central to our employment practice and service delivery.

The council's new equality and diversity enabling framework 'Equal Citizens – Different Needs' (3), in conjunction with partners, is actively helping to address these inequalities. Many of the legal responsibilities we must meet are captured in this framework.

Meeting our legal responsibilities will undoubtedly enhance our ability to tackle the underlying inequalities in our communities. However there are specific duties to address on cohesion a primary one being the duty to promote community cohesion in schools/governing bodies as part of the Education and Inspection Act 2006. The three key aspects for schools to address are:

- Teaching, learning and curriculum – helping children and young people to learn to understand others, to value diversity whilst also promoting shared values, to promote awareness of human rights and to apply and defend them...
- Equity and excellence – to ensure equal opportunities for all to succeed at the highest level possible...
- Engagement and extended services – to provide reasonable means for children, young people, their friends and families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relations...

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### **How we will monitor progress:**

No matter how effective the actions you take to improve community cohesion there needs to be a clear and accessible way to monitor progress. Consistent and regular monitoring must both take account of individual interventions and the difference they are making. Effective monitoring must also demonstrate how relationships between communities are improving.

Each theme in this strategy has its own set of indicators and measures to help assess progress. The information gathered against these indicators will be reported to appropriate bodies across the council and the partnership on a quarterly basis and the results will be publicly available.

The thematic indicators will be supported by the partnership regularly looking at information as part of the Local Area Agreement. Indeed the Local Area Agreement already has the headline indicator: "The proportion of people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds and different ages get on well together".

Localised performance indicators have also been developed for the five key themes within the strategy and the associated longer term action plan.

It is not enough to develop and measure clear indicators on cohesion. The partnership will develop a strong learning culture on cohesion and both share information with other relative bodies and act on the data it receives as part of the monitoring process. Likewise we will seek information from other bodies up and down the country to ensure we are continuing to improve and promoting best practice.

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### **Accountability:**

Community cohesion is being put at the heart of all activities and services delivered by the council and partners. In line with a strong monitoring regime to assess progress it is essential to establish clarity on the responsibilities we all have in strengthening community relations.

The equality and diversity enabling framework 'Equal Citizens – Different Needs' has already set out the key responsibilities for key stakeholders. The areas covered in this framework apply to how everyone can actively promote diversity and cohesion.

Having clarity about the responsibilities that everyone has combined with a strong monitoring process will greatly assist issues around cohesion being embedded in both employment and service delivery. Ultimately having this approach as custom and practice will result in significant positive outcomes for all communities.

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### Links to supporting information:

Links to information on the website -

[Our Main Legal Responsibilities](#)

[Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[Hate incidents](#)

[Kirklees fact sheets](#)

[Institute for Community Cohesion report](#)

[Commission on Integration and Cohesion - Our shared future](#)

### REFERENCES

1. Institute of Community Cohesion, A review of community cohesion in Kirklees
2. Commission on Integration and Cohesion, Our shared future (June 2007) Community cohesion, report of the independent review team, 2001 (The Cattle report)
3. Equal citizens – Different needs, Kirklees council equality and diversity enabling framework
4. Community cohesion, report of the independent review team, 2001 (The Cattle report)
5. Communities and Local Government, Strong and Prosperous Communities – the Local Government White Paper (2006)
6. Lyons inquiry into Local Government

### OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Communities and Local Government, *Community Cohesion Education Standards for Schools* (2004)
- Local Government Association, *Community Cohesion – an action guide*, LGA guidance for local authorities (2004)
- Communities and Local Government, *Community Cohesion: Seven Steps – A Practitioners Toolkit* (2005)
- Communities and Local Government, *Building a Picture of Community Cohesion* (2003)

### **The national agenda:**

Ever since the Ted Cante Report<sup>(4)</sup> in 2001 which examined the underlying causes of the disturbances in various northern towns, central government have placed a growing importance on community cohesion as being a key priority for all national and local bodies to embrace. The Government white paper 'Stronger and Prosperous Communities'<sup>(5)</sup> and the independent Lyons Review on local government<sup>(6)</sup> have re-affirmed cohesion as being a key policy objective.

Both documents place a strong emphasis on improving community relations and developing a stable and integrated society which creates a positive sense of local and national identity. Importantly this objective applies to both existing and new migrant communities.

In addition both reports highlight the importance of community cohesion at a local level and the need for it to become the 'core business' of local authorities and partners. It is recognised that local authorities as leaders of the community are best placed to understand the challenges within the community and to work with partners on how to affect change. The White Paper proposes eight guiding principles to achieving community cohesion:

- Strong Leadership and engagement
- Developing shared values
- Preventing the problems of tomorrow
- Good information
- Visible work to tackle inequalities
- Involving young people
- Interfaith work
- Role of partners such as local third sector organisations in building community cohesion

This strategy has taken these principles into account when developing actions/priorities that are appropriate to Kirklees.