House of Commons

ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee

Social Cohesion

Sixth Report of Session 2003–04

Volume I: Report

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Volume I

Report, together with formal minutes

*Ordered by The House of Commons
to be printed on 5 May 2004*

The ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee

The ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and its associated bodies.

Current membership

Mr Andrew Bennett MP *(Labour, Denton and Reddish)* (Chairman)
Sir Paul Beresford MP (*Conservative, Mole Valley*)
Mr Clive Betts MP (*Labour, Sheffield Attercliffe*)
Mr Graham Brady MP (*Conservative, Altrincham & Sale West*)
Mr David Clelland MP (*Labour, Tyne Bridge*)
Mr John Cummings MP (*Labour, Easington*)
Mrs Eleanor Laing MP *(Conservative, Epping Forest*)
Mr Chris Mole MP (*Labour, Ipswich*)
Mr Bill O' Brien MP (*Labour, Normanton*)
Mrs Christine Russell MP (*Labour, City of Chester*)
Mr Adrian Sanders *(Liberal Democrat, Torbay)*

The following members were also members of the committee during the parliament.

Mr John Bercow MP (*Conservative, Buckingham*)
Dr John Pugh MP (*Liberal Democrat, Southport)*
Mr Gary Streeter MP (*Conservative, South West Devon*)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/odpm.cfm. A list of Reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this volume.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Kate Emms (Clerk), Libby Preston (Second Clerk), Ben Kochan (Committee Specialist), Haidee Brockway (Committee Specialist), Ian Hook (Committee Assistant), Ian Blair (Chief Office Clerk) and Emma Carey (Secretary).

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Summary

The disturbances in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley in the summer of 2001 revealed racial tensions between communities in those towns. There have been many reports into the causes of the disturbances. When the Committee visited Oldham and held evidence sessions there, it seemed considerable progress had been made in addressing many of them. The Committee is concerned that social cohesion should not be seen as a law and order issue. The causes should be addressed through long term integrated programmes with strong leadership at a national and local level to ensure all departments give priority to achieving social cohesion.

Local Government

Local authorities need greater incentives to break down barriers between different communities. The Audit Commission should put social cohesion on a par with performance in education and social services in its Comprehensive Performance Assessments. Council officers should be rewarded for their efforts to promote social cohesion. Political parties and the wider public need to share a multicultural vision for their towns. Services should be based where they will serve all communities to avoid duplication and promote cohesion.

An open discussion about race issues needs to be encouraged and people should not feel threatened if they talk about them. Newspapers should not exacerbate tensions between different groups and should recognise the benefits in terms of their profitability of serving the whole community and helping to build a cohesive community. They should not allow their pages to be used for inciting race hatred through anonymous letters or ill-informed comment. Councils should develop close relations with their local media and use their marketing budgets as a lever to secure responsible reporting.

Many regeneration initiatives target very local areas and have generated resentment among residents in other areas who feel they are losing out. There should be greater emphasis on thematic regeneration programmes which tackle a particular need across a borough. All regeneration initiatives, particularly neighbourhood programmes, need to be part of a wider strategy to provide the basis for funding decisions that can be easily understood.

The students in many schools do not reflect the range of cultural groups in their locality. Parental choice is a key factor and is influenced by ignorance and fear of other cultures. Local education authorities and schools should ensure that choices are better informed. The school-building programmes in Greater Manchester and in many other cities provide an opportunity to provide services for all communities in an area if the sites are chosen carefully. Single faith schools tend not to see their role in promoting social cohesion. No new faith schools should be approved unless they are committed to promoting multi-cultural education. Key aspects of the Youth Service should be put on a statutory basis so that they are not subject to constant cuts. Community and voluntary organisations have a particular role to play in working with different cultural groups but it is important that they work across different cultural groups rather than reinforce segregation. Councils should require most voluntary and community organisations to work across cultural divides as a

condition of grant aid.

Central Government

Social cohesion concerns several central Government departments. The Home Office and the ODPM have taken the lead on developing a set of initiatives, but responsibility for delivering the programme is not clearly identified. Central leadership is required to ensure that all Government departments promote social cohesion and there should be clear Ministerial accountability.

Local Strategic Partnerships could have a key role in coordinating initiatives to promote social cohesion. Their remit and terms of reference need to be reviewed to give it greater prominence. The ODPM's housing policy to promote choice based lettings needs to be reviewed. Freedom of choice can lead to greater segregation if tenants choices are constrained by limited information, fear and safety. They can also be encouraged to integrate with the offer of support to move into areas where they might be in a minority. The large scale housing schemes proposed in the Government's Communities Plan in the South East and housing market renewal projects in the Midlands and the North must promote social cohesion. The responsibility for developing best practice and making it happen is not clear.

The police in the past have been accused of racism but considerable progress has been made. They have been working with and supporting local communities particularly through geographical policing initiatives. They need greater support at a national level, particularly through the National Policing Plan. National policing targets should encourage long term involvement in communities as well as short term crime reduction initiatives.

The arrival of asylum seekers is placing pressure on local communities. The National Asylum Support Service should use the review of its contracts to develop better relations with local agencies in the areas where contracts are signed and ensure adequate resources are available. The Commission for Racial Equality's remit is to promote equality and tackle discrimination but it should give higher priority to promoting good 'race relations' in a more positive way so that it encourages greater understanding between communities.

Access to health care for all groups is a fundamental right and funding should reflect the particular needs of black and ethnic minority groups. The translation services required particularly by older people from some black or ethnic minority groups need to be put on a professional basis to ensure that inadequate arrangements such as family members translating in complex cases are avoided. This will require targeted funding.

1 Introduction

1. In the summer of 2003, the Select Committee decided to inquire into the issues of social cohesion, and in particular what progress had been made in the two years since the disturbances in several towns in the North of England. The events in Burnley, Bradford and Oldham in early summer 2001 revealed tensions between communities in these towns, based around race. Following the disturbances central Government and local authorities commissioned reports to investigate their causes and identify possible solutions. The reports recommended action at a local and national level.

The Committee announced its Inquiry on 21 May 2003. The terms of reference were to consider:

- the Government's (and in particular ODPM's) response to the Community Cohesion reports, especially in relation to neighbourhood renewal, housing and local government;

- the role of councils, other public agencies and voluntary and community groups;

- how cohesive communities can be created, and examples of successful policies and initiatives, including whether they can be transferred to other places.[1]

2. The Committee asked for national evidence but also resolved to look at one community, in Oldham, in more detail. We were pleased so many individuals felt able to submit evidence from Oldham. The Committee visited Oldham for four days in September 2003 and took evidence for one and half days. We were disappointed that on our second day of evidence Ministers had to remain in the House of Commons to vote and that the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality failed to attend. We were impressed with much of what we saw in Oldham but worried that that many of the underlying problems were not being tackled quickly enough. The Committee decided to take further evidence to see how far what we heard and saw in Oldham was typical of the national picture. This report contains examples of good practice, deals with some of the issues particular to Oldham, and looks at Government policy in relation to social cohesion.

3. We would like to thank our two specialist advisers, Ted Cantle and Andy Forbes, for their guidance and assistance, as well as Martin Wilson, Principal Clerk of the Northern Ireland Assembly for his contribution to the inquiry. We would also like to thank the organisations who gave us hospitality in Oldham, all those organisations and individuals who made written submissions or gave oral evidence to this inquiry and those organisations which have contributed to the case studies.

Definition of Social Cohesion

4. There are diverging views on the definition of community cohesion, but there is general agreement about the features a cohesive community should display. Rodney Green, the

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[1] ODPM Select Committee Press Notice Session 2002-03 21 May 2003

Chief Executive of Leicester City Council felt there was a need for honest dialogue within communities about cultural differences:

> "I think a cohesive community is a community that has naturally many cross-links, where people from different race, age, background, feel free and happy to mix together in housing, in education, in leisure facilities. One test of that in my experience in Leicester is the willingness and ability to talk frankly and openly face-to-face about quite sensitive issues. If your language in a community is very politically correct, if you are treading on thin ice all the time and always being polite, that is not a cohesive community; it is a careful community."[2]

5. Gareth Daniel, the Chief Executive of Brent Council focused on the benefits to be gained when a community can enjoy and capitalise on the diversity of varied cultures within it:

> "We celebrate diversity in West London, we are not frightened by it, we are not scared of it, we celebrate it, and it is one of the strengths of the area. When you are trying to market what is a successful and relatively buoyant economy in West London, the fact that West London has a very multinational workforce, major headquarters of international companies based there, the very cosmopolitan nature of the workforce is itself quite a compelling factor driving inward investment in the area, and we think that is a strength. Also we celebrate one another's religions and cultures. In Brent, for example, we celebrate the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, we celebrate the Muslim festivals of Eid, everybody celebrates Diwali, whatever their religion, in West London. There is a sense in which we own one another's cultures and we have actively provided opportunities for engagement between communities, and that has been done actively, it has not happened by default. I think the political parties of all persuasions deserve some recognition for the leadership they have shown in that."[3]

6. Several other witnesses commented on the benefits to be gained from sharing in the diverse cultures within their towns. The submission by the West London Community Pathfinder Initiative said:

> "The migrants' arrival over several decades has also provided the local authorities and other public sector organisations with the chance to develop links with as wide range and number of community organisations, faith and refugee groups and encourage and celebrate the diversity of each of the different cultures. This is particularly evident in the festivals that are often hosted by the local authorities working in close partnership with community and faith organisations."[4]

However, Trevor Phillips, the Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, criticised the language used.

> "I dislike the term "community cohesion", frankly. I think it lacks clarity. I think we are beginning to talk more about the term "an integrated society" because in order to advance a solution – which is what I think community cohesion is supposed to be –

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[2] Q155

[3] Q494

[4] SOC72

we have first to understand what it is you are trying to remedy. My view is that we are trying to remedy some of the fractures in our society. Some of those are economically driven; some are driven by other kinds of difference and division independent of economics."[5]

7. The Committee accepted the Local Government Association/Home Office's definition that a cohesive community is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;

- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued;

- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and

- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.[6]

8. The Committee felt that any cohesive society should also demonstrate the ability to integrate people from different ethnic backgrounds so that they can relate together in terms of where they live, their education, employment, and social/recreation spheres. The Committee decided to consider the broader issue of social cohesion across the entire spectrum of society, rather than confine it to the problems affecting particular communities.

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[5] Q654

[6] Guidance on Community Cohesion LGA/Home Office 2002 page 6

2 Tackling the Causes of the Disturbances

9. The disturbances in the spring and early summer of 2001 provoked an immediate response from central and local Government. Each of the local authorities affected by the disturbances set up their own inquiries.

- In Oldham, a panel was established under David Ritchie to look into the causes of the disturbances and set out new ways of working to address them.

- In Bradford, Sir Herman Ouseley carried out an inquiry into the causes of the disturbances.

- In Burnley, Lord Tony Clarke chaired a task force to look at the causes of the disturbances in the town.

These inquiries have been translated into new strategies and programmes to address the racial tension in the towns and promote greater social cohesion. During our visit to Oldham we discovered considerable progress in overcoming the fragmentation and racial tension which had come to the fore during the disturbances.

10. At a central Government level, the Home Secretary established a Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion to consider how the Government should tackle the racial tensions that had given rise to violence. The Community Cohesion Review Team chaired by Ted Cantle was formed to identify the causes of the disturbances and to recommend ways to promote community cohesion. Shortly after the publication of the Community Cohesion Review Team's Report, the Home Office set up the Community Cohesion Unit (CCU) within the Community Policy Directorate.

11. The Home Office and ODPM developed an extensive programme which included:

- Support for the local authorities (including the Community Facilitation Programme) through the regional Government Offices;

- A Regions and Renewal Strategic Board (Home Office led with ODPM participation) to review the performance of the Government Offices in progressing neighbourhood renewal;

- A Programme of Positive Activities directed at young people was introduced by the Home Office (later delivered through the Government Offices);

- Community Support Teams were created by the Home Office and directed by the Community Cohesion Panel;

- The Community Cohesion Pathfinder Programme was launched jointly by the Home Office and the ODPM with funding of about £6m to run between February 2003 and October 2004. 14 pathfinder local authorities are developing best practice which is to be disseminated across all local government.

- The Beacon Council Scheme was introduced in 2002 to encourage the development of best practice from local authorities in the field of community cohesion;

- The measurement of local government performance under the Comprehensive Performance Assessments was to be redesigned by the Audit Commission to demonstrate performance in creating 'stronger and safer communities'.

12. There are concerns that the initiatives to tackle the causes of the disturbances are aimed at the short term. Evidence to the Committee argued that social cohesion should be a key factor in any decisions about public services on a long term basis to avoid segregation. As Camden Council said:

> "The riots lent a new urgency to the community cohesion agenda but we feel that it would be short-sighted to make the riots the critical driver behind efforts to make our communities more cohesive. Cohesion in our communities must surely be promoted as a positive good not as a law and order issue."[7]

13. **Social cohesion should be seen as a long term issue to be considered by all agencies. It has been brought to prominence by the disturbances in 2001 but it should not be seen predominantly as a law and order issue. Social cohesion requires the securing of improvements in the quality of life for all citizens and should be addressed in all policies and services developed by public agencies.**

14. The rest of this report considers how local and central Government have addressed the issues which were seen as the causes of the disturbances in 2001.

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[7] SOC19

3 Local Services

15. We were struck on our visit to Oldham by the physical separation of communities as well as the lack of communication between them. Andrew Kilburn, the Chief Executive of Oldham Council told us:

> "Undoubtedly people have talked about the nature of segregation in Oldham and the fact that we have particular communities segregated in residential terms. We clearly see that as an issue and we are looking for policies and programmes that will help us address that."

16. This was also reflected in Leicester. Rodney Green, Leicester Council's Chief Executive said.

> "The major challenge for us is to break down those parallel lives and create these cross-links in our schools and in culture and so on."

Oldham Council argued that the objective should not necessarily be to overcome physical segregation but it concerned widening the perspective of local communities.

> "The biggest problem we face is still the basic lack of understanding about the nature of different communities and the willingness of communities to be open and outward facing…..it is about whether they are outward or inward facing, and the reality in Oldham is that we still have communities in some areas that are inward facing rather than outward facing. In other words, they are not susceptible to dialogue and discussion and are not open to outside influences and to the development of relationships that are central to community cohesion."[8]

17. Many organisations are now responsible for promoting social cohesion. The Government recognised the importance of local agencies in promoting social cohesion. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 extended the responsibility to tackle discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people from different racial groups. Orders published under this act require local authorities and other public agencies to prepare and publish a Race Equality Scheme. Evidence to the committee underlined the importance of local authorities being the focus of policies for promoting social cohesion. Rodney Green, the Chief Executive of Leicester City Council commented:

> "The local authority is the single most decisive factor in leadership on community cohesion….. Leicester City Council spends about £650 million a year. If you understand that community cohesion is about housing, it is about culture, it is about economic performance, it is about faith issues, it is about housing and so on, the way that money is spent is bound to be extremely significant. That is why the City Council is the biggest key player. The second issue is to do with partnership. We are the key link to police, the voluntary sector, the private sector, on the local partnership, and if we are working well in partnership with them it is not just the £650 million spent; it is the orchestrating of the other spend that can be done in a

way that promotes cross-community links or inhibits them. We have a heavy responsibility."[9]

18. There are concerns that local authorities are not given sufficient incentives to promote social cohesion particularly through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The Local Government Information Unit pointed out that race equality is not "weighted particularly high in the overall assessment". It added that

"social inclusion and community cohesion are not necessarily focussed on, unless they are identified by the local authority themselves as key community leadership issues."[10]

The unit urged that performance in social cohesion should be measured on a par with performance in education and social services without creating new, complex rules within the framework. It proposed that:

"Progress on the race equality scheme needs to be given more weight in an overall assessment, The corporate performance assessment should clearly probe whether the council in its community leadership role has assessed the social cohesion issues that are relevant to the local authority area and has developed a programme of action to address these issues."[11]

19. Councils need to reorganise their corporate structures to incorporate social cohesion issues. Oldham council told us how it had reorganised its management team to focus more extensively on social cohesion.

"We have moved to a position where internally issues around race and quality are that much more centre stage. There is a much broader training programme for all the staff. There are management development courses where community cohesion is a central element being planned, and we have looked at the way in which we organise a whole variety of other activities and, as the leader has talked about, there is the overview of scrutiny. We now have a Community Cohesion and Diversity Overview and Scrutiny Committee."[12]

20. **Many public agencies now have the remit to promote social cohesion and are tasked with producing race equality strategies. Much more clarity is required as to what the strategies should comprise. It is unclear how they are supposed to be drawn up or implemented. There is a danger that the range of initiatives will be poorly coordinated and fragmented. Local authorities need to be given overall responsibility to coordinate their initiatives.**

21. **Councils need greater incentives to promote social cohesion. The Government should revise the Comprehensive Performance Assessment weightings to reflect greater importance to social cohesion issues and to consider a council's procedures for addressing them across all their operational areas. Councils should also revise their**

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[9] Q166

[10] SOC10

[11] SOC10

[12] Q283

corporate structure to integrate social cohesion within their management structures and oversight and scrutiny committees.

The provision of local services

22. Local authorities are major spenders in their communities. Investment in schools, leisure facilities, and roads can have a very direct effect on jobs, social cohesion and the local community in general. One would expect a council to ensure that its spending enhanced social cohesion. During our visit to Oldham we saw insufficient evidence of that; and Council policies and community initiatives appeared to have been thought up and executed in isolation. The Council has been classified as 'poor' by the Audit Commission and was criticised by the Ritchie report. We are very pleased that much of the senior management team has been renewed, however we feel strongly that the Chief Executive, who provides leadership to both the organisation and the local community, should be able to justify the work done to tackle these very serious and demanding situations, and levels of achievement should be reflected in his remuneration.

23. The control of Oldham Council has changed hands in recent years. It is clear that all the political parties need to have a clear vision for the town, while recognising that councillors have a local duty to their wards. Their wards will prosper most if the whole borough is successful. All the parties need to have - and actively promote - a vision for a cohesive town which celebrates its diversity, as do many places in other parts of the country. The electorate in Oldham also need to look beyond local parochial neighbourhood issues. They must recognise that to enjoy a prosperous and enriched life, they need to support political parties committed to a thriving Borough in order to make sure the area is not again associated with conflict or extremist political parties and intolerant and bigoted views.

24. The locations chosen for council offices and other services can reinforce the segregation of communities and in some cases, bring duplication and the waste of resources. Evidence from organisations in Northern Ireland highlighted how public authorities pandered to the particular interests of different groups which has inevitably led to the duplication of services. Mary McCandless from the Northern Ireland Council of Voluntary Associations said:

> "They took a decision that it was more important to get people to access the services than to try to teach them a lesson and force them to go somewhere they did not want to go and did not feel safe to go. It may be that there was a time when they could have taken a stand and said, "Sorry, this is where this facility is going to be and you have to make your way to it", but they made a decision to say no, we will put this here."[13]

Ms McCandless urged public agencies

> "to pick their locations well and negotiate with the community."[14]

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[13] Q614

[14] Q616

25. **Local authorities and other public agencies need to develop a vision for the provision of services which ensures that they serve different communities. They need to choose carefully both the means of delivery and the location for new facilities to ensure that they are accessible to the various different communities in an area and do not pander to sectarianism. Any decision on the funding of a new initiative and the location of a new public facility needs to be tested to ensure that it will promote social cohesion and avoid segregation.**

26. **All existing central Government policies relating to the delivery of public services should be reviewed to ensure that, as far as possible the kind of public service duplication (and consequent institutionalised segregation) that has occurred in parts of Northern Ireland is avoided. All funding applications for new public facilities such as schools, hospitals, leisure/community centres, etc, should be closely scrutinised from a social cohesion standpoint. This scrutiny should assess any potential factors that might inhibit one or other group from using these facilities. The Comprehensive Performance Assessments of local authorities should look for evidence that they have ensured that all policy or funding decisions promote social integration and avoid segregation.**

Measuring Success

27. Measuring the success of community cohesion policies in local authority areas has yet to be effectively addressed. The Home Office has introduced a biennial citizenship survey to increase its knowledge of what community cohesion is and the factors that influence it.[15] 500 interviews are to be conducted with local residents in order to capture how community cohesion is working at the very local level. More sophisticated measures are required. Stella Manzie, the Chief Executive of Coventry City Council, told us:

> "I am disturbed by some of the national guidance, which even some of the local authority bodies, I am sorry to say, have signed up to, which suggests that surveys which ask people whether they have spoken to somebody from another ethnic community recently, whether they have spoken to somebody from another social class recently, can be used as an indicator of community cohesion. That seems to me to be going down an extremely simplistic route."[16]

28. **We agree that the Government needs to develop more sophisticated measures to assess whether councils are promoting social cohesion. These need to be linked to Best Value Performance Indicators and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. However, we do accept that it will always be necessary to ask local people about their views and believe that these subjective measures should at least form part of the assessment.**

Open Discussion

29. An honest, open and mature debate on race issues is required so that trust can be built up and rumours dispelled. Andrew Kilburn, the Chief Executive of Oldham Metropolitan Council said that before the disturbances:

[15] SOC26

[16] Q470

"There was a fear in many people of not understanding the issue and being frightened of causing offence. …(Since the disturbances) "We have had some very full and frank discussions, sometimes in open, sometimes closed. That is half the battle that we have got in this borough, that people do not feel frightened or threatened and that they can talk about some of these issues which are the concerns for them and their families."[17]

30. **Councils need to work hard to create a climate in which people do not feel frightened or threatened and feel they can talk. The experience from Oldham underlines the importance for councils to promote open discussion about difficult issues associated with race.**

Use of the media

31. Local newspapers, radio and television are very influential in affecting relations between communities or fermenting divisions. Local newspapers can exacerbate tensions in communities; they can also help to alleviate tension. There are some examples where the relationship between local councils and their local newspapers and television stations is being improved to ensure there is a greater understanding of the social and cultural issues in their districts and how they are being addressed. Councils have considerable budgets to spend on advertising which can be used to encourage responsible reporting. A Home Office practitioner group on the media involving representatives of national, regional and local media is drawing up guidance on mechanisms to help promote community cohesion which is expected to be published this autumn.[18]

32. Part of the West London Community Cohesion Pathfinder's programme is a project working closely with the major publisher in its area to help newspaper journalists understand the area where they are working and so to improve coverage of social cohesion issues. The councils in West London have set up a local officers' group for dissemination and communication and are helping voluntary organisations to "support better informed reporting by the mainstream media and get wider promotion of the positive work community groups are involved in and so help to dispel myths and misconceptions."[19]

33. The Committee heard from Nick Carter, the editor of the Leicester Mercury, who took the initiative in developing a monitoring body for community cohesion in Leicester. Mr Carter told us:

"It is about encouraging local authorities, in particular, to be proactive in talking to the local media as well, because without local authority involvement our role is that much more difficult."[20]

He set out in his submission the newspaper's approach to working with the local communities.

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[17] Q282

[18] SOC26

[19] SOC72

[20] Q407

"The responsibilities the Leicester Mercury now accepts as a consequence of sitting round that table mean we work harder to look for the positives in our communities – particularly where they demonstrate that people from different cultures are living and working together.

We are more aware of those small groups of extremists who want to divide our communities and spread fear and suspicion. And we are better able to provide a platform for all the communities in which we seek to sell.

Inevitably, this puts more pressure on us to make those right decisions and it does mean we have to spend more time thinking about the consequences of everything we do."[21]

34. We were impressed by the drive and commitment of the Leicester Mercury. Mr Carter appeared to recognise that making sure the paper served the whole community in terms of advertising, reporting and editorial policy was good for circulation and profitability as well as being a key element in building a socially cohesive community.

"It may be easy to sell newspapers in the wake of trouble within communities, but that is a very short-term benefit, if I can put it that way. Fragmented communities contain people who are less likely to want to get involved in what is happening in those communities, they are full of suspicion and apprehension. In that environment, fewer people are likely to be interested in what is going on around them, and since we are the main provider of news and information about those communities we are less likely to have people turning to us for information. A cohesive community is a community which feels comfortable with itself, its people are involved in what is happening in those communities. They take a more active interest in what is happening, and therefore they are more likely to turn to their local newspaper and to other sources of local information to find out what is happening. On top of that, of course, as our communities change, we need to reflect also the changing make up of those communities in the sort of coverage that we provide."[22]

35. We understand the Oldham Chronicle is improving its coverage of the different communities in the town but it still seems prepared to publish unsigned letters in its correspondence columns, many of which express extreme views. In a society that is committed to free speech, such views ought not to be suppressed but those expressing them ought to have to put their own names to them. The black and ethnic minority groups ought to make much more effort to use the town's local newspaper. Whilst the Committee believes in free speech, racist letters should never be published, as the paper has a responsibility to the whole community and should not allow race hatred to be spread in such a way.

36. **Local authorities need to take more seriously their relationship with the local media. They should be encouraged to develop a communications group among officers working on social cohesion to ensure that the benefits of their projects are maximised in the media and that any misinformation can be quickly countered.**

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[21] SOC72

[22] Q404

37. **The media also need to recognise their responsibilities and the benefits of promoting social cohesion. The new Home Office guidance on media relations should suggest that local authorities and other local agencies use their advertising and promotional budgets to encourage the local media to promote social cohesion by serving all local communities.**

38. **Local authorities and other local agencies should agree a local concordat with local media setting out how they will work together and a panel of representatives from both organisations should be established to monitor the relationship. The local media should take the initiative in establishing contact with faith and ethnic minorities on a regular basis and ensure that ethnic minority groups are represented in their workforce so that they have a fuller understanding of community issues.**

Case Study: Opportunities for Women

Opportunities for Women operates two innovative services in the Oldham area which are to provide opportunities where women can explore, creatively and confidently, their choices within the world of work, and can develop skills to attain their new found goals:-

- The Opportunities for Women Centre – a town centre based facility, which offers a holistic service of information provision, guidance and training to women seeking to return to work or enter work for the first time.

- The Opportunities for Women Bus (Asian Women's Project) – a fully equipped double-decker bus that provides information, guidance and English training to women within Oldham's Asian communities who are seeking to enter work. It includes a fully equipped crèche.

Each initiative provides a first step for the target client group. The organisation works in close partnership with a range of other services and training providers to offer a holistic service to meet all the needs of women preparing themselves for work. This includes raising self esteem and confidence, and guidance to ensure progression onto training or into work.

The Asian Women's Project was established following research into why the numbers of Asian women using the OFW Centre in Oldham town centre were low during the first year of its operation in 1991/2. The project bus targets women who have only been in the country for a short time as well as women who have raised their families in Oldham and perhaps have been born and educated in the UK.

One of the key objectives of the OFW Bus is to integrate Asian women into mainstream provision by actively encouraging them to take advantage of town centre facilities and to make it possible for them to attend courses at the OFW Centre by paying for transport and childcare. Through arranged group visits as part of their training programme, these clients are introduced to the Job Centre, the Libraries, the Volunteer shop etc.

Throughout the 12 years these projects have been in operation OFW has seen a huge increase in the numbers of Asian women using the town centre facilities. A key lesson that has been learnt over the years is that this integration takes time and involves a careful development of trust and the fostering of confidence. It cannot be forced. Currently, OFW has large groups of Asian women attending IT training in the OFW Centre with bilingual support and integrated job search activities.

Both services are offered entirely free to women and financed by a variety of different funding streams including GM LSC, Jobcentre Plus, College Franchise and local funding initiatives.

Case Study: Oldham Community Fire Station

In the aftermath of the Oldham riots, Greater Manchester Fire Service sought to address the breakdown in communication, trust and confidence that existed between the various secular communities within the borough. Initially the brigade funded a single uniformed community cohesion outreach worker to develop a network of contacts within other organisations working in the various communities.

During this network development phase other national initiatives conducted by various fire brigades and external providers were contacted, in order to exchange learning outcomes and experiences. These included the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, Merseyside, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service as well as a diverse range of other public sector and volunteer providers such as Connexions, Groundwork Trust, Youth Offending Teams and Greater Manchester Police. All of these organisations were approached with the view to raising their awareness of the fire service's unique position as a communicator within a disparate range of communities. It also resulted in a number of small scale initiatives involving socially excluded and hard to reach individuals, all of whom had exhibited patterns of anti-social behaviour, nuisance, educational non-attendance or mistrust of existing channels of support.

The most basic project, (Firefly) is a spin-off of the provision presently offered by London Fire and Civil Defence Authority in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. This initiative has attracted enormous support from the Metropolitan Police and has been commended by various Politicians and elected local government representatives alike due to its ability to provide positive outcomes. Re-offending rates during the six-months following attendance on this project were reduced by 85% and provided a cost benefit far in excess of the initial cost of provision.

The Greater Manchester Fire Service programme, Fire Service Intervention Responding through Education to direct the Future Lives of Young people (Firefly) has the capacity to exceed this level of success, as it provides for a more diverse range of participants and tackles some of the most pertinent issues surrounding cohesion within and between communities. It also combines and provides for interaction between other tried and tested initiatives such as the Princes Trust and the Young Fire-fighters scheme.

Fire Service neutrality within these disparate communities provides the common thread for communication and facilitation of inter-organisational support, with referrals coming from those working within the disadvantaged areas, law enforcement liaison officers and members of the youth justice system. Local authorities need to maximise the role which the Fire Service can play in promoting social cohesion and ensure that it is involved in all initiatives otherwise a valuable tool in the challenge to improve cohesion remains under utilised.

4 Regeneration Programmes

39. There is much suspicion in communities about how regeneration funds are used. Witnesses to our inquiry and other reports about Oldham highlighted concerns expressed in the local communities that other communities were being favoured. This suspicion has been generated by

- The very local nature of many recent initiatives rather than thematic programmes across a wider area and the boundaries chosen for regeneration initiatives

- The lack of a transparent decision making process for making funding decisions and a strategy which sets out clearly how funds are being spent.

Local initiatives

40. The Government's recent regeneration initiatives such as the New Deal for Communities programme and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund have targeted very specific neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation. This has generated resentment in other areas which have not benefited. Since the disturbances, Oldham Council like other authorities has sought to develop a more sophisticated approach which prioritises thematic approaches benefiting the whole of a district. The Council said:

> "The intention of this approach is to ensure that, while the quality of life of everyone in the Borough is improved, the greatest impact is achieved in the areas where need is greatest. The process is encouraging people to think outside the issues in their own neighbourhood and contribute to development of their area and the Borough as a whole."[23]

The Commission for Racial Equality also supported the idea of thematic regeneration initiatives:

> "We believe that a thematic approach, where funds are not limited to electoral wards but are used to deal with similar problems in different geographical areas, could have a more socially cohesive impact."

Rodney Green, the Chief Executive of Leicester City Council, emphasised that thematic programmes could more easily work alongside other public services than neighbourhood projects.

> "Thematic would help. I am biased, of course. I would say routing it through the City Council which knows the area and understands the local politics and understands the wider picture is best. This is just one source of funding, so if you make decisions which are rational just in this one source of funding without taking into account many other fundings you could end up putting all the resources in a particular period in one area and that would create enormous social tensions."[24]

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[23] SOC27

[24] Q179

The need for clear strategies and transparent decisions

41. The lack of an open discussion about how to allocate funds is leaving councils open to criticism that they are favouring one area over another even if the criticism is ill founded. Rodney Green, the Chief Executive of Leicester City Council, said:

> "Wherever you go in the community they are absolutely convinced that that area has been favoured for many years and this area has been underplayed, and so we have a constant backcloth of criticism, negativity and self-pity that regeneration has favoured all the other communities. This works particularly badly in the white working class outer estates which see community cohesion as something that has an unfortunate bias towards more recent arrivals of persons from abroad and see their own white working class culture being taken for granted, and I think if we are not careful both in the substance of deployment of regeneration resources and (just as importantly) the communication about the fairness of it to change the perception, this can turn itself into being a problem."[25]

Stella Manzie, the Chief Executive of Coventry City Council, suggested that with careful presentation in terms of explaining the allocations to all the communities in and around the area, the conflict can be avoided.

> "If the local authority area and the local partners handle it properly, there is no reason why specific funding initiatives for one area as against another should lead to community conflict. ---- That is because, in Coventry, for example, where we have benefited from a very large number of external initiatives, we have taken great care in the way in which, first, those initiatives have been brought into the city, and, second, the way in which both politicians and executive officers have explained those initiatives to local people."[26]

42. Oldham Council's Chief Executive Andrew Kilburn said that it is using the local newspaper to explain how funding decisions are made:

> "We have a local evening paper that is printed on five nights a week. We work closely with that and I have to say that the relationship and the way in which that works has developed much more strongly over the last two years since the events of 2001. ---- There is absolutely no doubt that in terms of an impact on the community the way in which the local press, and indeed local radio, treat these things is a major issue for us. There is also a weekly free sheet and we have a similar relationship with that. We are putting more time and effort into our own publication, *The Oldhamer*, which we believe is improving in quality, and we are particularly trying to tackle some of the myths that are around. One of the key issues, and it has been picked up already, is the way in which funding was seen in Oldham to benefit certain communities and not others. There is no doubt it has created a lot of jealousies, bitterness and division. We have worked with the local paper now on two occasions to run a centre page spread which has outlined in detail where the funding goes in Oldham and who benefits, and presented a much more comprehensive picture which illustrates that there are

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[25] Q178

[26] Q458

very few parts of this borough that do not benefit from regeneration funding in different ways."[27]

43. Developing an effective funding strategy can also help to ensure that funding decisions are widely understood and support social cohesion. Since the disturbances in Oldham, the council has developed an investment plan to guide its funding decisions. The Assistant Chief Executive of Oldham Council, Andrew Fletcher, pointed to the processes used to prepare its investment plan.

"We have deliberately constructed it so that it is very wide, inclusive and comprehensive and picks up all aspects of regeneration, so rather than just economic aspects of regeneration it is economic, social and environmental, regeneration in the round, and we are trying to make the initiatives and the various funding streams that hit us from time the instruments and the background to that approach rather than being the main drivers of it. The approach now, to which I would say there is complete buy-in around the borough; it has been debated very widely around the borough and has been played out through the media and so on, is very much about starting through the community strategy, thinking about the themes that contribute to that but in combination with an area plan approach as well, which is very distinct from an area based initiative approach, and using those two approaches in tandem to deliver the community strategy."[28]

44. The Commission for Racial Equality was concerned that the Regional Development Agencies did not consider issues about social cohesion in their strategies and funding decisions.

"We think there are two kinds of problems that arise in the way that regeneration money is distributed, both of which are to do with inequality and perceptions of inequality. First of all, it is not clear that in the redistribution of regeneration money, particularly by redevelopment agencies, there is a race equality and integration filter applied; that is to say, they think very seriously, as it were, in handing out the money: What impact will it have socially? Part of the guidance, I think, that emanated from ODPM, at least until a year ago, was that the regional development agencies should consider themselves principally as economic bodies and not to worry too much about social targets. This is a mistake. It is a mistake because one of the things that then happens is communities, particularly communities where there is a concentration of ethnic minorities, feel a sense of grievance. They feel that they are missing out on the investment that is taking place elsewhere and that in itself is a cause for division. Inequality is always the enemy of integration. The reason that this becomes an issue is the way it is presented – and here I think there is a practical point that the development agencies have to think about."[29]

45. During the course of our inquiry the ODPM and the Home Office published guidance for those local authorities designing, developing and delivering area based initiatives to ensure that relations between recipient communities and their neighbours are not

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[27] Q277

[28] Q255

[29] Q673

damaged. The guidance underlines the importance of full and meaningful involvement of neighbouring communities in the development of area based initiatives, flexibility in the application of scheme boundaries, and meaningful consultation with recipient communities, and that the funding rules should not become a barrier to interaction between communities.[30]

46. **Neighbourhood initiatives can be effective and avoid rivalries between communities if they are part of a wider strategy which is widely understood and subject to widespread consultation. However, they must be part of a wider strategy.**

47. **Councils should consider grouping wards together to benefit from regeneration funds and give greater priority to thematic programmes to avoid the possible accusations that one ethnic group is benefiting. The Government and the RDAs should set a spending balance between area funds and district wide thematic spending. The guidance to RDAs needs revising to emphasise their role in promoting social cohesion and to set out a process for the agencies to consider how their funding decisions can encourage it.**

48. **The Committee welcomes the publication by the Government of advice on area based initiatives and community cohesion. It must ensure that the recommendations are now fully implemented. Implementation will require a review of its funding policies nationally to ensure that thematic programmes are given greater priority.**

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[30] Community Cohesion Advice for those designing, developing and delivering Area Based Initiatives Home Office/ODPM. December 2003

5 Education

49. Schools provide an opportunity for different cultural groups to mix or at least for young people to gain the benefit of an awareness and understanding of different communities living in their areas and in the wider world. There are many schools whose students do not reflect the range of cultural groups in their locality and so do not help to promote social cohesion. This is a result of parental choice, the quality of some schools and the growth of faith schools.

Parental choice

50. Parental choice is giving parents the opportunity to make cultural choices. Maureen Haddock, the Head Teacher at Burnley Brow School in Oldham, said that

> "as it stands at the moment by parental choice and first brothers and sisters, that provides me with a 100 per cent Bangladeshi community."[31]

Bernard Phillips, the Head Teacher of Breeze Hill School, told us:

> "We serve a Bangladeshi heritage population. It is very close to a white population as well. Mine is 100 per cent, apart from one child, Bangladeshi heritage. When I went there ten years ago it was 60 per cent Bangladeshi, 40 per cent white community but over the ten years there has been "white flight", the term that the Americans use: we have had white families that have moved away…. I am in an area that is surrounded mainly by what we describe as white….As the Asian numbers in the school increased white parents chose not to send their children to the school, although in the school's particular situation that was also exacerbated by the school going through a bad period, results-wise especially.[32]

51. The perceived quality of the schools is highly influential in determining school choices. Paul Sheehan, the Chief Executive of Calderdale Council, told the Committee:

> "People tend to want to go to a school that is near them, but we have found increasingly that the success of a school determines where people will want to go…….. The single most successful school in terms of its improvement over the last three years has been a school that is 96 per cent Asian in its catchment and people now want to use that school."[33]

52. In Oldham, some schools are trying to give better information about school choices to enable parents to make more informed choices and to make a virtue of the multicultural nature of some schools. Paul Makin, the Deputy Director of Education in Oldham, said:

> "We are talking to parents as well as to the educationalists about broadening their aspirations, and one of the outcomes of the review that we had of the linking projects was that we have identified a need to support parents in this. It is a two-way process.

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[31] Q212

[32] Q206

[33] Q173

I do think it is about schools being flexible and creative with regard to admissions within the statutory framework, but it is also about educating parents on what their rights are. Although there are some flexibilities within that complex framework there still tends to be an element of parental choice which tends to be overriding."[34]

53. Oldham Council has promoted the setting up of 6th form colleges which have successfully attracted students from most the communities in the town and achieved higher standards. Nick Brown, the principal of Oldham 6th Form College told the Committee:

"The college was built very courageously by the local authority. It was the first purpose-built one for something like 25 years at the time. It was hoped that it would go to 700 strong. We have over 2,000 now. When we started the intake from Asian heritage families was about 17 per cent and it is now 34 per cent. Of that 34 per cent 80 per cent of those go on to Higher Education and that was completely unknown before. The fact that it is multi-racial makes it much stronger. What we have found is that it is very hard to change attitudes but you can shift perceptions and if you shift perceptions you alter behaviour and you end up with a group of people who go through something, like it, feel valued, and they are different and they are going to be the ones who come back and lead the town in the future."[35]

Oldham 6th Form College is one of two further education colleges in Oldham, which were commended for their successful integration in the Ritchie report on the disturbances in the town. The Oldham College of Further Education has just won a national Beacon Award from the Association of Colleges for its work in Promoting Race Equality.

54. In the Greater Manchester area there is major schools rebuilding programme. Councillor David Jones, the Leader of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council pointed out: "Hopefully, within the next seven to eight years we should see virtually every single one of our secondary schools either totally regenerated or rebuilt."[36] There are similar programmes in other towns. This could provide an opportunity to encourage greater social integration. The location for new schools needs to be carefully chosen to ensure that the opportunities to promote social cohesion are maximised.

55. **Parental choice can unfortunately increase segregation. The quality of school provision is an important but not sole determinant of choice. Some choices are motivated by ignorance and fear of other cultures and LEAs and schools have to be prepared to adopt new techniques to ensure that choices are better informed and not based on misconceptions about whether that particular school is 'for them'. To achieve greater social cohesion, improving the quality of schools becomes even more important so that all schools are equally attractive.**

56. **The Committee commends the work of the local authorities and the educational staff in relation to the success of Oldham 6th Form College and Oldham Further**

[34] Q209

[35] Q221

[36] Q309

Education College, and recommends that a study be undertaken to identify best practice for application to the primary and secondary sectors.

57. **With a major school rebuilding programme currently underway, real progress in tackling segregation can be achieved if the sites are chosen carefully. The Committee suggests that additional thought is needed for plans to regenerate schools in urban areas so that full advantage is taken of the opportunities to provide facilities serving all communities in an area.**

58. **The Department for Education and Skills should commission a survey into the relative performance of multi-cultural schools aimed at dispelling any concerns that they perform any less well than mono-cultural or single faith schools. It should facilitate and lead an open discussion on the role that faith schools can play in tackling mono-cultural neighbourhoods.**

59. **It should be recognised that in some circumstances there could be a conflict between parental choice and social cohesion. The Committee recommends that the Department should prepare revised guidelines for local authorities regarding admissions policies for schools, focusing on strategies for coping with problems arising from parental choice. Efforts should be made to enable the relative performance of local schools to be highlighted in a way that makes them attractive to all local people regardless of their background. In this regard, all multi-cultural schools should be seeking to make a virtue of the richness they can offer to potential students. Councils should be encouraged to inform parents about the advantages of their children attending multi-cultural schools, in terms of exposure to other cultures and a better standard of overall education.**

Single Faith Schools

60. Evidence to the Inquiry raised concerns that, while faith schools could instil high standards in both morals and behaviour among young people, few tended to promote social cohesion unless there were determined policies to promote integration through the curriculum. Father Sumner, former Chair of the Oldham Inter-Faith forum said:

> "We have an Anglican school here that has 90 per cent Muslim attendance and that is the Anglican community seeing itself there as being of service to the community. One of the primary schools where I am Chairman of Governors has 25 per cent from the non-Catholic community, and again I think that enables a true sense of respect to grow within the school as long as you are addressing the race issues and the faith issues as well within the school. That is an example of a church being of service to the rest of the community and it can be an example of cohesion. Where schools become almost all white, or exclusively so, and almost all one faith, or exclusively so, and people choose to go there precisely because they do not have to mix with people of other faiths, I think there is a problem about cohesion."[37]

However there have been other experiences, particularly in Northern Ireland. Evidence to the committee suggested that faith schools tended to contribute to segregation. Mary

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Candless, Director of Policy at the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, expressed concerns about the growth of faith schools:

> "We have separate schools. I was amazed, when the debate on faith schools was being held in the media, that there was never any reference to Northern Ireland. We have a system of faith schools which has failed entirely to promote any form of social cohesion."[38]

Camden council argues that the Government does not have a consistent policy on promoting social cohesion in the education agenda.

> "Camden agrees with the guidance in its emphasis on educational activity being central to the debate on this agenda, especially in relation to education's key role in developing a deeper tolerance and understanding between individuals and communities. Yet whilst the guidance 'encourages schools to attract an intake which reflects their community and promote cross cultural contact within the school and parental network', the Education White Paper of 2001 promotes more faith schools."[39]

61. **The Government needs to prevent, and where necessary reverse, any tendency for faith schools to become mono-cultural. Faith schools do not apparently perceive themselves as having the potential to make a contribution to achieving social cohesion. The DFES should provide additional guidance to faith schools on how to address social cohesion both in terms of their admissions policies and their curriculum. No new faith schools should be approved unless they are committed to promoting a multicultural agenda.**

Linking schools

62. Linking schools can help to break down barriers between different ethnic groups. Darra Singh, Chief Executive of Luton Borough Council, told the Committee:

> "What we have done is look at this from the other end, which is to say, given that we have got this pattern and that 43.1 per cent of our school population is from the minority ethnic community at the moment, it will rise to 50 per cent by 2010, how do we promote cross-cultural contacts? We do that by using the curriculum, with curriculum-based activities, music, art, sport, to encourage contact between different communities. We have school twinning arrangements, we have got a new e-learning centre, which draws in people from different schools."[40]

63. Evidence to the Committee highlighted the need for twinning exercises to be put on a long term basis. Rajah Miah, the senior project officer at Peacemaker in Oldham emphasised the limited benefits of one-off coming together of two groups of people and then they go their separate ways.

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[38] Q590

[39] SOC19

[40] Q475

"It is about trying to create that meaningful relationship and that takes far more time and commitment than many of the things I have seen over the last two years."

64. **Twinning initiatives can help to bridge divides between communities, but they must not be seen as one-off projects. The DFES and Local Education Authorities must see them as part of core funding for schools and put on a long term funding basis. They must be seen as the first step to breaking down the barriers between the communities and the eventual re-integration of school populations and not necessarily as an end in themselves.**

The National Curriculum

65. The Committee was impressed by Leicester city council's work in promoting social cohesion through the school curriculum which is now being applied in Oldham. Father Phil Sumner, the former chair of the Oldham Inter-Faith Forum, told us:

"Leicester authority have done a tremendous amount of work in taking an on-the-shelf policy and making sure that what happens in the classroom in terms of the delivery of the curriculum from a non-European perspective as well as from a European perspective is put into practice. For example, with mathematics every teacher has responsibility for showing in mathematics why we have 60 minutes in the hour and things like that, being able to show the influence of Indian and Islamic cultures on the development of that within mathematics. It is the same with so many other things in mathematics, with trigonometry, for example. In terms of English it is the books that we read. All of those things are important, the curriculum itself and the delivery of the curriculum from a non-European perspective as well as a European perspective. ---- There is a document, *Young, Gifted and Equal*, which provides a tool. They received beacon status perhaps partly for that document. They take every subject, key stage 1, key stage 2, key stage 3, key stage 4, and look at it in the curriculum area and say to the members of staff in that curriculum area, "What are your performance indicators?" They give certain performance indicators to show that if they are addressing racial identity nurturing or faith identity nurturing in their curriculum area they should be doing this, this and this. What are they doing? Where is the evidence to show that they have done it, and there are gaps to write that down? We are working precisely on that with one of our secondary schools here at the moment, using it as a pilot if you like, in Oldham. Members of the staff and parents from outside are saying that they are noticing that there is beginning to be a true integration of pupils from different faith backgrounds and different ethnic backgrounds within the school, whereas before there was very definitely a separation in the playground. That is often the litmus test when you go into a school, how you know whether real integration work has been done through the curriculum itself, whether the children themselves play separately and fail to integrate."[41]

66. **There are opportunities to incorporate in the curriculum concepts and ideas intended to promote greater understanding and tolerance of other cultures. This could be achieved by including such material as a natural part of the class-work in schools, as demonstrated by the Leicester experience.**

[41] Qs 322 & 324

67. **The Committee recommends that the Department should use the work that has been done in Leicester as a case study in order to determine how this initiative can be taken forward in terms of embedding multi-culturalism into the national curriculum.**

Setting Standards

68. As part of its inspection regime, Ofsted considers the ethnic make-up of schools and the academic achievement of different cultural groups. It can play a more proactive role in assessing the quality of multi-cultural education and encourage better practices in promoting social cohesion. Luton Council invited Ofsted to carry out a thematic study of the Council's overall approach to community cohesion as part of Ofsted's regular inspection of the education authority. According to the council the inspection promoted debate as well as helping to create an action plan across all its departments.

> "The themed Ofsted inspection report threw down the challenge of addressing the issue of schools where all or nearly all of the pupils are from one cultural heritage and suggested that the make up of pupils in schools should be more balanced; however it did not put forward a method to achieve this. The conclusion of the scrutiny study was that artificial social engineering such as changing admission criteria, redrawing school catchment area boundaries and bussing children to schools away from the area where they live was to be avoided and that what mattered was that all pupils had the opportunity to learn about and experience the cultures of others. The Council has followed the latter approach through imaginative use of the curriculum and school twinning arrangements. It is hoped that the achievement of specialist status by more of our secondary schools will also make a contribution to this objective."[42]

69. Evidence to the Committee highlighted the different level of achievements attained by students from different ethnic groups which could have damaging consequences in terms of social cohesion. Bernard Phillips, Headteacher, Breeze Hill School said:

> "My school is 80 per cent Asian heritage. The under-achievers at my school are the indigenous white population. They are the ones where family issues cause me the major problems in relation to valuing education, supporting the school, instilling discipline, etc."[43]

Darra Singh, the Chief Executive of Luton Council pointed out:

> "What I am not clear about is whether or not you can legislate for effective community cohesion. What you can do and I think what is already in place, is set standards and requirements through a range of other pieces of legislation around duties in terms of, for example, promoting educational attainment and looking at how different communities, or children from different ethnic backgrounds, for example, perform in schools and ensuring that in the relationship between central government agencies and local government there is a focus on those children who are underperforming, for example"[44]

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[42] SOC75

[43] Q235

[44] Q465

70. **Ofsted's remit needs to give added emphasis to issues of social cohesion. Social cohesion should become a regular part of Ofsted inspections. It should look at both the way social cohesion is addressed by education authorities and also within schools. Ofsted inspection should give greater consideration to the varying performances of pupils from different ethnic and cultural groups.**

71. **The Committee recommends that the DFES should continue to work with Ofsted to further develop the schools inspection and appraisal systems so that greater recognition is given to the performance of multi-cultural schools in representing the ethnic mix of their communities and that good performance in this respect is rewarded in an appropriate way. In particular, the DFES should consider whether specific action is needed within schools to address instances where pupils from one or other group are demonstrably under-performing in comparison to the school population as a whole.**

Case Study: Oldham College

Oldham College is well aware that, for many, attending college will be their first significant experience of being alongside people from varied ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Because of this the College works actively from enrolment onwards to provide a clear and positive message emphasising the extent to which it values diversity and the pleasure in welcoming students from all sections of the community. This entails working closely with the Students Union, which is reinforced at student induction, through the student handbook and through colourful posters on walls and notice boards. In the first term all full time students receive special tutorial lessons on equality and diversity

A "Celebrating Diversity" competition is run during the Autumn term and is open to all students, with prizes for winners from each of the Departments. This year there was a record 260 entries, and the best were displayed around the college.

About a quarter of the students are Muslim, and each year guidance is circulated on the fast of Ramadan and information about religious festivals such as Eid. A Multi-faith Forum has been launched recently, which will organise events to celebrate different faith traditions, and will promote discussion between members of different faiths.

The programme of enrichment activities for students includes regular events that promote social cohesion. This has included a series of for a where a cross-section of students have discussed issues of concern directly with senior Oldham police officers, a college fashion show with both Asian & European styles on display, an Iftar gathering attended by Muslim and non-Muslim students, and a community cohesion consultation meeting with the new chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Phillips.

A great deal has been learnt as this work has been developed. First and foremost, it is better to allow students an opportunity to talk about differences, even when this can lead to heated or even angry exchanges. If properly managed, discussion leads to better understanding, while trying to stifle debate simply stokes up tensions. The key is to have robust and decisive management of any rude, offensive or intimidating behaviour, and to make sure this is understood right from the start.

The college accepts that much remains to be done, but feels that it is making an important contribution by challenging negative attitudes and building positive communication between younger members of Oldham's many communities.

Case Study: Gladesmore Community School

Gladesmore has tried to develop the school and its interactive functions as an integral part of the community. The school is a highly developed organisation which forms part of and supports keys features of the community network.

Its core purpose is to provide teaching, learning and achieve the best results for students. From this goal it is clear that parental support is a key issue, parents need to understand how necessary it is to provide the encouragement and conditions for their children's progress. Gladesmore feels that the best way of doing this is to encourage parents to visit the school. The aim is to develop trust in the school staff (many local people have experienced failure in education) and where possible involve them directly in the educational process. The high profile events involving parents and carers have led to a 43% improvement in their attendance at Parents' Evenings and Review Days over the last four years. On these occasions there is a consistent attendance of over 90% of parents.

The greatest, and most obvious success is the Saturday School. Each week over 500 individuals, aged 6 to 19, take classes in literacy and numeracy run by community volunteers, and assisted by some of our teachers. There are also classes in parenting, basic English for adults only (which continue each weekday morning at school), a wide range of classes in ICT and a number of enrichment and booster classes in dance, music, languages, science, mathematics and sport.

It is in the school's interest to promote good behaviour, regular and punctual attendance and to reduce truancy. In an attempt to address these issues there is a programme outside school. Staff equipped with walkie-talkies liaise closely with the police in the area. This has increased pupil attendance, reduced the number of unpleasant people (including drug dealers and prostitutes) in the area and minimised intrusion. The behaviour of students outside the school has improved, and this is reflected in initiatives such as the outreach work on litter, which is managed by a student Task Force, Gladebusters.

In addition, Gladesmore's relationship with Haringey Council has helped to get local services to clean up areas, introduce traffic calming, improve lighting and generally begin to improve the quality of life for everyone. The school has also developed a good relationship with specific community groups, for example the recent anti harassment procedure to protect the local Orthodox Jewish community. Gladesmore feels that it could develop these operations much further by having additional staff and/or funds to extend its operations.

6 Youth Provision

72. The Committee heard about many examples of good practice in promoting social cohesion amongst young people. However, the provision of youth services and its quality in many areas is highly varied and subject to constant funding cuts. The Government is seeking to improve the quality of services for young people by developing a national network of youth provision provided by a partnership involving local authority youth services, careers advice services and other local agencies. In response to the disturbances, Connexions Oldham developed a programme of youth work with local communities including summer projects which was specially funded by central government.

73. However a severe lack of funding is limiting provision because youth services are not prioritised by local authorities. Raja Miah from Peacemaker told the Committee

> "as soon as cuts are announced in local authorities the Youth Service is the first to have its budget slashed. There is an issue of prioritising the Youth Service and prioritising the funding of the Youth Service."[45]

74. Evidence from this inquiry supported the recommendation in Ted Cantle's report for the Home Office that parts of the youth provision should be put on a statutory basis. Cantle's report suggested that consideration should be given to placing some aspects of youth provision on a statutory basis, to a given standard. The resources necessary to underpin this would obviously be necessary. Indeed, we believe that this must be addressed by Government, if the issues in this report are to be taken seriously."[46]

75. Other public agencies including the fire and police services have also become involved in promoting social cohesion among young people. Oldham fire station's involvement in social cohesion was a result of its work in fire prevention. Realising that traditional fire safety education through schools was not working, it began to develop other networks with other agencies from the various cultural groups. It provides a wide range of courses for all groups in the Oldham community targeting the most disengaged and disaffected. The fire service has used its neutral position within local communities to promote bridges across them.

> "Fire service personnel have also been recognised as possessing unique qualities, which they can bring to the process, by virtue of service provision to all, regardless of colour, religion, age or social classification."[47]

The fire station argues that the Government should recognise its neutral position in local communities and it should be encouraged to play a more strategic role.

76. **Providing high quality youth services is a fundamental requirement for addressing social cohesion. We urge the Government to put the provision by local authorities of youth services on to a statutory basis to ensure adequate standard and consistent provision. This needs to be backed up by adequate funding from central Government.**

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[45] Q567

[46] Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team Home Office 1st January 2003 para 5.7.8

[47] SOC41

77. **Other services, particularly the fire stations can play an important role in promoting social cohesion because they are not involved in law enforcement nor are they associated with any particular cultural or ethnic group. The Government should actively encourage greater work by fire services in bridging divides between communities, particularly among disaffected youth.**

Case Study: PeaceMaker

PeaceMaker is an anti-racist youth development organisation that was developed in Oldham in 1997, PeaceMaker was developed as a consequence of the failure of youth service providers, both from the voluntary and statutory sector, to positively engage with children and young people in a manner that promoted and developed integrated youth provision. PeaceMaker viewed this mono-ethnic service provision as detrimental to the social development of young people, especially in a multi-cultural town.

PeaceMaker's objective is simple – it attempts to bring together children and young people in a positive environment where prejudices are overcome, friendships are developed and the collective issues that face children and young people are discussed and overcome. In order to achieve this aim, PeaceMaker have over the last 6 years developed a number of programmes. These programmes can be split into three key areas. These are: Citizenship and Cultural Diversity Programme, Overcoming Fear and Prejudice Programme, and Developing Inclusive Services within Organisations.

Each of these programmes has a number of projects that sit within them. One of the key lessons is that, in order to overcome segregation, projects should work, not just with young people, but also support existing service providers in changing the way in which they have traditionally delivered services.

During the development of this work the following key lessons have been learnt:

- children and young people do want to live within a multi-cultural society.

- Working with children and young people in isolation places them in a position of conflict with their peers, their families and their communities.

- Children and young people from white communities need to be supported to value being British.

- Children and young people from BME communities need support to develop their belonging to Britain. Often this group consider themselves as outsiders.

- Organisations need training and practice based support to change their existing service provision to become inclusive. Often organisations do not know where to begin and in some instances actually do not see mono-ethnic provision as a hindrance to the development of community cohesion.

- Parallel Service Provision or Single Group Funding is in most instances detrimental to the development of cohesive communities. It is usually BME groups who view this as an attack on their organisations. There is a clear and important role for BME organisations in supporting this process.

PeaceMaker is willing to offer support and guidance to any groups who are interested in promoting community cohesion amongst children and young people.

7 The needs of vulnerable people

78. The Committee heard evidence regarding the position of vulnerable groups within the black and ethnic minority communities and in particular the older members of those communities who require targeted services by a range of agencies. The Head of Policy at Age Concern, Helena Herklots said:

> "At the moment we are in a situation where people will just not come forward to services, they would not come to services unless they felt they were specific to their culture. Therefore we need to recognise and provide for that, but at the same time we try to build a more cohesive society and a more cohesive community and to have the mainstream service providers, which in some areas may well be Age Concern, doing all they can to try to ensure that their services are more open and people are more likely to approach them. At the moment, if we just say we want everyone to come together and that is the approach we are going to take, that will not work. We need to try to do both. We need to identify the needs of particular individuals and groups and try to respond to those, as well as work hard to try to make mainstream services more appropriate and more sensitive. It is about trying to recognise each individual need and that may be a need around race or culture, it may be a need around disability or mental health or whatever. It is a huge challenge, but it is not a question of trying to do either/or; we need to try to do both."[48]

The Committee heard evidence in Oldham about the problems of older people, mostly from ethnic minorities, who were no longer receiving to the same extent the traditional support from their extended families and were therefore becoming increasingly isolated. This is a particular problem which the Government needs to address.

79. Age Concern argued that older people should be recognised by the Home Office/ Local Government Association guidance to Local Authorities on social cohesion.

> "The single thing it could do which would be really helpful would be to include older people as both contributors to community cohesion and as people who can benefit from it. This is a point generally about policy in these areas. If older people are not specifically mentioned, the danger is that they will get left out and ignored; not necessarily deliberately, but simply because they have not been identified. We should like the community cohesion guidance to include some measures about consulting and involving other people at local level in a way which has not been there to date."[49]

80. **The Committee was concerned that the needs of vulnerable groups (such as, but not limited to, the elderly) could differ within some ethnic communities for a wide variety of reasons including cultural habits. If left unaddressed, such differences might result in unnecessary hardship for those very people who were least able to cope. The Committee recommends that government guidance to the wider public service on social cohesion policy should seek special recognition for the needs of vulnerable groups, especially within the black and ethnic minority communities.**

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[48] Q630

[49] Q633

Case Study: The Nugget Street Project

The purpose of the Nugget Street project is to develop a community based, robust and sustainable service around the theme of promoting the independence of elderly and vulnerable people. The focus of the organisation is on a specifically designated area and draws on the collective knowledge, resources and strength of the Neighbourhood Network Partnership. It is intended that this will develop and inform Social Cohesion by delivering quality services that will be replicated across the borough.

The organisation is currently 'overseen' by the Neighbourhood Network Partnership, this partnership includes – User Group representation, Social Services, Age Concern, Ethnic Health Team, Primary Care Trust, Leisure Services, Housing Agency, Police Reassurance Initiative, Voluntary/Community Sector representation. It is important to stress this 'coalition' as the present and future delivery of Community services in this and other areas will need to draw on the support, resource and finance from numerous stakeholders.

The project's objectives are delivered by three employees, based in the community, and primarily involve developing relationships between the project officers and the community. Language support is also provided from external agencies if appropriate. The organisation attempts to inform individuals that might not be aware of particular community groups and their objectives, it also attempts to reach people who might not be aware of general service provision in the borough. The project aims to encourage and support individuals through consultations and regular community based surgeries.

In the future the project would like to develop further the current consultation and listening mechanisms, potentially through the development of user representatives. There will be opportunities for work placements within the project's volunteer bureau, and potentially the development of a women's group, which could connect to other groups across the borough. Additionally, the project would like to provide training opportunities to people from different communities, and it would also like to develop databases and formal protocols across service areas.

The project believes that for true cohesion the borough needs healthier and appropriately supported older people, however inevitably that requires finance and resources to grow and develop. It is also the project's goal to ensure that everybody has an equal 'voice'. To ensure this the project will endeavour to strengthen not only the service user input but the support they individually need to find that 'voice'. First and foremost, there needs to be co-ordination and management for the development of a multi-agency community partnership.

8 The role of the Community and Voluntary Sectors

81. Social cohesion cannot be imposed by local authorities on communities; it needs to be developed with them. Rooted in local areas, community and voluntary sector organisations can help to provide services and empower communities. The challenge for those organisations is also to work across cultural divides. Local authorities have a key role in providing leadership and facilitating cross cultural activity. The organisations however need consistent long term funding which might initially come from the Government's special funds but then should be taken over by mainstream local and national Government programmes.

82. Camden Council wrote:

> "The community sector offers a wealth of diversity and often leads the way in providing a voice in communities and in enabling relationships between different individuals and groups."[50]

Groundwork Northern Ireland sets out some examples of its work in promoting understanding across the divides in the Province through environmental projects:

> "Many projects focus on the revitalization of "interface areas," narrow borders between republican and loyalist neighbourhoods, seeking to renew hope by improving the quality of open spaces and making them usable – and used. The environment is often a tool that can be used to engage people in discussion because they can focus on a subject of shared concern."[51]

83. The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) suggested that the social and community sectors can bolster community cohesion by providing neutral venues and acting as honest broker when tensions are high. It warns that while there are a large number of voluntary and community organisations, this could have increased the divisions. "The voluntary sector over the past 30 or 35 years has played many roles in trying to build a more cohesive society. It is also possible that in some ways, by working with communities in isolation, it has reinforced separation and added to division."[52]

Seamus McAleavey, the Chief Executive of NICVA, explained:

> "What happens is that community organisations will come forward and they will be almost exclusively one side or the other, simply by the area that they are in. We have talked recently about single identity groups and that is particularly common in Protestant working class areas where they feel they have to have a single identity group to develop their culture and feel that they can then communicate with the other side. One of our fears is that that does not happen there (in England)."[53]

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[50] SOC19

[51] SOC14

[52] SOC81

[53] Q586

84. Evidence to the Committee argued that councils should continue to provide funding for projects which benefit one cultural group on a limited basis however they should ensure that this does not increase divisions and that it should be concentrated on enabling those groups to access mainstream funding. Raja Miah from Peacemaker argued:

> "single group funding should not be seen simply from a defensive point of view, in essence from black and minority groups, but should be seen as an opportunity for mainstream service providers who had previously failed to access these communities to change the way they service these communities."[54]

85. David Holloway from the youth organisation Tolerance in Diversity argued that single group funding was required in some situations.

> "I would certainly support single issue groups, single race groups at times, but there has to be a very good reason for that. If it is a faith group and it is a faith which is actually specific to one culture, then okay, it is their own community's response, but certainly if anything is funded by local government or any sort of state institution, it should ask those questions. Why should it be? What is the institution doing which is being funded? Is it reinforcing that segregation or is it overcoming it? Is there a good reason for it? Is the overall, long-term aim going to work towards a cohesive society?"[55]

86. A number of witnesses expressed concerns to the Committee regarding the long-term viability of projects funded under the various special schemes. The Chief Executive of Groundwork Northern Ireland, Mary McKee, told us:

> "In terms of our role, our role is not mainstream or delivering mainstream services. Our role is about Research and development; our role is about taking something and trying it differently, joining up the Youth Service with mental health, with the environment, with racism, sectarianism, and creating something and studying it from the beginning"[56]

87. The problems experienced by practitioners in relation to funding streams could be summed up in evidence presented by Councillor Jones, the leader of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council:

> "----- we are looking at the funding machine for the voluntary sector now so that we can try and build in some security funding over a number of years. The Chief Executive has put his finger on the problem that we face in that it is short term funding. Housing market renewal shows the way forward in terms of government funding for local authorities and for particular projects and for dealing with particular indicators. That is to have it as long term funding where you can talk to the community, where you can communicate with the community, where you can gain views and attitudes and then determine the programme and put the programme

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54 Q558

55 Q556

56 Q593

forward instead of having to bid for this scheme, that scheme and the other scheme. Yes, it is divisive when you have to bid for it scheme by scheme."[57]

88. **The voluntary and community sector has an important role in working with local communities to promote social cohesion but there is a danger that they can increase segregation by working with only one community. Local authorities need to develop a strategy which identifies when it is appropriate to fund an organisation catering for only one cultural group. Grant conditions should otherwise require voluntary and community organisations to work across community boundaries. Every effort should be made to ensure that community centres cater for a range of cultural groups rather than separate centres being provided for different groups.**

89. **In many instances, projects that have been initiated under short term arrangements are simply too valuable to be left to the vagaries and uncertainties of the kind of competition in which voluntary organisations are required to participate in order to keep them going. If an activity has been demonstrated to be beneficial to the development of social cohesion in a neighbourhood and its continued existence would be of benefit, then it should be considered for mainstream funding. Short term project funding should be reviewed in relation to funding streams that are intended to address the social cohesion agenda. It is suggested that a formalised procedure should be established to assess regularly the suitability of social cohesion projects for mainstreaming.**

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[57] Q313

Case Study: Groundwork Northern Ireland

Groundwork has been using the environment as a tool to resolve conflict and create cohesive communities over the last twenty years. The environment can engage disenchanted communities and contribute massively to the restoration of community confidence. Groundwork's success in promoting community cohesion and conflict resolution is illustrated by the work of Groundwork Northern Ireland. Greencare was an initiative designed to empower residents of disadvantaged Belfast communities to be part of the decision making process in their areas. It was established by Groundwork Northern Ireland through a partnership with Belfast City Council and The Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Communities from four inner city Belfast estates, north and south, Catholic and Protestant were involved.

Groundwork Northern Ireland engaged in extensive community consultation to find out how residents wanted to improve the areas where they lived. In total more than 600 young people and 250 adults took part. In one estate – Mount Vernon - the outcome of the process was the establishment of the Mount Vernon environmental group made up of local residents. The group implemented a number of projects ranging from regular litter-picks to transforming the derelict 'mucky field' at the heart of their estate into a community garden, complete with clock tower and time capsule. The property market began to change from over-supply to over-demand and four very disparate areas began to develop a positive dialogue. This project has been recognized by a number of awards including the Guardian Award for Public Consultation and participation.

Groundwork Northern Ireland was also involved in the high profile project in the Ardoyne Road area of Belfast, near the site of the Holy Cross School conflict, which includes landscape design work to develop interface areas that will diminish violence, increase safety for residents and make the neighbourhood more attractive. Involving children and young people in consultation and development of strategies in relation to their public open spaces is often one of the most crucial elements in resolving community conflict.

There is great value in supporting neutral intermediaries in areas of community conflict, particularly due to their ability to negotiate from a non-official standpoint. Much of this work involves staff participation in a wide range of committees and informal networks in order to maintain their local standing. The need to resource this involvement, beyond funding for specific projects, must be recognised by Government and local authorities in order to sustain an ongoing and much needed intermediary presence within communities.

Case Study: Worcestershire Racial Equality Council

Worcestershire Racial Equality Council has been working with a number of community based organisations in an attempt to break down social and cultural barriers between black and ethnic minority communities and the wider white working class community.

The Racial Equality Council has appointed a Community Cohesion Officer who has helped it support multi-community activities that have brought together white and black communities. Through the youth work strategy, mentoring schemes have been supported to enable white and black young people to develop peer identity activities. Presently the organisation of a conference in June 2004 is underway, where we are aiming to emphasise to senior officers from public authorities, the importance of integrating social cohesion and community integration through the services that they provide.

An informal community project has been developed by the Community Cohesion Officer and Youth Officer, which aims to develop a community strategy between the Bangladeshi community and the wider white community selected from one area of Kidderminster. The work so far has created a local focus group of 25 people from both communities who jointly participate in discussions and activities aimed at reducing local crime, increasing drug awareness programmes and youth participation in social activities. The project is 6 months old and has so far been a very positive and creative programme. However, the group does not intend to apply for local funding at the present time, as they consider this may adversely affect their aims and commitment.

The responses from the local communities in the area have been positive and very supportive of the outcomes so far. There has been a notable difference in the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of local people towards each other. This has led to a greater understanding of specific social and cultural qualities of the different communities.

Yet, in the early days of the focus groups some members were reluctant to engage with other communities. Many of the group members felt disenfranchised because of the language barriers and a lack of understanding of the group's aims. In addition, some members were frightened of cultural differences and this caused hesitation in their participation in the work of the focus group. However, after several meetings and joint discussions, these barriers began to diminish and there was an atmosphere where members began to feel that their contribution was beginning to make a difference within the overall work of the programme.

9 Central Government

Cross Departmental Arrangements

90. The problems underlying the disturbances are complex, requiring the involvement of several Government Departments including the Home Office, the ODPM, the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health. Each has a significant responsibility for the equitable delivery of public services. Following the disturbances of 2001 the Home Office and ODPM accepted the need for close cooperation in carrying forward the social cohesion agenda and ODPM ensured that its own Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) established a close working relationship with the Community Cohesion Unit (CCU).

91. Evidence to the Inquiry raised concerns that

- no department had clear and overriding responsibility for social cohesion;

- there was still a plethora of regeneration programmes which were short term and divisive;

- best practice being developed by a range of pilots needed to be better disseminated.

Responsibility for programmes to achieve Social Cohesion

92. The Home Office and the ODPM have collaborated closely on developing joint policy initiatives but in terms of implementation no one department has responsibility for implementation and achieving results. There are a large number of different groups and units including a Ministerial Group of Ministers from different Government Departments, a Community Cohesion Panel of specialists and practitioner groups developing proposals to tackle different issues. These were summarised in the Home Office's evidence:

> "The Ministerial Group set out the Government's response in terms of action already taken, and proposals for further action; including the maintenance of the Group to ensure continued cross-Departmental working, and the establishment of an independent Community Cohesion Panel of people with relevant knowledge to support Ministers and agencies. The Panel is supported by a series of specialist practitioner groups dealing with a range of subjects including housing, education, policing, employment and regeneration.[58]

93. There are a range of Units staffed by civil servants in the two departments and their boundaries. Responsibilities are not always clear. We also question whether they act in the most joined up way. Manchester City Council said:

> "Within Government, both the Home Office, through the Active Communities Unit, and the ODPM, through the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, have responsibility for supporting the development of strong and vibrant communities. From a Manchester perspective it is difficult to appreciate the separate roles that each of these units has

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58 SOC26

and how they can work together to promote community cohesion. We believe that the separation of responsibilities is unhelpful and confusing to local stakeholders. At strategy, policy implementation and resourcing levels it would be beneficial to have a single focus with Government that sets community cohesion within the wider neighbourhood renewal agenda."[59]

Camden Council highlighted the need for more collaboration between Government Departments:

> Central Government play a critical role in all of this and, as such, it seems essential to have a much clearer indication of the way in which Government intends to link their general initiatives and legislation to this agenda. We understand that the theme of community cohesion is to become central to all Government policy, yet we are offered little to illuminate how joined-up working and thinking is to be achieved, or how current policy and practice might be reviewed.[60]

94. The Committee was disappointed that social cohesion was not explicitly mentioned in the new strategy being developed by the ODPM to regenerate Northern Towns, "the Northern Way".[61] The ODPM Minister Yvette Cooper emphasised that the need to address social cohesion was implicit throughout the document. She said:

> It has to be everywhere in it. It has to be everywhere, when you are talking about how you develop parks and green spaces in a local community, how you deal with your housing market renewal pathfinders and housing issues and tensions there, how you deal with all sorts of things. I think it is a sort of implicit part of all of it, really.[62]

If social cohesion is of such importance to the Government, it deserves explicit reference in strategy documents, particularly those such as "the Northern Way" that address the needs of the towns which suffered the disturbances.

95. **More work is needed to formalise and clarify the lines of responsibility between the Home Office and the ODPM. Clear leadership is required to direct the programme. One single group should have authority over Government Departments and agencies. The group should produce guidelines to ensure that all new government policies support social cohesion and that it is embedded into all policy development. All new Government policies should be assessed to determine whether they maximise every possible opportunity to improve community environments, tackle deprivation, and promote understanding.**

A plethora of short term divisive uncoordinated programmes

96. The large number of uncoordinated programmes supporting communities provided by a range of Government Departments has proved divisive and created perceptions of unfairness. This has hindered the development of long term strategies to promote social

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[59] SOC17

[60] SOC19

[61] Creating Sustainable Communities: Making it happen the Northern Way, ODPM, 2 February 2004

[62] Q766

cohesion. These concerns were best expressed in the Report of the Community Cohesion Review Team chaired by Ted Cantle in 2001 and they remain a cause for concern:

> "Unfortunately, the programmes devised to tackle the needs of many disadvantaged and disaffected groups, whilst being well intentioned and sometimes inspirational, often seemed to institutionalise the problems. The plethora of schemes and programmes, with their baffling array of outcomes, boundaries, timescales and other conditions, seemed to ensure divisiveness and a perception of unfairness in virtually every section of the communities we visited. ----- Indeed, many community based schemes - including those developed and run by statutory agencies - seemed to be clinging on to the margins of anything that resembled a longer term strategy."[63]

97. Witnesses called for streamlining and rationalisation of the disparate funding arrangements which would enable local authorities to draw up a coordinated programme. The Chief Executive of Oldham Council, Andrew Kilburn, told us:

> "Ideally what we would be doing would be preparing a programme of activity for Oldham across the range of activities in which we are involved and submitting that for approval rather than the still very bitty lines of funding for which one is continually applying. Weaving those together to make sense is not the easiest thing to do. By way of example, we had a meeting with the Crime and Disorder Executive last Friday and we took a report on the funding. One could either view it as a masterpiece in terms of the way that we have drawn funding from 27 different sources or a complete dog's breakfast in terms of trying to deliver some sensible and central objectives. I am an optimist; I take the former view. We are getting on with it, but it is not a sensible way to fund what is obviously a key objective for us."[64]

98. Darra Singh, the Chief Executive of Luton Council, argued that a team was required to investigate all local area programmes to ensure that they are well coordinated.

> "---there is a role also for specific initiatives. I think the issue is perhaps how we can accelerate the progress which has been made and the commitment which has been given at a national level to look at the relationship between different specific initiatives, to try to iron out any conflict in terms of rules, timescales, target groups in specific geographical areas in which initiatives are focused. To use perhaps a Home Office team as well as a Regional Co-ordination Unit within the ODPM actually to undertake that kind of analysis, to streamline and make sure there is a better fit between programmes."[65]

99. **The Committee recommends that the Government rationalise and integrate the full range of schemes presently available to local authorities and voluntary bodies offered by several different departments and funding organisations. The assessment should not lead to a reduction in the overall funds available to local authorities and the voluntary agencies but an enhancement of the ability of such organisations to access them**

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[63] Report of the Independent Review Team on Community Cohesion ps 2.7 & 2.8

[64] Q299

[65] Q455

wherever possible, and to consolidation of schemes, in order to make them easier to access.

100. **The Inter-departmental Ministerial Group on Community Cohesion should reduce the overall number of schemes and simplify the criteria involved, with a view to cutting unnecessary expenditure of resources in completing applications. The ultimate objective should be to ensure that all available funds are drawn down and equitably distributed among the applicant bodies.**

101. **The Committee further asks Ministers to recognise that the funding of schemes designed to enhance social cohesion across a broad front will be required to be sustained over the longer term and indeed in certain specific instances may need to be increased. Government should embed the need for social cohesion funding into national expenditure planning.**

Identifying best practice and providing training

102. There are a large number of organisations delivering policies and services that impact on levels of social cohesion. There are differences in procedures and practices across such a wide range of bodies and a danger that these would lead to variations and inequity in the delivery of such services. The Government is establishing best practice through its Pathfinder and Beacon Council Schemes which was reflected in the Home Office evidence. The Home Office Minister Fiona Mactaggart told the Committee:

> "I think it is really important to embed the learning which comes out of the pathfinders and to put learning at the heart of it, and to make sure that we make the connections. One of the striking things is that in these very different 14 pathfinders and 14 shadow pathfinders (some, like West London, are collections of local authorities, some are single local authorities) there are some very similar messages coming out of that. For example, things like connection with the voluntary and community sector; for example, things like communicating, being open about policies, and so on, and making sure that those messages are widespread even if differently applied in different circumstances. It is quite striking to me that in these very different circumstances quite similar strategies, adapted to the real local situation, seem to be appropriate."[66]

103. Gail Richards, the Chief Executive of the Oldham Primary Care Trust highlighted the need for good guidance:

> "As a new organisation we are still accessing the training and education that is available from the predecessor organisation. We have reviewed that and we have put in place an action plan to ensure that we are "positively diverse" across all the organisation. We have now recruited an education and training lead to take that forward within the organisation because we recognise that, whilst the staff did have access to equality and diversity training, not just in relation to employment but in relation to playing a part in the borough, it was a bit piecemeal. We will be

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[66] Q734

commissioning a company later in the year and two of our Human Resources staff are now trained in "positively diverse" to bring that in across the organisation."[67]

104. Other witnesses spoke about the need for high standards of training for staff working in this field. Hilary Martin, the principal policy officer at Rochdale Metropolitan Borough council said:

> "In terms of officers we are shortly embarking on some diversity training for service managers based round practice for local government equality standards and we are deliberately including something in that training to try and help managers to ensure that community cohesion is considered in the way that they take their actions. That is not straightforward because there are certain things in terms of fairness and diversity in relation to one group which could be seen as positive but if you look at the impact of that on the borough or the community as a whole there are potential things to cause tension."[68]

105. **The Committee commends the steps already taken by the Home Office and ODPM to identify best practice in terms of those procedures and policies that have been proven to be successful. The proven technique of identifying examples of best practice and using them to assist other organisations at an earlier stage in drawing up their social cohesion strategies should be further developed. However, simply disseminating information about what works is not enough. The Government should initiate a programme of continuing assistance in which organisations would be given feedback about their performance delivery on a wide range of initiatives.**

106. **The issues of recruitment and subsequent training of staff are particularly important if organisations are to gain the confidence of the public and guidance; more practical assistance should be developed in these areas. The Committee recommends that further work should be undertaken regarding the mechanisms for identifying the lessons learned which should encompass all government departments and the wider public service.**

107. **The Committee recommends that arrangements should be put in place for any necessary follow-up action that may be needed to ensure that acceptable minimum standards of service are universally applied.**

108. **The Committee recommends that guidance to local authorities and other public service employers should address the need to take appropriate measures to ensure that their workforce reflects the ethnic composition in the locality. The Committee further recommends that the training of practitioners and other public servants whose role impacts on social cohesion matters should be conducted to national standards devised at central government level.**

[67] Q28

[68] Q344

10 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Community Strategies

109. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has a central role in taking forward the Government's strategy for promoting social cohesion. One of the most important areas of activity relates to the work of local authorities through the development of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and community strategies. Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 placed a statutory responsibility on local authorities to produce a strategy for promoting the well being of their local communities, to be implemented by the LSP and its members. The Government's guidance on the operation of LSPs was produced in March 2001, before the disturbances in the spring and summer of 2001. The ODPM submission to our inquiry suggested that the powers in the 2000 Act were designed to promote social cohesion. It said:

> "These strategies should consider how local authorities can use the wide-ranging well-being powers they were given in the Local Government Act 2000 to promote social cohesion……..Specific requirements around community cohesion have been part of the accreditation requirements for the 88 NRF LSPs, and this will continue to be a requirement as they move towards developing their own performance management frameworks to enable an approach based on continuous self assessment. It is a core requirement of the performance management framework, that the LSP monitors its inclusiveness and the impact of its strategies on community cohesion."[69]

110. The guidance issued in March 2001 did not make any specific reference to social cohesion. More recent documents such as the performance management framework, which set out suggested performance measurement criteria for use in creating the objectives for the community strategies, did include references to community cohesion. The level of attention given by LSPs to social cohesion did concern the Leicester Constabulary. Its Chief Constable Matthew Baggott told the Committee:

> "---- I think partnerships are very much localised within what I call crime type approaches, tackling robbery, burglary, drugs, as discreet entities. If you look at, for example, their priorities, very few actually choose social cohesion or priority neighbourhoods as critical to their agenda, because they are very localised. I think the development of much more comprehensive partnerships, structures and approaches which deliver real change in some of our most deprived neighbourhoods is utterly critical."[70]

The Commission for Racial Equality commented:

> "---- whilst LSPs are a very good thing – and in terms of the intention behind them they are a very good idea – with all such good ideas the difficulty is about making them work. Consistently we find that LSPs are not foregrounding the issue of

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[69]Memorandum [ODPM [ps 41 & 42]

[70] Q430

equality and race equality at the heart of their business. That seems to be a recurring theme. I think a lot more effort or leverage has to be placed on making them take that particular issue forward in a more meaningful way."[71]

111. **The Committee recommends that the original guidance for Local Strategic Partnerships should be reviewed and up-dated to incorporate, among other matters, specific references to the need to pursue targets designed to promote social cohesion.**

Housing

112. One of the most striking visual images of parallel communities is on the housing estates which are dominated by one ethnic group or another. Andrew Kilburn, the Chief Executive of Oldham Council told us:

"Undoubtedly people have talked about the nature of segregation in Oldham and the fact that we have particular communities segregated in residential terms. We clearly see that as an issue and we are looking for policies and programmes that will help us address that."[72]

113. The ODPM has a range of housing programmes which will have a particular impact on social cohesion: These include

- 'choice -based' lettings

- A major development programme focused mainly around the Sustainable Communities Plan which includes a house-building programme in the South East and Housing Market Renewal Programmes in the Midlands and the North.

Choice-Based Lettings

114. The Government and local authorities are offering tenants greater choice in where they want to live to create more stable communities. In 2001, the Government launched a two-year pilot programme with 43 local authorities to give new and existing tenants greater choice over their housing. This programme is now being rolled forward. There is a danger that this could create even more segregation unless councils seek to influence choices by offering support. The ODPM is encouraging councils to develop choice-based letting policies:

"The ODPM is committed to ensuring that social housing tenants have more choice over where they live. We believe this is the best way to build communities which are stable, viable and inclusive."[73]

Choice-based letting schemes are supported by some communities. Rodney Green, the Chief Executive of Leicester City Council said:

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[71] Q659

[72] Q250

[73] Memorandum [ODPM, p 48]

"---- if you speak to minority communities and ask them about their choices they will say they want unfettered choice. This is the evidence in Leicester. When it comes to issues like housing, 'We want to live with people that we know and understand, next to our granny and cousins and so on. Don't call that a ghetto. That is our choice. We do not want to have that changed'. ---- Take a different issue like leisure and art and culture, 'We want as much mix as possible. We want to be integrated and have cross-links and we actively want to promote those ourselves'. There are these differentiated ways of looking at parallel lives and cross-links. It is not a homogeneous picture. Housing is quite different from sport and art and leisure."[74]

115. Some of the Councils now operating choice based letting schemes are offering support to help members from one community to move into areas dominated by another. Yvette Cooper, the ODPM Minister said:

"One of the things which I think is important in terms of addressing some of those sort of tensions is some of the work that some of the areas which are pathfinders have been looking at, Rochdale is a good example, round the sort of choice-based lettings, you give people more choice about where they want to live, the different things that are coming up, and so on, and you do it with the right kind of support. If it is an area where there is nobody from that particular minority ethnic group living at the moment actually arrange support, somebody goes with them to visit the property, somebody arranges introductions with the neighbours, talks to the neighbours and tries to address some of the kinds of prejudices that can prevent people living in different areas and can lead to some of the hostility."[75]

Hugh Broadbent, the Chief Executive of First Choice Homes in Oldham commented:

"--- I would commend choice and choice has historically tended to lead to concentration of minority groups in certain areas. I do not think society has the right to regulate where people live but I do believe we have a responsibility to facilitate the opportunity to live in other areas ---"[76]

116. Mr Broadbent explained that the choice of housing was limited by the availability of appropriate housing.

"One of the issues that the Committee ought to understand is the background to Oldham. Of the homes that we manage more than 50 per cent are small homes. The demand from the minority communities is typically for large family homes and that is a historic and cultural background which will still be there for some time. Just to give you an example, we manage only 270 four-bedroom homes out of our 18,000 homes and yet on our waiting list at any one time there are more people from the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities wanting homes of four bedrooms or larger than we manage in their entirety."[77]

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[74] Q160

[75] Q767

[76] Q182

[77] Q48

117. First Choice Homes is excluding larger properties from its choice-based lettings policies so that they can be targeted at the needs of ethnic minority families.

> "With our choice-based letting policy we have recognised that one of the issues that might impact particularly unfairly on the minority communities is their ability, through language typically, of going through the choice-based process and making bids, so we have excluded all our four-bedroom homes, however few they are, from the choice-based lettings process."[78]

118. **The Committee recommends that the ODPM, in conjunction with other relevant departments and the local authorities, should review the present policies on 'choice based letting'. The objective should be to create strategies to mitigate or reverse the tendency for freedom of choice to lead to greater segregation. This would best be achieved by making integration in housing the most attractive option for householders. Any choice-based lettings policy should include a strategy which included encouragement for greater integration by offering support to tenants moving into areas where they might be in a minority.**

Sustainable Communities Plan

119. New housing developments provide an opportunity to promote greater integration by ensuring a mix of unit sizes and providing the appropriate support mechanisms. The Government's sustainable communities plan is supporting housing market renewal in areas suffering from low housing demand in the Midlands and the North, and is seeking in the South to secure a major increase in housing supply, particularly in the Thames Gateway area. The ODPM Minister Yvette Cooper told the Committee:

> "The work being developed round the Thames Gateway and the other growth areas is very much about the need to sustain proper communities and that has all sorts of different dimensions, it means looking at public services, employment, transport and all of those sort of things. It also means looking at issues round community facilities, ensuring that you have ways for people to gather, to meet, to really live as a local community rather than simply being people living in a dormitory that then travel somewhere else and never see each other. Community cohesion is very much a part of that whole approach and part of the development of those communities. I think that also applies in housing market renewal pathfinders, there you probably have even more difficult questions to address because in housing market renewal pathfinders you are dealing with communities which are already in place and sometimes where there are already tensions in place and actually using the housing market renewal pathfinders is an opportunity to address those as well."[79]

120. **The Government appears committed to ensuring the adequate provision of community support in the areas benefiting from its Sustainable Communities programme. These policies must ensure that housing schemes and new facilities contribute to social cohesion by attracting and integrating different communities.**

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[78] Q66

[79] Q762

11 Home Office

The Police

121. The police service has a central role in improving social cohesion. The reports following the disturbances in 2001 highlighted a breakdown in confidence in the police amongst local communities and a perception that they were racist. The Ritchie Report into the riots in Oldham noted:

> "---- within the Asian community there is a widespread perception that the police are racist in their attitudes and whilst some of the concerns cannot be substantiated, there is no doubt that some are based on experience. ---- In some cases, the complaints relate to non-Greater Manchester police officers drafted in to support operations during the riots, but this does not account for all such cases, let alone justify them."[80]

122. Evidence to the Committee highlighted the progress that police forces were making in terms of working with local communities and developing local policing strategies and partnerships with local authorities. Matt Baggott, the Chief Constable of Leicestershire told us:

> "---- the work on our inner-city estates in Leicester last year has relied heavily on a regional arrangement, where we brought in specialist officers to work with those neighbourhood teams for a prolonged period of time tackling the drug networks. I think this comes back to the whole essence of community policing. If you have a view of community policing that is based simply on their beat bobby, it is always doomed to failure. If you have a notion of community policing which is putting trusted and respected officers, in the right numbers, in the right place, backed up by sophisticated policing methods and specialists, if needed, then you can start changing the hearts of communities."[81]

123. The Association of Chief Police Officers is preparing practical guidance jointly with the National Centre for Policing Excellence on the police response to Community Cohesion which will be published later in 2004. The guidance is to be piloted in eight forces. Evidence to the Committee raised two key issues which need to be addressed at a national level to support these initiatives-

- The priority given by the Home Office to community and social cohesion

- Links between policing and the ODPM's regeneration and neighbourhood renewal agenda

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[80] Oldham Independent Review, p. 8.32

[81] Q451

National Police Priorities and Targets for Community Policing

124. In her evidence to the Committee, the Home Office Minister Fiona Mactaggart set out the potential role that the Department wanted the police to play in working with communities to tackle social cohesion:

> "If you look at the National Policing Plan in 2002, community cohesion was absolutely at the heart of the first-ever National Policing Plan. If you then go on to consider the kinds of reforms to policing that we are presenting, developing and discussing with the Police Service, this is about developing much more citizen-focused policing. To succeed in citizen-focused policing and better citizen participation in policing you have actually got to engage with communities intelligently and sensitively – not kind of police "at" them but police "with" them - and respond to them. That requires a much more powerful skill-set from the police in terms of community cohesion and community relations"[82]

The commitment to community cohesion cited by the Minister in the 2003-2006 National Policing Plan states that:

> "The promotion of community cohesion should be central to the work of the police….. Forces should look to embed good practice for promoting community cohesion into all aspects of their work"[83]

However, this commitment is not followed through in the latest plan for the period 2004-07. There is only one mention in the 40-page document of the police role in community cohesion in this plan:

> "Forces and authorities should take these related initiatives on civil renewal and community cohesion into account when developing each priority and proposed set of actions in their local strategic and annual policing plans."

The Home Office's Public Service Agreement 9 sets out an objective

> "to bring about measurable improvements in race equality and community cohesion across a range of performance indicators, as part of the Government's objectives on equality and social inclusion."[84]

The Home Office is working in several areas, mainly through the Community Cohesion Unit to promote social cohesion, but the police need to have a better defined role in achieving this objective, particularly through community policing. This will require a rethink on the way targets are set and resources allocated.

125. Community policing is popular. Senior police officers cannot put the resources on a consistent basis to support it because of national priorities. David Baines, a Chief Superintendent from Greater Manchester Police, told us:

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[82] Q745

[83] National Policing Plan 2003-2006 Home Office p 22

[84] Home Office Departmental Report 2003

"The community love it. The tension I have got is obviously in not having the consistent presence of those officers at a time when I am trying to manage demand. Ideally I would like to ring-fence them and not move them away from their community beat areas, but if I am short of officers because they are under training, on leave or on a rest day, sometimes in order to fill the patrol vehicles to do a response I have to bring them in and use them. ---- Indeed, there was a public "Voice on Policing" meeting where the community was saying, "We are fed up of you taking our officers to go into the town centre", because on a Friday and Saturday night it is sometimes a bit like the Wild West and we need to put sufficient officers in there for their own safety. There is a tension between pooling resources and managing."[85]

Short term performance targets set nationally do not encourage police forces to use resources to develop long term programmes with local communities. Matthew Baggott, the Chief Constable of Leicestershire Constabulary told the Committee.

"Performance should not be based essentially upon individual crime types but against the deployments and use of resources across the spectrum of policing activity. Some crime targets set arbitrarily four years ago could skew police deployment away from geographic areas and into short-term squads. Both may be needed, but performance should be based upon justification for action and not simply short term or annual delivery. Thirdly, the inappropriate use of some performance targets may actually reduce the ability to move resources and restrict actual street presence. If, for example, an over-emphasis is given to providing an excellent standard of feedback across all investigations or police interventions, then this will require larger administrative units and office bound police officers. This is of particular importance in the citizen focus elements of police performance assessment, where pragmatic choices will need to be made."[86]

Mr Baggott emphasised that the short term targets do not necessarily reflect progress in promoting cohesion.

"I think some of the measurement which has been put in place relies upon short-term success. For example, when I was in the West Midlands, I spent four years putting about 800 police officers into the 80 most deprived neighbourhoods. When you do that it is a huge strategic risk, but I believed that was the right thing to do for capacity-building. However, I know, because when suddenly you introduce police officers into communities you become more accessible, confidence grows, suddenly you will get a rise in crime-recording, so for 18 months your crime levels rise, particularly burglary, anti-social behaviour, racist crime, all those crime categories will rise. If you are being measured, however, in terms of three to six months, it does not show 'good' on your radar."[87]

[85] Qs 95 & 96

[86] SOC77

[87] Q432

Links between Policing and Neighbourhood Renewal

126. The National Policing Plan is not integrated with the Neighbourhood Renewal Agenda. Mr Baggott said:

> "What historically both Government and policing have done is say, "Community policing is over there. CID policing is over there. Regeneration is over here." In fact, what we need to be saying is "Where is the neighbourhood? What are the problems? Let's look at how we need to resolve those."[88]

127. He argued:

> "What drives police activity is the National Policing Plan, the Policing Performance Assessment Framework, local police authority plans and the range of incentives and funding schemes that we follow. If the Neighbourhood Renewal agenda is to be progressed in full, it has to be positioned in there. There was even a target, I think, a couple of years ago, that no area was to have a burglary rate more than three times the national average. It did not feature in terms of the National Policing Plan."[89]

Mr Baggott said that the Home Office and the ODPM were working more closely on police issues but that the collaboration needed to be formalised in something like a "National Community Safety Plan."

128. Local partnership arrangements need to be reviewed to reflect crime issues. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships are very local and based around crime types while local strategic partnerships do not have a strong remit around policing issues. Mr Baggott said:

> I think partnerships (Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships) are very much localised within what I call crime type approaches, tackling robbery, burglary, drugs, as discreet entities. If you look at, for example, their priorities, very few actually choose social cohesion or priority neighbourhoods as critical to their agenda, because they are very localised. I think the development of much more comprehensive partnerships, structures and approaches which deliver real change in some of our most deprived neighbourhoods is utterly critical. …… I had hoped to have some potential for Local Strategic Partnerships with the ODPM to do that. I do not think their remit has been clear enough around their need to tackle criminality and reassurance issues in the longer term. I think at the moment they are too economically focused and the policing element of that and the social cohesion element get a little bit lost, I think. There may be some work to do with Local Strategic Partnerships, there may be some work to do around redesigning what a Strategic Partnership might look like, and I see some great potential for that.[90]

129. Police training and recruitment needs to enable and encourage police officers to make a commitment to the neighbourhood where they are working. Mr Baggott's submission to the Committee pointed out:

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88 Q451

89 Q437

90 QQ430

Confidence in policing needs to be enhanced but the links between recruitment and retention, professional standards and training, the exercise of police powers (citizen focus), and operational practice (community cohesion and reassurance) are not explicitly stated. Greater strategic oversight is required.[91]

130. **The Committee concluded that much could be achieved in restoring the confidence of the public in the police service as a whole by focusing on building trust between individuals within communities and the local police officers that serve them. Whilst recognising the inherent difficulties relating to operational imperatives and the career development of individual officers, the development and implementation of advanced practices in geographical policing for local communities will make a real difference in overall relations with the police.**

131. **The Committee welcomes the new commitment by many police forces to work with local communities. The NCPE/ACPO guidance will help to spread good practice. It is disappointing that these initiatives are not receiving more support at a national level and that the emphasis on promoting community cohesion in the previous National Policing Plan has not been carried through to the latest version. It is vital that this is reviewed so that a strong direction is given to police forces to prioritise programmes which seek to achieve greater social cohesion including geographical policing. The Committee recommends that the Home Office should work with NCPE/ACPO to give a high priority to bringing forward guidance and best practice examples in the field of social cohesion. The commitment which police officers make to local communities needs to be positively valued when promotions are considered by senior management.**

132. **There is greater cooperation between the Home Office and the ODPM around policing arrangements in neighbourhoods. This collaboration needs to be formalised. The National Policing Plan needs to be subject to wide discussion and renamed as a community safety plan. The partnership arrangements between the police and local agencies and communities needs to be reviewed. Local Strategic Partnerships need a stronger remit to address policing issues.**

133. **The Home Office needs to develop a new set of targets which measure the benefits of police forces making a long term commitment to communities, rather than the simplistic crime reduction targets, and needs to articulate clearly the role of the police service in delivering Public Service Agreement 9, which aims to bring about measurable improvements in race equality and community cohesion across a range of performance indicators.**

Asylum

134. The Government's asylum policy was raised by a number of witnesses as a subject of considerable concern. Ben Brown, the assistant director of Asylum Services at Haringey Council told us:

"We have something like 33,000 asylum seekers and refugees within Haringey. While the NASS will take on responsibility for the payment of looking after those asylum seekers that is not entirely the case and there is a hell of a burden placed on authorities that I do not think has been dealt with and I think the Government seriously needs to look at whether these problems are to get worse and create further tensions."[92]

The Chief Executive of Leicester City Council Rodney Green said:

"---- there is no provision at the moment when large influxes of population move to a certain area to provide any kind of up-front financial support. Leicester has accommodated 10,000 Somalis within less than two years without any additional funding. That means teachers having ten, twenty, thirty children appearing at their school door who do not speak English with no additional resources until the following year when their enumeration brings resources in. We need a new and more proactive and creative policy for funding large movements of population exceptionally. Otherwise the tensions that will produce, particularly for the indigenous community, will be very severe."[93]

135. Evidence to the Committee suggested that the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) had placed a disproportionate amount of asylum seekers into disadvantaged communities, which the Government is now reviewing. The Home Office minister Fiona Mactaggart told us:

"At the moment together with Blackburn and with Darwen we are piloting a local scheme of how we might develop the NASS resident system in order to avoid some of the problems it might have had in the past. That pilot will inform the new contracts which will happen after 2005 because we will have more effective management of the application of asylum, the number of asylum seekers are reducing, the number of applications have gone down by half and so the programme will not need to be as big in future as it has been in the past. It does need to be sensitive to local demands and right now we are working on ways of making it much more sensitive."[94]

136. In the lead up to the expiry of NASS's accommodation contracts in 2005, the Home Office published a review of the service on 25th March 2004. The review emphasised the importance of the service working better with local agencies to promote social cohesion.

"NASS clearly needs to be more aware of the issue of social cohesion than it has been to date and to have ready access to good quality advice on it. Some of that advice, especially about local circumstances and sensitivities can be gained by working more closely with local government in the sort of arrangement that we suggest should be explored for the next round of contracts and phase 2 of regionalisation.

But we do not believe it makes sense for NASS to become the Home Office's centre of expertise on such a complex, wide-ranging issue as social cohesion on top of their

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[92] Q202

[93] Q201

[94] Q754

"day job". Where NASS is not to be the centre of expertise, however, it must be clear who in the Home Office does have that role, and their remit should explicitly include advising NASS."[95]

The report recommended:

"It is essential that NASS is encouraged to work more closely and openly with local agencies, and that it should be able to share information with them except where they are genuinely prohibited from doing so by the law (eg the Data Protection Act). The general presumption should be that information should be shared openly with at least the relevant local authority potentially affected by any decision, except where NASS has specific legal advice that it cannot do so."[96]

137. **The Committee recommends that any review of Asylum policy by the Home Office should incorporate an examination of those cases where the current dispersal policy is alleged to have damaged local communities. The lessons learned from such case studies should be used to inform the further development of asylum policy. The Home Office's work on social cohesion should be extended to providing advice to the National Asylum Seekers Service with a clearly identified contact point. Clear guidance should be provided to NASS on developing relationships with local authorities and other service providers, local communities and the voluntary sector and sufficient resources should be provided.**

The Commission for Racial Equality

138. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was established in 1976 under the Race Relations Act 1976 to tackle racial discrimination and promote racial equality. The Commission, a publicly funded, non-governmental body, works to promote equal opportunities for everyone regardless of their race, colour, nationality or national or ethnic origin. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 came into effect in April 2001. It places a duty on specified public authorities to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups. One of the Commission's major roles is to provide advice on these legal obligations and to encourage compliance with the statutory obligations on public authorities.

139. In its memorandum to the Committee, the Commission appeared to support strongly the Government's effort to enhance social cohesion. The CRE's Memorandum stated:

"As part of our work to promote good race relations we have been actively addressing the community cohesion agenda and outline in Section 7 the ways in which we are taking this work forward. ……By fulfilling their obligations under the Race Relations Act, public authorities will be well placed to deliver community cohesion. ---- Inequality and discrimination, in particular race inequality destroys and impedes cohesion and must be directly addressed …. There has to be an

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[95] Report of the Independent Review into the Operation of National Asylum Support Service (NASS), page 13, Home Office, March 2004

[96] Report of the Independent Review into the Operation of National Asylum Support Service (NASS), page 41, Home Office, March 2004

acceptance that the former cannot and should not be pursued in isolation from the latter as they are inextricably linked."[97]

140. Later in its oral evidence to the Committee, the Commission sought to clarify the link between social cohesion and the general race equality issue. The Commission's director of Countries, Regions and Communities, Dharmendra Kanani said:

"I think we need to understand very clearly that we cannot achieve social cohesion or cohesion of any sort unless we begin to tackle issues of both inequality and discrimination. I think that is where the rub is, if we begin to ignore that how communities begin to trust each other, live comfortably next to each other, is born out of their experiences of access to services and their ability to enjoy employment on a fair and equitable basis – and I think issues around perceptions come to the fore. So I do not think they are incompatible as issues."[98]

141. The Government is proposing to establish a single equality body, which would take over from the CRE, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission and possibly also equality issues related to age, sexual orientation and religion. The Government has argued that such a single organisation would deal with these relatively closely linked matters more coherently. The Committee is concerned that the more demanding objectives for such an organisation could overwhelm its ability to play an active part in addressing social cohesion.

142. **The Committee welcomes the CRE's commitment to address actively the community cohesion agenda. However, it seems that it is perceiving the entire social cohesion agenda as a vehicle for pursuing its own strictly equality-based objectives. The CRE should give greater emphasis to promoting the wider goals of social cohesion for their own sake rather than seeing them as part of its equality agenda. The CRE should review the way it undertakes its statutory duty to promote 'good race relations' in a more positive way so that it encourages a greater understanding between different communities. The CRE needs to give clearer practical guidance on drawing up and implementing race equality strategies and to enable public authorities to share best practice.**

143. **The Committee recommends that if the Government decides to go ahead with the single equality body, its contribution to achieving social cohesion should be maximised. Promoting social cohesion should be incorporated into the vision statement for the new organisation.**

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97 Memorandum [Commission for Racial Equality, p 4.9]

98 Q642

Case Study: The Policing Approach in Leicestershire

The approach to policing in Leicestershire is based upon the simple philosophy of 'right people, right numbers, right place'; in other words realising the collective influence and capacity of the entire organisation to make a difference. This philosophy is underpinned by ten 'corporate principles' to which everyone is held accountable. In summary, these principles set out the 'who we are' in being creative, self critical, accessible, wise custodians and people of integrity, and 'what we are' through concentrating resources in local areas to resolve vulnerability and criminality. The principles focus strongly upon individual and corporate accountability for being a 'positive force for good within communities and our ability to build community cohesion'.

The 'right people' starts with a clear understanding of the fundamental policing role as community 'guardians', where the emphasis is upon relationship building, listening and problem solving. This has recently been taken further through 'in house' probationer training where new recruits spend significant time in the community learning about communication and perception, and the context of their powers in resolving problems. Every police officer is given their own unique part of Leicestershire to oversee as 'guardian', the size and nature of which depends upon local issues but could be a children's home, village or estate. Although routine demand means they cannot be present all the time, the 'micro-beat' is a constant default to which they must return and oversee. Promotion, movement into specialist departments and bonuses are increasingly dependent upon an officer's impact on improving quality of life in an area.

It is also recognised that tackling vulnerability may require a greater concentration of policing presence in some neighbourhoods. Under a significantly devolved structure, local commanders are responsible for identifying areas of disproportionate crime, victimisation or tension, and prioritising longer term, intensive policing. This 'mapping' of need is being developed with the National Centre for Policing Excellence and draws upon involvement in the National Reassurance Project. Minimum standards of response, and the provision of dedicated community beat officers, also apply across the whole of Leicestershire to ensure that overall confidence is not undermined by perceptions of disparities in service provision. Specialist resources, such as covert policing, can be used to support local commanders and their teams where problems are identified as being beyond their capability to resolve. Similarly, they can make short term tactical decisions using the national intelligence model, should an issue require immediate resolution. A central community safety unit provides expert and up to date advice on problem resolution and monitors quality and practice in areas such a racist crime, domestic violence and the effective focus of partnership on issues such as offender management.

12 Department of Health

144. Access to appropriate healthcare on an equal basis is a fundamental right of any citizen. The Committee received a number of contributions concerning the problems that people from black and ethnic minority communities experienced in accessing healthcare. Like the local authority, the three health trusts in Oldham, the Pennine Care NHS Trust, the Pennine Acute Hospitals Trust and the Oldham Primary Care Trust are also major spenders and employers in the town. It is important that their senior managers live locally and that their employment policies encourage people from all the local communities to work in the health service. The needs of local communities ought to be reflected in the funding. However there are areas where funding does not seem to reflect local issues, notably translation and asylum. The most critical issue raised was the question of translation services. Gail Richards, the Chief Executive of the Oldham Care Trust, explained the extent of the problem:

> "We have people from 46 different countries; 52 different languages are spoken across Oldham. We get by some of the time with access to the ethnic health team which is under tremendous pressure to provide the outreach into the community service. As you said, you have highlighted the issues about relying on either the health care staff themselves and GPs or family, which is far from satisfactory when you are looking at some of the more sensitive issues and certainly some of the women's issues. Then we fall back on Language Line, which is a three-way telephone support line, and we are waiting for the launch of NHS Direct which I think is going to provide a much improved service. This work, now in partnership with social services and the council, is to build and strengthen a community based provision creating employment opportunities and looking at not just interpreting but advocacy and people who are able to explain what is happening, not just interpret what is being said. This report sets out a proposal to take that work forward and we are committed to doing that but it will take two or three years before we are really meeting the need."[99]

145. Evidence suggested that family members were frequently relied on to assist with translation. This practice was not without difficulties and not solely because the family member might not always be on hand. Chris Appleby, Chief Executive of the Pennine Acute Hospitals Trust, said there were problems in using family members to translate in medically complex cases:

> "Potentially there is, I agree, although in an emergency situation often you have to settle for something that is perhaps not optimal. I have to say that that is used in emergency situations."[100]

The Health Minister Dr Stephen Ladyman said that trusts should not be dependent on family members to translate:

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[99] Q9

[100] Q9

"No, absolutely not. Of course that is bound to happen from time to time because in any huge organisation the delivery of services is never as perfect as we want it to be, but no, we would not expect that to be built into systems; we would expect people to be trying to minimise that type of activity. We would expect primary care trusts and acute trusts to be commissioning services in order to make sure that that is not necessary. Frankly, it is not necessary because we do have both national and local services available."[101]

146. While the Minister accepted that it was not appropriate to depend on family members for translation he also told us that the Department is not prepared to set aside funding for translation services:

"There is no additional money from the centre. Obviously the centre pays for NHS Direct, so we pay for the national services. So far as primary care trusts are concerned, the indices of their local need are used in order to judge how much money the PCT gets in total. Of course, one of the things on which they would be expected to use the additional money they get to reflect their local extra need would be to provide, out of that, translation services. So there is not a pot, I am afraid, that somewhere like Oldham can ring up and say "Send us some more money because we have a greater need for translation services", but they would be expected to engage with their local PCT to explain the need for those services and for the PCT to provide that money.[102]

It does not seem that funding from central Government for translation services is increased to reflect rising demand, even in places such as Oldham where the demands on the translation services have grown as a result of asylum seekers particularly in terms of the range of languages used. Dr Ladyman told us:

No additional money. We recognise the range of languages through the NHS Direct service, so we would hope that NHS Direct could provide language translation services for just about any language. Translation services for the four Asian languages are the ones which are most often requested.[103]

147. Older people were particularly disadvantaged due to the inadequacy of translation services. Helena Herklots, the director of policy at Age Concern told us:

"We have quite a way to go before we have interpreting services which meet what people need. One of the issues we come across is older people going to their GP and needing an interpreter and perhaps having a younger person there doing the interpreting, who may not actually understand what the older person is trying to express or is going through in terms of the illness they are presenting. Sometimes also you find that interpreters may be members of the family and there may be an issue of confidentiality for the older person. They may not want to talk about their particular problem with the member of their family."[104]

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[101] Q697

[102] Q698

[103] Q699

[104] Q631

148. There is a serious problem for older members of the ethnic minority groups accessing professional translation services which adversely affects access to adequate health provision and ultimately their human rights. Translation services should be put on a professional footing with sufficient funding to ensure a uniformly high quality of provision. The needs of all elderly people but with special emphasis on the ethnic minority communities should be given a higher priority.

149. **The Committee recommends that the Department of Health should undertake a root and branch review of the provision of translation services with a view to establishing a properly funded service that removes the current disadvantage experienced by some members of the ethnic minority communities.**

Case Study: Language Support Services at the Royal Oldham Hospital

Following the creation of a specialist post in 1991, the Ethnic Health Team at the Royal Oldham Hospital developed rapidly into a much respected and highly committed group. Starting with funding from the Urban Aid Programme, it carried out a three year project raising an awareness of health amongst Oldham's Black and South Asian communities, particularly working on issues such as diabetes, coronary heart disease, smoking, breast feeding and the nutrition of infants and young children. This project was very successfully delivered and as a result, mainstream funding was provided by West Pennine Health Authority in 1995. This was a key moment in terms of social cohesion and an important message for the communities who had become used to (and still are) having funding provided on a short term basis. 'Short termism' is one of the biggest barriers to the development of services for ethnic communities. This service became an integral part of mainstream services and demonstrated a determination to keep ethnic communities' health high on the health care agenda.

Throughout this time, new practices were developed which improved access and ensured a high quality language support service. Ethnic health workers are available from 8.00am-7.00pm to meet different demands at different times of the day. An out of hours "bank" exists to provide a 24 hour service. The ethos of the team is always to put patients first and a "can do" approach is taken at all times. Patients are themselves encouraged to contact us if they require our help when attending the Royal Oldham Hospital and training programmes are in place to provide health professionals with the skills necessary to use interpreters effectively. Cultural awareness training is also available. Again, a climate of quality has been encouraged and staff no longer attempt to use children or family members as communication tools. The team recorded 7,800 contacts last year, and ethnic health staff themselves are highly skilled individuals who receive regular training.

Providing patients with a comprehensive language support service contributes to community cohesion by ensuring equality of access, greater cultural competence in the delivery of services, greater empowerment of individual patients and it improves opportunities for patients to participate more actively in their care. Access to services and better education in health care is further improved through effective partnership working with the local communities which is positively encouraged by the Trust.

The challenge lies in ensuring that a similar level of service is provided across the board. More funding always helps, however, having champions who recognise the importance of our work is equally important.

Conclusions and recommendations

Tackling the Causes of the Disturbances

1.   Social cohesion should be seen as a long term issue to be considered by all agencies. It has been brought to prominence by the disturbances in 2001 but it should not be seen predominantly as a law and order issue. Social cohesion requires the securing of improvements in the quality of life for all citizens and should be addressed in all policies and services developed by public agencies. (Paragraph 13)

Local Services

2.   Many public agencies now have the remit to promote social cohesion and are tasked with producing race equality strategies. Much more clarity is required as to what the strategies should comprise. It is unclear how they are supposed to be drawn up or implemented. There is a danger that the range of initiatives will be poorly coordinated and fragmented. Local authorities need to be given overall responsibility to coordinate their initiatives. (Paragraph 20)

3.   Councils need greater incentives to promote social cohesion. The Government should revise the Comprehensive Performance Assessment weightings to reflect greater importance to social cohesion issues and to consider a council's procedures for addressing them across all their operational areas. Councils should also revise their corporate structure to integrate social cohesion within their management structures and oversight and scrutiny committees. (Paragraph 21)

4.   Local authorities and other public agencies need to develop a vision for the provision of services which ensures that they serve different communities. They need to choose carefully both the means of delivery and the location for new facilities to ensure that they are accessible to the various different communities in an area and do not pander to sectarianism. Any decision on the funding of a new initiative and the location of a new public facility needs to be tested to ensure that it will promote social cohesion and avoid segregation. (Paragraph 25)

5.   All existing central Government policies relating to the delivery of public services should be reviewed to ensure that, as far as possible the kind of public service duplication (and consequent institutionalised segregation) that has occurred in parts of Northern Ireland is avoided. All funding applications for new public facilities such as schools, hospitals, leisure/community centres, etc, should be closely scrutinised from a social cohesion standpoint. This scrutiny should assess any potential factors that might inhibit one or other group from using these facilities. The Comprehensive Performance Assessments of local authorities should look for evidence that they have ensured that all policy or funding decisions promote social integration and avoid segregation. (Paragraph 26)

6.   We agree that the Government needs to develop more sophisticated measures to assess whether councils are promoting social cohesion. These need to be linked to Best Value Performance Indicators and the Comprehensive Performance

Assessment. However, we do accept that it will always be necessary to ask local people about their views and believe that these subjective measures should at least form part of the assessment. (Paragraph 28)

7.   Councils need to work hard to create a climate in which people do not feel frightened or threatened and feel they can talk. The experience from Oldham underlines the importance for councils to promote open discussion about difficult issues associated with race. (Paragraph 30)

8.   Local authorities need to take more seriously their relationship with the local media. They should be encouraged to develop a communications group among officers working on social cohesion to ensure that the benefits of their projects are maximised in the media and that any misinformation can be quickly countered. (Paragraph 36)

9.   The media also need to recognise their responsibilities and the benefits of promoting social cohesion. The new Home Office guidance on media relations should suggest that local authorities and other local agencies use their advertising and promotional budgets to encourage the local media to promote social cohesion by serving all local communities. (Paragraph 37)

10.   Local authorities and other local agencies should agree a local concordat with local media setting out how they will work together and a panel of representatives from both organisations should be established to monitor the relationship. The local media should take the initiative in establishing contact with faith and ethnic minorities on a regular basis and ensure that ethnic minority groups are represented in their workforce so that they have a fuller understanding of community issues. (Paragraph 38)

Regeneration Programmes

11.   Neighbourhood initiatives can be effective and avoid rivalries between communities if they are part of a wider strategy which is widely understood and subject to widespread consultation. However, they must be part of a wider strategy. (Paragraph 46)

12.   Councils should consider grouping wards together to benefit from regeneration funds and give greater priority to thematic programmes to avoid the possible accusations that one ethnic group is benefiting. The Government and the RDAs should set a spending balance between area funds and district wide thematic spending. The guidance to RDAs needs revising to emphasise their role in promoting social cohesion and to set out a process for the agencies to consider how their funding decisions can encourage it. (Paragraph 47)

13.   The Committee welcomes the publication by the Government of advice on area based initiatives and community cohesion. It must ensure that the recommendations are now fully implemented. Implementation will require a review of its funding policies nationally to ensure that thematic programmes are given greater priority. (Paragraph 48)

Education

14. Parental choice can unfortunately increase segregation. The quality of school provision is an important but not sole determinant of choice. Some choices are motivated by ignorance and fear of other cultures and LEAs and schools have to be prepared to adopt new techniques to ensure that choices are better informed and not based on misconceptions about whether that particular school is 'for them'. To achieve greater social cohesion, improving the quality of schools becomes even more important so that all schools are equally attractive. (Paragraph 55)

15. The Committee commends the work of the local authorities and the educational staff in relation to the success of Oldham 6th Form College and Oldham Further Education College, and recommends that a study be undertaken to identify best practice for application to the primary and secondary sectors. (Paragraph 56)

16. With a major school rebuilding programme currently underway, real progress in tackling segregation can be achieved if the sites are chosen carefully. The Committee suggests that additional thought is needed for plans to regenerate schools in urban areas so that full advantage is taken of the opportunities to provide facilities serving all communities in an area. (Paragraph 57)

17. The Department for Education and Skills should commission a survey into the relative performance of multi-cultural schools aimed at dispelling any concerns that they perform any less well than mono-cultural or single faith schools. It should facilitate and lead an open discussion on the role that faith schools can play in tackling mono-cultural neighbourhoods. (Paragraph 58)

18. It should be recognised that in some circumstances there could be a conflict between parental choice and social cohesion. The Committee recommends that the Department should prepare revised guidelines for local authorities regarding admissions policies for schools, focusing on strategies for coping with problems arising from parental choice. Efforts should be made to enable the relative performance of local schools to be highlighted in a way that makes them attractive to all local people regardless of their background. In this regard, all multi-cultural schools should be seeking to make a virtue of the richness they can offer to potential students. Councils should be encouraged to inform parents about the advantages of their children attending multi-cultural schools, in terms of exposure to other cultures and a better standard of overall education. (Paragraph 59)

19. The Government needs to prevent, and where necessary reverse, any tendency for faith schools to become mono-cultural. Faith schools do not apparently perceive themselves as having the potential to make a contribution to achieving social cohesion. The DFES should provide additional guidance to faith schools on how to address social cohesion both in terms of their admissions policies and their curriculum. No new faith schools should be approved unless they are committed to promoting a multicultural agenda. (Paragraph 61)

20. Twinning initiatives can help to bridge divides between communities, but they must not be seen as one-off projects. The DFES and Local Education Authorities must see them as part of core funding for schools and put on a long term funding basis. They

must be seen as the first step to breaking down the barriers between the communities and the eventual re-integration of school populations and not necessarily as an end in themselves. (Paragraph 64)

21.   There are opportunities to incorporate in the curriculum concepts and ideas intended to promote greater understanding and tolerance of other cultures. This could be achieved by including such material as a natural part of the class-work in schools, as demonstrated by the Leicester experience. (Paragraph 66)

22.   The Committee recommends that the Department should use the work that has been done in Leicester as a case study in order to determine how this initiative can be taken forward in terms of embedding multi-culturalism into the national curriculum. (Paragraph 67)

23.   Ofsted's remit needs to give added emphasis to issues of social cohesion. Social cohesion should become a regular part of Ofsted inspections. It should look at both the way social cohesion is addressed by education authorities and also within schools. Ofsted inspection should give greater consideration to the varying performances of pupils from different ethnic and cultural groups. (Paragraph 70)

24.   The Committee recommends that the DFES should continue to work with Ofsted to further develop the schools inspection and appraisal systems so that greater recognition is given to the performance of multi-cultural schools in representing the ethnic mix of their communities and that good performance in this respect is rewarded in an appropriate way. In particular, the DFES should consider whether specific action is needed within schools to address instances where pupils from one or other group are demonstrably under-performing in comparison to the school population as a whole. (Paragraph 71)

Youth Provision

25.   Providing high quality youth services is a fundamental requirement for addressing social cohesion. We urge the Government to put the provision by local authorities of youth services on to a statutory basis to ensure adequate standard and consistent provision. This needs to be backed up by adequate funding from central Government. (Paragraph 76)

26.   Other services, particularly the fire stations can play an important role in promoting social cohesion because they are not involved in law enforcement nor are they associated with any particular cultural or ethnic group. The Government should actively encourage greater work by fire services in bridging divides between communities, particularly among disaffected youth. (Paragraph 77)

The needs of vulnerable people

27.   The Committee was concerned that the needs of vulnerable groups (such as, but not limited to, the elderly) could differ within some ethnic communities for a wide variety of reasons including cultural habits. If left unaddressed, such differences might result in unnecessary hardship for those very people who were least able to

cope. The Committee recommends that government guidance to the wider public service on social cohesion policy should seek special recognition for the needs of vulnerable groups, especially within the black and ethnic minority communities. (Paragraph 80)

The role of the Community and Voluntary Sectors

28.   The voluntary and community sector has an important role in working with local communities to promote social cohesion but there is a danger that they can increase segregation by working with only one community. Local authorities need to develop a strategy which identifies when it is appropriate to fund an organisation catering for only one cultural group. Grant conditions should otherwise require voluntary and community organisations to work across community boundaries. Every effort should be made to ensure that community centres cater for a range of cultural groups rather than separate centres being provided for different groups. (Paragraph 88)

29.   In many instances, projects that have been initiated under short term arrangements are simply too valuable to be left to the vagaries and uncertainties of the kind of competition in which voluntary organisations are required to participate in order to keep them going. If an activity has been demonstrated to be beneficial to the development of social cohesion in a neighbourhood and its continued existence would be of benefit, then it should be considered for mainstream funding. Short term project funding should be reviewed in relation to funding streams that are intended to address the social cohesion agenda. It is suggested that a formalised procedure should be established to assess regularly the suitability of social cohesion projects for mainstreaming. (Paragraph 89)

Central Government

30.   If social cohesion is of such importance to the Government, it deserves explicit reference in strategy documents, particularly those such as "the Northern Way" that address the needs of the towns which suffered the disturbances. (Paragraph 94)

31.   More work is needed to formalise and clarify the lines of responsibility between the Home Office and the ODPM. Clear leadership is required to direct the programme. One single group should have authority over Government Departments and agencies. The group should produce guidelines to ensure that all new government policies support social cohesion and that it is embedded into all policy development. All new Government policies should be assessed to determine whether they maximise every possible opportunity to improve community environments, tackle deprivation, and promote understanding. (Paragraph 95)

32.   The Committee recommends that the Government rationalise and integrate the full range of schemes presently available to local authorities and voluntary bodies offered by several different departments and funding organisations. The assessment should not lead to a reduction in the overall funds available to local authorities and the voluntary agencies but an enhancement of the ability of such organisations to access

them wherever possible, and to consolidation of schemes, in order to make them easier to access. (Paragraph 99)

33.   The Inter-departmental Ministerial Group on Community Cohesion should reduce the overall number of schemes and simplify the criteria involved, with a view to cutting unnecessary expenditure of resources in completing applications. The ultimate objective should be to ensure that all available funds are drawn down and equitably distributed among the applicant bodies. (Paragraph 100)

34.   The Committee further asks Ministers to recognise that the funding of schemes designed to enhance social cohesion across a broad front will be required to be sustained over the longer term and indeed in certain specific instances may need to be increased. Government should embed the need for social cohesion funding into national expenditure planning. (Paragraph 101)

35.   The Committee commends the steps already taken by the Home Office and ODPM to identify best practice in terms of those procedures and policies that have been proven to be successful. The proven technique of identifying examples of best practice and using them to assist other organisations at an earlier stage in drawing up their social cohesion strategies should be further developed. However, simply disseminating information about what works is not enough. The Government should initiate a programme of continuing assistance in which organisations would be given feedback about their performance delivery on a wide range of initiatives. (Paragraph 105)

36.   The issues of recruitment and subsequent training of staff are particularly important if organisations are to gain the confidence of the public and guidance; more practical assistance should be developed in these areas. The Committee recommends that further work should be undertaken regarding the mechanisms for identifying the lessons learned which should encompass all government departments and the wider public service. (Paragraph 106)

37.   The Committee recommends that arrangements should be put in place for any necessary follow-up action that may be needed to ensure that acceptable minimum standards of service are universally applied. (Paragraph 107)

38.   The Committee recommends that guidance to local authorities and other public service employers should address the need to take appropriate measures to ensure that their workforce reflects the ethnic composition in the locality. The Committee further recommends that the training of practitioners and other public servants whose role impacts on social cohesion matters should be conducted to national standards devised at central government level. (Paragraph 108)

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions

39.   The Committee recommends that the original guidance for Local Strategic Partnerships should be reviewed and up-dated to incorporate, among other matters, specific references to the need to pursue targets designed to promote social cohesion. (Paragraph 111)

40.   The Committee recommends that the ODPM, in conjunction with other relevant departments and the local authorities, should review the present policies on 'choice based letting'. The objective should be to create strategies to mitigate or reverse the tendency for freedom of choice to lead to greater segregation. This would best be achieved by making integration in housing the most attractive option for householders. Any choice-based lettings policy should include a strategy which included encouragement for greater integration by offering support to tenants moving into areas where they might be in a minority. (Paragraph 118)

41.   The Government appears committed to ensuring the adequate provision of community support in the areas benefiting from its Sustainable Communities programme. These policies must ensure that housing schemes and new facilities contribute to social cohesion by attracting and integrating different communities. (Paragraph 120)

Home Office

42.   The Committee concluded that much could be achieved in restoring the confidence of the public in the police service as a whole by focusing on building trust between individuals within communities and the local police officers that serve them. Whilst recognising the inherent difficulties relating to operational imperatives and the career development of individual officers, the development and implementation of advanced practices in geographical policing for local communities will make a real difference in overall relations with the police. (Paragraph 130)

43.   The Committee welcomes the new commitment by many police forces to work with local communities. The NCPE/ACPO guidance will help to spread good practice. It is disappointing that these initiatives are not receiving more support at a national level and that the emphasis on promoting community cohesion in the previous National Policing Plan has not been carried through to the latest version. It is vital that this is reviewed so that a strong direction is given to police forces to prioritise programmes which seek to achieve greater social cohesion including geographical policing. The Committee recommends that the Home Office should work with NCPE/ACPO to give a high priority to bringing forward guidance and best practice examples in the field of social cohesion. The commitment which police officers make to local communities needs to be positively valued when promotions are considered by senior management. (Paragraph 131)

44.   There is greater cooperation between the Home Office and the ODPM around policing arrangements in neighbourhoods. This collaboration needs to be formalised. The National Policing Plan needs to be subject to wide discussion and renamed as a community safety plan. The partnership arrangements between the police and local agencies and communities needs to be reviewed. Local Strategic Partnerships need a stronger remit to address policing issues. (Paragraph 132)

45.   The Home Office needs to develop a new set of targets which measure the benefits of police forces making a long term commitment to communities, rather than the simplistic crime reduction targets, and needs to articulate clearly the role of the police service in delivering Public Service Agreement 9, which aims to bring about

measurable improvements in race equality and community cohesion across a range of performance indicators. (Paragraph 133)

46. The Committee recommends that any review of Asylum policy by the Home Office should incorporate an examination of those cases where the current dispersal policy is alleged to have damaged local communities. The lessons learned from such case studies should be used to inform the further development of asylum policy. The Home Office's work on social cohesion should be extended to providing advice to the National Asylum Seekers Service with a clearly identified contact point. Clear guidance should be provided to NASS on developing relationships with local authorities and other service providers, local communities and the voluntary sector and sufficient resources should be provided. (Paragraph 137)

47. The Committee welcomes the CRE's commitment to address actively the community cohesion agenda. However, it seems that it is perceiving the entire social cohesion agenda as a vehicle for pursuing its own strictly equality-based objectives. The CRE should give greater emphasis to promoting the wider goals of social cohesion for their own sake rather than seeing them as part of its equality agenda. The CRE should review the way it undertakes its statutory duty to promote 'good race relations' in a more positive way so that it encourages a greater understanding between different communities. (Paragraph 142)

48. The Committee recommends that if the Government decides to go ahead with the single equality body, its contribution to achieving social cohesion should be maximised. Promoting social cohesion should be incorporated into the vision statement for the new organisation. (Paragraph 143)

Department of Health

49. The Committee recommends that the Department of Health should undertake a root and branch review of the provision of translation services with a view to establishing a properly funded service that removes the current disadvantage experienced by some members of the ethnic minority communities. (Paragraph 149)

Formal minutes

Members present:
Mr Andrew Bennett, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts   Mr Chris Mole
Mr David Clelland   Mr Bill O'Brien
Mr John Cummings   Mrs Christine Russell
                                  Mr Adrian Sanders

The Committee deliberated.

Report (Social Cohesion), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 149 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixth Report of the Committee to the House – (The Chairman.)

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That the provisions of Standing Order No. 134 (Select Committee (reports)) be applied to the Report.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.

[The Committee adjourned.

Witnesses

List of supplementary written evidence

Memoranda SOC 01 to SOC 59 published as HC 1060-II on 12th September 2003

Reports from the ODPM Committee since 2003

The following reports have been produced by the Committee since the start of the 2003-04 Parliament. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2003–04

First Report	ODPM Annual Report and Accounts 2003	HC 102-I
Second Report	Annual Report to the Liaison Committee	HC 221
Third Report	The Fire Service	HC 43-I *(CM 6154)*
Fourth Report	Coalfield Communities	HC 44-I
Fifth Report	Decent Homes	HC 46-I