

OPEN

Ethnic minorities and immigrants - actions to promote tolerance and respect

Seminar Proceedings and development plan



CONTENTS PAGE

Introduction	3
Keynote Speeches	4
Ranuka Jagpal	4
Jude Hawes	6
Statistical Summary from West Midlands Regional Observatory	8
Workshop Materials, Discussion Points and Recommendations	10
Workshop 1 – Building Inter-community Contact	10
Workshop 2 – Economic Downturn and Hate Crime	15
Workshop 3 – Awareness Raising and Myth Busting	20
Questions and Answers	24
Appendix 1	25
Appendix 2	29

INTRODUCTION

The seminar focused on the three following areas:

- **Building inter community contact**
- **Economic turndown and hate crime**
- **Awareness raising and myth busting**

KEYNOTE SPEECHES

Keynote Speech One – A Policy Perspective

Ranuka Jagpal – Assistant Director, Government Office West Midlands

The key points covered in Ranuka’s speech are outlined below; footage of the speech in full can be accessed here <http://www.wmleadersboard.gov.uk/open-seminars>

- The Department for Communities and Local Government definition of what community cohesion is:-
“Community cohesion is about people from different backgrounds getting on well together, and the benefits this can bring to communities”
- An integrated and cohesive community must be based on three foundations:
 - People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities.
 - People knowing their rights and responsibilities.
 - People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly.
- And three ways of living together:
 - A shared future and sense of belonging.
 - A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside recognition of the value of diversity.
 - Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.
- Britain today is a more diverse society, ethnically, racially and culturally.
- This presents huge economic benefits, via migration and diversity, but also challenges in terms of risks to community cohesion.
- Public Service Agreements (PSA’s) have been developed by the Government, with the aim of developing cross departmental objectives to deliver key agendas.
- The three PSA targets that relate to cohesion have been identified as:
 - PSA 3 - Ensure controlled, fair migration that protects the public and contributes to economic growth.
 - PSA 15 - Address the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief – there is a very marked difference how different people are treated.
 - PSA 21 - Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities – nationally 84% of people report that get on well together.
- Local Strategic Partnerships are required to develop Sustainable Communities Strategies, which set out the strategic vision for the area. The government then requires each Local Authority to develop a Local Area Agreement (LAA) that sets out the delivery plan for this strategy.
- It is a requirement that the plan includes 35 priority indicators from a possible list of about 200 that reflect the key issues and priorities for the area.
- The role that Government plays in this local process is to work with Local Authorities and their partners to identify places where cohesion should be a local priority in LAA, to provide support and challenge when areas are facing difficulties, to emphasise the importance of promoting community cohesion, to

- share best practice effectively, and to support the establishment of forums on extremism where necessary.
- There are three funding programmes currently being rolled out by Government in this policy area:
 - Empowerment Programme (£7.5 million nationally) – includes a duty to promote democracy, and a duty to involve communities.
 - Migration Impacts Fund (£35 million nationally) – aimed at promoting innovative ways of managing short term pressures and support for local communities.
 - Connecting Communities (£12 million nationally) – aimed at listening to hard to reach groups - 20 areas per region.

Keynote Speech Two – A Grassroots Perspective

Jude Hawes – Equalities Team Manager, Stoke-on-Trent Citizens Advise Bureau

The key points covered in Jude’s speech are outlined below; footage of the speech in full can be accessed here <http://www.wmleadersboard.gov.uk/open-seminars>

- Stoke-on-Trent CAB is not typical: it is one of the largest in the country and has developed a wide range of services for the local communities.
- Stoke-on-Trent is the 14th most deprived local authority, was in the bottom 10 local authorities for community cohesion in 2005, and has a relatively disorganised minority ethnic sector. The economic downturn is having a particularly negative impact.
- In 2001, 5.5% of the population was BME and by 2006 that number had almost doubled to 10%.
- There is greater diversity with this larger BME cohort with up to 70/80 different groupings, with their different nationalities and languages.
- This rapid expansion of ethnic minority communities has had the following impacts:
 1. Pressure on services – for financial reasons, new arrivals are usually housed in the most deprived areas of the city, where public services are already under pressure. Added to this, there was a lack of preparedness for these client groups from the public sector, partly because of relatively low numbers in the past. This meant that there was a lack of critical public services such as a lack of interpreting/translation services as well as very limited cultural awareness from officers. The Third Sector in Stoke-on-Trent has responded by meeting the gaps, possibly because it was a more traditional role for the sector to provide, the sector is quicker to change, it was already working with BME communities, and it is more accessible to “hard to reach” groups.
 2. Community Cohesion – because services have been under pressure there is competition for the limited resources and a feeling that others must be doing better or “getting our share”. This has coincided with the virtual collapse of the local jobs market. Therefore a number of local people feel neglected and have looked for scapegoats. Some local politicians have exploited this myth and the media also had a negative impact. As a result there has been hostility within “white” communities, and 9 BNP councilors have been elected.
 3. Impact on Ethnic minorities and immigrants – established minority ethnic groups have not welcomed the new arrivals because of the additional competition for limited resources. There has also been an additional strain on ME community organisations that are underdeveloped and so are unable to support the new communities or to influence the mainstream.
- The Equalities unit of Stoke-on-Trent CAB has played an active role in trying to ensure that social policy changes in Stoke-on-Trent do not marginalise those most disadvantaged, as well as providing clear and accurate information into the public arena.
- The Equalities unit have delivered a number of service responses to Gypsies and Travellers, longstanding ME communities, Refugees and Asylum seekers, and

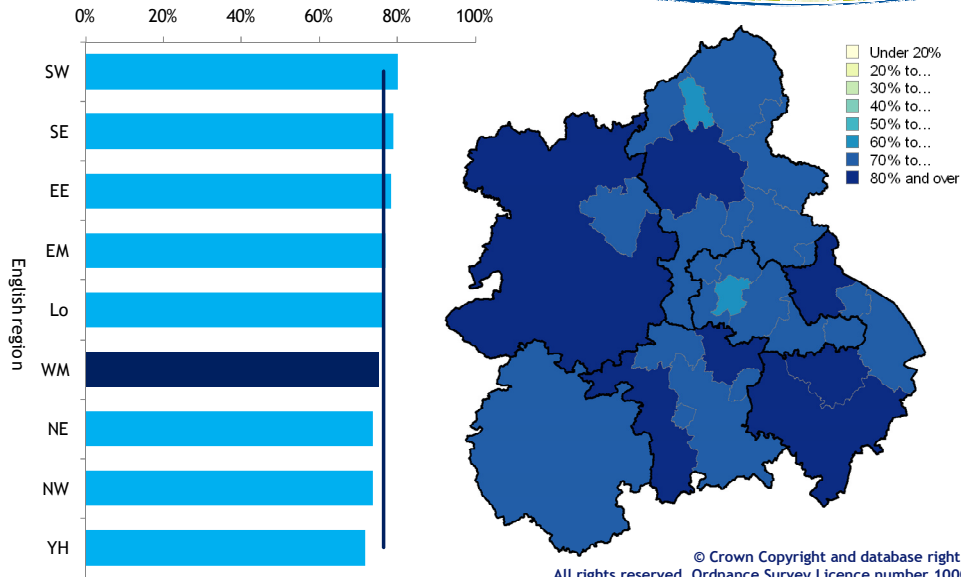
for EU workers. These services include recruitment and training of volunteers, casework, school projects, strategic leadership and co-ordination, outreach services, factual and awareness training for service providers, community engagement and conferences.

- The main three national indicators that inform and guide the work of the CAB are:
 - NI 1 – people feel people from different backgrounds get on well together
 - NI 2 - people feel they belong to their neighbourhoods
 - NI 23 – perception that people treat each other with respect and dignity

Proportion of residents who think that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together



West Midlands
Regional
Observatory
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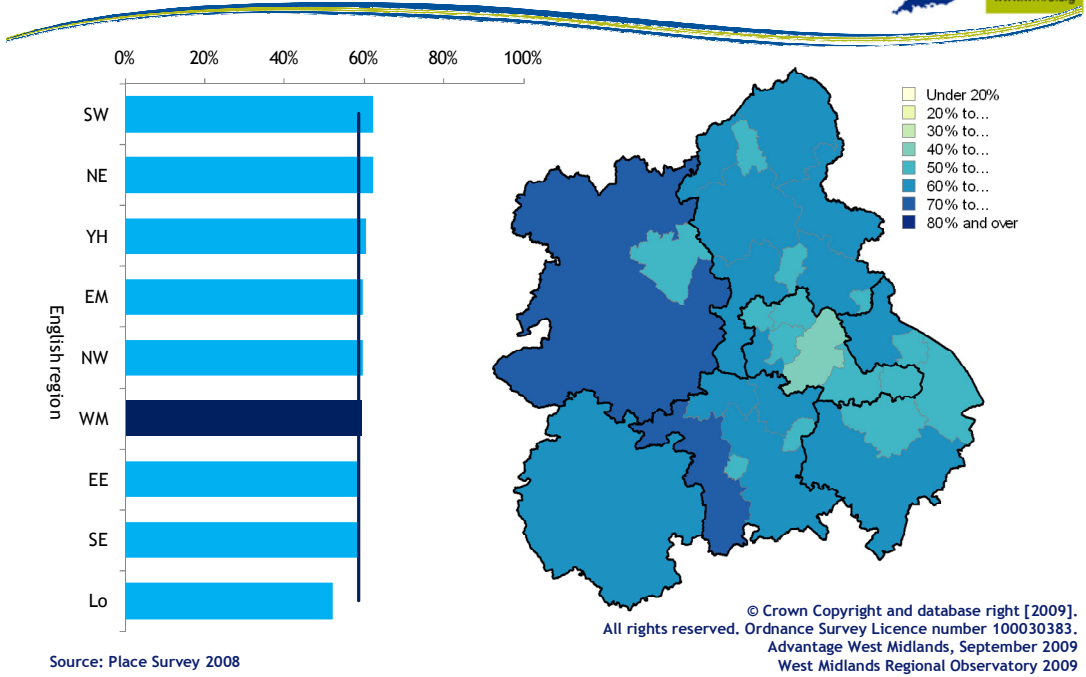


Source: Place Survey 2008

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Advantage West Midlands, September 2009
West Midlands Regional Observatory 2009



Proportion of residents who feel that they belong to their immediate neighborhoods



WORKSHOP MATERIALS, DISCUSSION POINTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WORKSHOP ONE – Building inter community contact **Facilitated by Marcia Lewinson, Chief Executive, WAITS**

Background context supplied in advance of workshop one

Policy Context

Community cohesion is a contested term that has taken on high importance in UK policy agendas in response to concerns about segregation, tension and more recently extremism. The concept of cohesion goes beyond previous policies on equality, discrimination and social inclusion to include the proactive development of positive community relations. It builds on shared belonging, goals and futures in communities but also requires a basis of equality and respect for both rights and duties.

The Commission for Integration and Cohesion (COIC) put forward a new definition of cohesion and integration: ‘Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together.’ A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

Our vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on three foundations:

- People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities
- People knowing their rights and responsibilities
- People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly

And three key ways of living together:

- A shared future vision and sense of belonging
- A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
- Strong & positive relationships between people from different backgrounds’

New Migration and Cohesion

The UK has been home to people from refugee and migrant backgrounds for many years and in this time they have made important contributions to the social, cultural and economic life of the country. However, the opening up of the UK labour market to citizens of new EU member states in 2004 initiated the largest rate of migration in British history and has brought significant challenges with it. This has occurred within the global context of increased numbers, fluidity and multi-directionality of migration.

The unprecedented scale and pace of recent migration together with the diverse range of countries, cultures and languages and the high population churn, are adding new dimensions to local communities across the UK, both those with existing multicultural populations and those new to migration. Some concerns have been expressed about the cohesion impacts of this new migration, but it can also be seen that new arrivals often settle in areas with existing issues and deprivation. They can be blamed for these issues instead of recognised for their contribution to cohesion and may face hostility based on difference, competition for resources and perceived preferential treatment.

Key Issues and Impacts

Cohesion strategies, policies and guidance have rapidly developed within both Central and Local Government but have so far tended to focus on desired outcomes and indicators rather than developing and evaluating cohesion practice. This is reflected in Government monitoring of cohesion that is mainly policy-driven and concerned with public opinion at both national and local levels i.e. Citizenship Surveys. Much of the evidence about the impact of migration on cohesion is still anecdotal and more research into the interaction of refugees and migrants with other communities locally is required.

All new arrivals can face difficulties settling into their new community and in accessing services due to language and cultural barriers, lack of understanding of systems and entitlements and prejudice and discrimination. They experience a limited 'sense of belonging' particularly at a neighbourhood level (Markova & Black, 2007). It can be difficult for them to build relationships and links locally when they may need to move frequently, have no fixed abode, work long hours or are uncertain about their status. Those who are not allowed or able to work and have No Recourse to Public Funding face additional problems due to poverty, homelessness and vulnerability to exploitation. A lack of accurate data on populations of new arrivals further exacerbates these issues.

Regional Responses

Most localities in the West Midlands have chosen to include cohesion indicators in their Local Area Agreements but take up of the two national indicators with a focus on migration and language or housing has been very low. The cohesion indicators are based on the subjective measure of those agreeing that local people get on well together and do not indicate levels of hate crime, prejudice, community tension or negative media coverage locally. A case study of community relations in a typical urban multicultural area in the West Midlands (Daley, 2007) found that perceptions of cohesion differed significantly from the actual levels that negative attitudes, hidden tensions and lack of meaningful relationships across difference suggested for the area.

Recommendations

Government guidance has identified the need for raising public awareness, improving positive media coverage, encouraging interaction and dialogue between different groups and collating and communicating accurate information about newcomers. Local and regional mechanisms are also required for including migrant concerns and needs into local community cohesion and community safety strategies, equality schemes and Area Agreements. New migrants need to be an integral part of cohesion initiatives in the Region and included together with established communities and other ethnic minorities.

Feedback from Workshop one

Key Points:

Understanding 'Community'

- The definition of 'community' is too simple, too crude. Racial boundaries are complex, not simple, and becoming more complex e.g. mixed heritage. We are

all members of several communities, e.g. area, work, school, family, communities of interest. Policies and funding streams still use simple tick boxes to manage and measure activity, and third sector organisations are often funded for their work with specific minority communities which can be divisive

- There is therefore a need to develop our definition and understanding of “the local community”, and understand how to engage with the whole community, and tackle cultural mindsets. The question of our national identity also requires discussion
- Society has changed significantly since the current structures of government were established, the question was asked whether they are fit for purpose or whether there is a need to re-engineer the structures to provide a more suitable form of decision making and democracy

Cohesion

- The experience across the region is that there is tolerance, but no real cohesion, and interventions tend to be temporary and not sustainable. The point was made that our agencies need the ability to effectively challenge discrimination and encourage people to let their barriers down. We need to develop our own understanding so that we can inform the community more effectively
- Our ICT systems and monitoring frameworks appear to further divide and silo our community, and require us to only work with certain target groups
- There are major concerns that the recession and cuts in LA budgets will have an adverse affect on community cohesion

What could ‘we’ do locally/regionally?

Community Cohesion

- Community cohesion must stay as a high priority on agenda through coming cut backs and the Third sector should not be ignored but fully engaged with the public sector to build community cohesion across communities. Events and celebrations need to be developed to support this process
- It is difficult to make the change at grass roots, we need to use forums like this to develop a collective voice for change
- We need more clarity on who is governing the cohesion agenda: There appears to be too many organisations approaching the issues in an uninformed and incoherent manor
- Schools can play a key role in understanding diversity and respecting our wider community
- We need to balance the needs across the whole community and ensure that we

do not disenfranchise the white community. Frontline staff and services need to 'know' the communities that we work in

- The third sector has passion, and appears to be proactive. Therefore there is a need to define Local Area Agreements more collaboratively and meaningfully to include the third sector and community interests. The third sector needs to gather the evidence and argue the case, so that those that control the process invite the sector to play a full role including bringing minority communities together however service provision and resources need to be more issue based
- In order to prevent parallel living we need to highlight the similarities between the host and minority communities and also we need to actively challenge policies that are not effective/making a difference and we need to effectively challenge media bias, particularly towards GRT communities
- It was suggested that we need to by-pass the media and use our own communications machinery to sing our own praises. There is a lot of good practice and wonderful contributions by local people. We also need to make use of events where communities come together as well as agree common values

Training

- Proactive interventions could be developed to support community members to represent their communities, including delivering training and meeting their support needs
- More work is needed to develop support services tailored to specific community needs rather than a one size fits all approach. Training community members to deliver these services was also suggested

Recommendations and messages to policy makers

Community Cohesion

- Use the Comprehensive Area Assessment process to scrutinise Third Sector and community engagement and strategic contribution to community cohesion. Outcomes need to be evidence based and avoid short term quick fix approaches
- We need to focus on what we have in common rather than our differences, use the framework of Human Rights, promote positive messages, and bring people together from across communities, listening to their perceptions as a starting point. Identify common values that can be agreed and owned across communities
- The government (Policy Makers) need to have a clear vision/picture of multicultural Britain. They need to establish and promote positive images in the media

- We need to get better in the use of resources in tackling cohesion; the Third sector's role is often ad hoc and inadequately resourced. What is required is long term funding arrangements which build on existing positive relationships and partnerships and that have clear evidence based outcomes
- The natural and built environment needs to become more inclusive, as the increase in homes and transport is inadvertently dividing communities

Policy Suggestions

- Do not dump newly arrived communities into deprived areas
- Simplify the systems and funding and make the process to access services more transparent, as well as the process for making decisions
- There is a need for the national government and policy makers to recognise that short term, knee jerk, or tokenistic project interventions do not provide a sustainable solution in the long term

WORKSHOP TWO – Economic downturn and hate crime

Facilitated by Alison Quigley, Hate Crime Reduction Officer, Coventry City Council

Background context supplied in advance of workshop two

The latest British Crime Survey (BCS) estimates that there were around 207,000 racially motivated incidents in 2007/8. This compares with a total of 184,000 incidents reported by the 2006/07 BCS.

However, as with most crime, the majority of racial incidents are not reported to the police. During 2007/08, 57,055 racist incidents were recorded by the police, a decrease of 7% over 2006/07. There were 38,327 racially or religiously aggravated offences in 2007/08, a 10% decrease from the previous year (42,554 in 2006/07). Two thirds (66%) of these were offences of harassment. The clear-up rate for racially or religiously aggravated offences has improved slightly over the last four years (39% in 2007/08, compared to 38% in both 2005/6 and 2006/7 and 37% in 2004/05).

Definitions of Racist Incidents and Racially or Religiously Aggravated Offences

All police forces have collected information on racist incidents from 1986 on the basis of a common definition. This definition was changed in 1999 when the police adopted the proposed definition from the report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry:

A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person (Macpherson 1999)

It should be noted that incidents included here are wider than the normal definition of a crime in published crime statistics and include general threatening behaviour. Sections 28 to 32 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced into law the concept of specific racially aggravated offences. The provisions came into effect on 30 September 1998. They were further extended to include religiously aggravated offences by section 39 of the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, with effect from 14 December 2001. An offence may be defined as racially or religiously aggravated if at the time of committing the offence, or immediately before or after doing so, the offender demonstrates towards the victim of the offence hostility based on the victim's membership (or presumed membership) of a racial or religious group; or the offence is motivated (wholly or partly) by hostility towards members of a racial or religious group based on their membership of that group.

The overall number of racist incidents recorded by the police in England and Wales decreased by 6.9% from a peak of 61,262 in 2006/07 to 57,055 (Table 3.1). Around two-fifths of forces registered an increase in the number of incidents. Three police force areas registered increases in racist incidents greater than 25% (Derbyshire, City of London and Suffolk), while four police force areas registered a decrease greater than 25% (Northamptonshire, North Yorkshire, Wiltshire and Gwent).

Research from across the UK indicates that the majority of racist incidents recorded are either damage to property or verbal harassment (Maynard and Read, 1997; Clark and Moody, 2002; Jarman, 2002). Section 95 13

The BCS records people's experiences and perceptions of crime including whether

victims of crime perceived the incident to be racially motivated. The number of racially motivated incidents was estimated at around 207,000 incidents based on the 2007/08 BCS. This compares with previous estimates of 184,000 incidents (2006/07 BCS), 139,000 incidents (2005/06 BCS) and 179,000 incidents (2004/05 BCS, Jansson et al., 2007).

Based on the 2007/08 BCS, less than 1% of the population of England and Wales had experienced one or more racially motivated crimes in the last 12 months. Less than 1% of the White population had been victims of racially motivated crimes compared with 2% of people from Asian, Black and Chinese and Other ethnic backgrounds, and 3% among people from Mixed ethnic backgrounds. People in the Mixed, Asian, Black and Chinese and other groups had a higher risk of being a victim of racially motivated crimes than White people. However, differences in risk of being a victim of racially motivated crime between BME groups were not statistically significant.³

Based on previous research about how victims perceived these crimes, there were clear differences between the White and BME populations in terms of the proportion of crimes that were thought to have been racially motivated, with a larger proportion of people from BME groups perceiving incidents as having been racially motivated compared with people from White backgrounds. Of all BCS crimes where the victim was White 1% were thought to be racially motivated, whereas the comparable figure was 10% for BCS crimes where the victim was from a BME group (2006/07 BCS, Jansson et al., 2007).

In England and Wales, the police recorded 38,327 racially or religiously aggravated offences in 2007/08. This represents a 10% decrease from the previous year (42,554 in 2006/07). It is not clear why this change has occurred. Of the total, 66% were harassment, 12% less serious wounding, 10% criminal damage, and 11% common assault⁴. This is a similar pattern to previous years. The numbers of all types of racially or religiously aggravated offences decreased apart from common assault which increased slightly.

Police forces varied greatly in the number and type of offences recorded. More than 80% of all forces registered a decrease in the number of racially or religiously aggravated offences.

When compared with the total number of similar non-racially or religiously aggravated offences, 11% of harassment offences were recorded as racially or religiously aggravated, 2% of common assaults, 1% of less serious wounding, and less than one per cent of criminal damage. These proportions were very similar to those recorded for the previous year.

Detected crimes are those that have been 'cleared up' by the police, in accordance with the 'Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime'. The clear up rate is the total number of detections recorded in a given year as a percentage of the total number of crimes in the same period.

In 2007/08, 39% of racially or religiously aggravated offences were cleared up, compared to 29% of equivalent non-racially or religiously aggravated offences. Overall the clear up rate for racially or religiously aggravated offences increased by one percentage point between 2006/07 (38%) and 2007/08 (39%).

As with the previous year, only criminal damage had a clear up rate which was greater

for racially or religiously aggravated offences than non-aggravated ones (21% compared to 14%). For harassment and less serious wounding the clear up rate was lower for racially or religiously aggravated offences than for equivalent non- racially or religiously aggravated offences – again a similar pattern to 2006/07. In particular, the clear up rate for racially or religiously aggravated harassment was 42% compared to 68% for its non-aggravated equivalent, and for less serious wounding it was 39% compared to 40%. For common assault the clear up rate was the same for both offences at 37%.

This publication is available on the Ministry of Justice website:
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/statistics.htm>

Feedback from Workshop two

Key Points:

- There was consensus that hate crime is grossly under-reported, one estimate was that only one in ten crimes are reported
- People’s lack of awareness of the subject, the difficulty of engaging them in discussions, their lack of confidence around the subject matter and how the subject is portrayed in the media were all identified as issues
- The issue of representation was also considered; it was felt that narrow self-interest can get in the way of a broad collective representative being identified. It was suggested that it would be helpful to move beyond labels and recognise our common humanity. We also need to recognise that those who come forward from the community are not necessarily able to act on behalf of all and may have a narrow personal agenda
- The economic downturn was felt to be having a negative effect on hate crime generally with groups looking to blame others for their insecurity or difficulties as highlighted by Jude Hawes in her keynote speech
- It was noted that the structures that govern us were created a long time ago when society was very different. The question was posed, are they fit for purpose or do they require an overhaul

What could ‘we’ do locally/regionally?

Reporting

- Hate crime is on the increase but is significantly under-reported. To address this we need to encourage third party reporting, open reporting centres which are community friendly, and provide better training to the professionals involved

Young People

- It was felt that working in Schools was a key imperative with the suggestion that extra capacity to deliver this work could be accessed by training willing parents as well as bringing in specialists
- Work with young people who are not in the school system was discussed and engaging with the Young Offenders professionals was suggested as a key area of activity

Recommendations and messages to policy makers

Training

- A significant programme of awareness and training is urgently needed for police, CPS, local authorities, public agencies as well as community leaders. This needs to have the outcome that participants build confidence and clarity to intervene and comment on unacceptable behaviour
- We need to recognise that the hard to reach are not in the usual establishments and we need to design specific interventions to address this
- Government, public agencies and frontline workers need support and training to play a positive role in raising awareness and be confident to confront unacceptable behaviour
- If we want people to report racial hate crime then professionals involved must be very well trained. And we need to make sure that the training is delivered in creative ways to build confidence

Partnership work

- We require longer term sensible funding commitments that support and build on existing partnerships and relationships and that have clear evidence based outcomes
- The importance was stressed of working with perpetrators and victims, use restorative justice initiatives, and targeted interventions
- Policy makers need to consider whether that the prevention of radical extremism agenda should extend beyond Muslims to include some white working class areas

Media

- There is a need to engage with the media to develop a working relationship that will provide a counterbalance to extreme views and mis-information
- Influencing the media and politicians is key, as well as getting messages directly

to the general public. The suggestion was made we need to adopt a campaigning style, and be more challenging



WORKSHOP THREE – Awareness raising and myth raising

Facilitated by David Barnes - Director, WMSMP, and Claire Daley - Policy Officer, WMSMP

Background context supplied in advance of workshop three

Background information:

New challenges both for policy and practice are linked to new migration and the related increased mix of ethnicity, language and background ('super-diversity'), changes in existing BME communities and in the areas experiencing new communities.

In the West Midlands, areas of asylum seeker dispersal and new migrant settlement are also often those areas facing cohesion challenges relating to deprivation and social exclusion such as the Housing Market and Neighbourhood Renewal Areas in Birmingham, the Black Country, Coventry and Stoke-on-Trent and rural areas new to migrants as highlighted in the Commission for Integration and Cohesion's area typology.

Hostility and discrimination towards new arrivals can arise in some of these areas focused on difference, competition for services and resources and perceived preferential treatment. There is a need to tackle deprivation, inequalities and exclusion as well as to raise awareness and create opportunities for mixing across difference. Work targeted at both new migrants and established communities is required together with clear communications, consultation and transparency on local policy and resource allocation.

The Commission for Integration and Cohesion (2008) proposed that local public agencies respond to local resource competition by:

- Addressing issues experienced by both majority and minority communities
- Developing a communications strategy that includes all residents (e.g. communicating & preparing existing communities & services for new arrivals)
- Ensuring local media understand their responsibilities in building integration and cohesion
- Proactively tackling myths and misinformation in communities (this includes Local Authorities actively working with media to rebut myths)
- Ensuring effective scrutiny and strong local data and intelligence

There is an urgent need for a programme of proactive awareness-raising work with established communities in areas of new migration to help people from a diversity of backgrounds come to terms with new population change and its impacts. Awareness-raising is an important first step in tackling the negative attitudes and misconceptions that inhibit the development of interactions and connections between people from different backgrounds. Building awareness and understanding of the diversity and experiences of new arrivals living in a local area can help established communities to recognise the valuable contributions they make and to work together with new communities in addressing shared issues and goals for their area.

Regional Work

The West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership, the lead regional policy forum on

refugee, asylum and new migrant issues, co-ordinates activities regarding the dispersal, accommodation and support of asylum seekers and the integration and social inclusion of refugees and new migrants by effective multi-agency working across the region.

The Community Cohesion Regional Implementation Group (RIG) was established by WMSMP in September 2006 to take forward actions in relation to cohesion and new arrivals. The RIG's action plan includes a range of cohesion activities: myth-busting, inter-group contact, community safety, participation and regional co-ordination.

A key achievement of the Cohesion RIG has been the development and online publication of *'Where Our Journeys Meet'*, a regional resource for raising awareness on refugee, asylum and migrant issues. This resource was first envisaged to address the identified need for accurate, up-to-date and consistent myth-busting information on refugee and migrant issues for use across the region. However, as information and material were collated, developed and piloted, it became apparent that activities raising cultural awareness and challenging racism and prejudice were also required. The resource was therefore developed into a more comprehensive awareness-raising pack.

The training course *'Understanding and Responding to the Asylum, Refugee and Migration Experience'* has been developed using material from this resource and has been delivered by members of the Cohesion RIG across the Region as part of the RegenWM and WMLGA training programmes and in-house on request by agencies.

Considerable positive feedback has been received from public agencies about the usefulness of the resource and training for building understanding about the asylum process and the experiences of people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. It has also proved valuable and effective in raising the awareness of local communities, faith and ethnic groups and individuals and in building their capacity to tackle tensions, prejudice and racism and to increase understanding of diversity.

A Regional Media and Communications strategy for working with the media on refugee and migrants issues has also been developed by partners in the West Midlands. Contacts have been developed with media agencies and both reactive and proactive work undertaken to improve the balance and accuracy of reporting on refugee and migrant issues in the West Midlands. Refugee Week has been a key focus for developing public awareness about the contributions and experiences of refugees and providing opportunities for building contact between refugee & established communities.

Feedback from workshop three

Key Points

Focus from previous workshop: Commonalities: Bringing people together: Media: Education

Communication

- There is a lack of communication and respect for new and established communities and the political climate means that there is no political support for

migrants and their rights. There often appears to be stereotypes and labeling

- There is a lot of good practice at a local level but it does not get highlighted, celebrated and disseminated
- In working with this subject, perceptions are key, it is necessary to do a lot of listening, sharing stories, and moving step by step with sensitivity
- The importance of schools was stressed, and the suggestion was made that adults need to be more involved in schools and educated in culture and racism as well as bringing communities into schools

Myth-busting

- The economic downturn is an issue creating greater tension and stress and highlighting the lack of trust, fear of change and fear of difference. Compassionate acceptance is required. Myth busting around events like 'remembrance day' is necessary. We should look at the correct contributions that minority communities make to the economy
- The group discussed negative national media images, which influence and play on fears and can also lead to 'acceptable racism'. They felt that the media does no favours to community cohesion. The emphasis has mainly been on the Muslim community.
- There are issues to do with parenting and disadvantage which are pinned onto BME, however this is an issue affecting all communities

What could 'we' do locally/regionally?

- Citizens should be encouraged to go to different places of worship, with the view to understand difference and diversity. Another suggestion was to encourage grassroots settings (like faith settings) to be more welcoming and child friendly. Also we need to encourage religious festivals and get behind them
- Local community spirit should be harnessed, by encouraging communities to get together. For example, coffee mornings in community and church halls
- Personal action and responsibility was seen as key. We all need to take personal responsibility to challenge myths and bias in our work settings. We need to change ourselves and learn how to embrace difference. We also need to seek to influence councilors and MPs
- We should challenge the media directly using the internet and 'face book' to counter attack negative media and we should complain to OFCOM. Target high profiled media celebrities to challenge myth and stereotypes in the media. Keep the dialogue going

Recommendations and messages to policy makers

Community Cohesion and Good Communication

- Be proactive, get out the messages, which need to be wider than individual equality strands, and focus on similarities/commonalities and services. These messages need to get to the general public rather than to the converted; they need to address tensions and use of terminology e.g. reference to equalities rather than different strands/human rights. The messages need to be consistent
- Bring people together across differences and beyond cultural stereotypes. Focus on what links us as human beings and establish shared values
- Get to know local communities and their needs, recognise existing diversity and the multi-layered nature of some individuals circumstances, make sure awareness raising is two way and provide the opportunity to meet across differences and bringing people together Use events like this to bring people together
- There should be more emphasis on celebrating good practice and projects across the region, including community events
- The role that schools and education generally can play to support awareness and initiate change was highlighted. We also need to engage parents in this process as both advocates and also to learn

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q: A participant asked Jude to describe in more detail some of the work they have been doing with schools. **A:** Jude explained that they start with providing support to new arrivals to help them access school including appeals and ongoing support needs; next they have undertaken myth busting work using quiz, fun, support pupils to listen to the new arrival's story as refugees etc and letting other pupils ask questions; finally to put on events with teachers to raise awareness and develop confidence. Note Community Cohesion is now part of the Ofsted inspection programme

Q: A participant made the point that the "Preventing Extremism" agenda is targeting Muslims and yet there are other communities where this work is an issue with particular reference to the BNP. **A:** Sharron Palmer responded that in her understanding the pilot phase is now complete and the "Connected Communities" funding that is now coming is a wider programme with 20 areas in the West Midlands.

Q: The question was asked whether panel members felt the current structures were fit for purpose. Responses included 1) LSP's are a good idea however there are still power structures being exercised behind the scenes 2) current structures do not demand much personal responsibility and many people are unrepresented. We need a mechanism where the means deliver the objective. LSP's may be able to be made to work, however the model of community organising is one that has potential 3) nothing will change until those in power understand better how the community and third sector work and respond differently 4) current structures divorce the leaders from their constituency. Good leadership needs to maintain the contact with their constituency and be grown from the bottom up

Q: How are national grants allocated, and how well does the West Midlands perform? **A:** It is not usually divided equally, and that the West Midlands often receives a percentage based on population

Q: Given that GOWM represents the acceptable face of government in the West Midlands, how could they get information about each of the LSP's, as they seemed to have very variable approaches to the issues being discussed? **A:** Each directorate in GOWM takes responsibility for a range of the 33 LAA's across the region

Appendix 1

OPEN Project Case Study

Seminar: Ethnic Minorities and Immigrants – actions to promote tolerance and respect

Case Study Title: Welcome to Birmingham

Organisation

West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership

The partners involved are [Digital Birmingham](#), [West Midlands Strategic Migration West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership](#), [Birmingham City Council](#), [Be Birmingham](#), [Wardlow Rd Centre](#), [Refugee Council](#), [iCentrum](#), [Projects in Motion](#) and [Birmingham Health and Well-being Partnership](#). Partnership, [Birmingham City Council](#), [Be Birmingham](#), [Wardlow Rd Centre](#), [Refugee Council](#), [iCentrum](#), [Projects in Motion](#) and [Birmingham Health and Well-being Partnership](#).

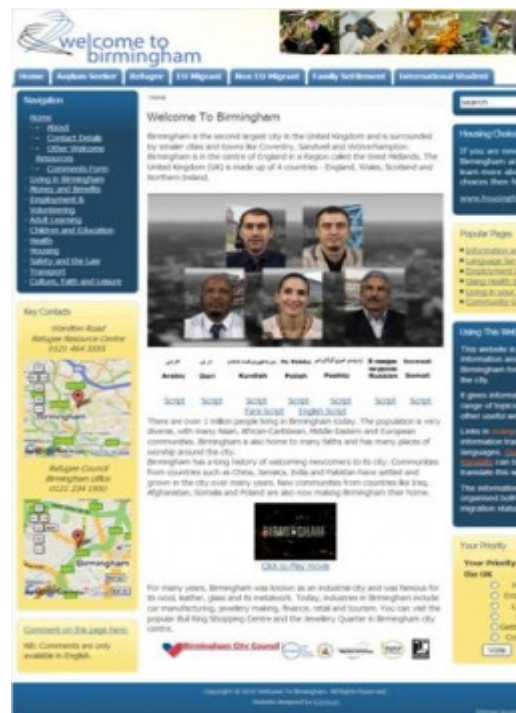
The challenges

Summary

'Welcome to Birmingham' is a local website created for new arrivals which aims to bring together information in one place, in a user friendly, up-to-date and accurate format. The website provides over 100 pages of orientation information on support, services and organisations targeted to new arrivals in the city and those who work with them.

It can be navigated by migration status or by subject area and aims to present information in a clear, accessible and plain English format with links to related websites for further information or support.

'Talking head' videos and scripts have been developed on the home page in seven different refugee and migrant languages, to provide a welcome to new arrivals to Birmingham by their own community and to signpost them to interpreting services. Easily-recognisable images and icons are provided to aid navigation around the website. Maps to key agencies are also found on the home page.



- Creating a website which would be informative and easy to use and understand for all new arrivals.
- Finding match funding for collecting and compiling the information for the website. As funding was only short term, long term marketing suffered, which meant the website received a low number of hits after the first wave.
- Some users felt that the website was text heavy, the information needed simplifying and navigation should be easier.
- Partnership working was very beneficial, however it the project moved more slowly than expected, as there were more people to co-ordinate.

The solutions

- Funding for project management and web design was made available through Digital Birmingham's involvement in the national DC10 Plus programme.
- Funding from Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Partnership was received for the adaptation, development and testing of information for the website, which was undertaken by West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (WMSMP).
- A steering group of key partners was set up to oversee the project development, implementation and promotion.
- User testing and partner consultation was built into project development and delivery. A focus group of local refugees and migrants was used to consult on preferred website design, navigation and content and then to test the draft website and videos before launching.
- Specialist agencies were asked to amend website sections as they were drafted and there was a consultation process on the draft web content which involved a range of different sectors and agencies in the Region.
- Website analytics have been set up to give monthly reports on website use and significant positive qualitative feedback has been received from partner organisations using the site and from other localities interested in setting up their own sites using same model.
- Information on the website is updated regularly both in response to feedback and amendment from stakeholders and also proactively to ensure the information reflects accurately current migration policy and practice.
- The project made use of the national IDeA toolkit on integration information, ensuring it built on existing welcome websites and resources and made links with the new national migrant website developed by the East of England.

The WMSMP is in the process of creating a new website called "Welcome to the West Midlands". More time and resource has been available to tackle some of the challenges faced by the "Welcome to Birmingham" website, including marketing, simplification of information and improved navigation.

The results

The project has been successful in improving equality of access to information for the diversity of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants living in Birmingham.

The website includes information on the following topics: [Living in Birmingham, Money and Benefits, Employment and Volunteering, Adult Learning, Children and Education, Health, Housing, Safety and the Law, Transport](#) and [Culture, Faith and Leisure](#).

The 'Welcome to Birmingham' website has also been recognised as good practice at a national level by National migration groups and partnerships and at a European level on the new European website on integration. The project was Highly Commended at RegenWM's Prizes 2009.

Other localities outside Birmingham are using information from the website and are developing their own locally specific websites for new arrivals. WMSMP has recently brought interested localities together into a new Regional Partnership which has been successful in securing funding for a Regional Welcome Online Hub based on the 'Welcome to Birmingham' model.



Example pages:

Culture, Faith and Leisure

Housing

Learning points

- User-testing of the information, designs, topics and videos helped to find language errors and ensured that the website was targeted appropriately to new arrivals and their needs.
- The use of plain English, popular images and icons, and videos and text in different languages, particularly helped new arrivals with limited English and understanding of the UK system to access the website.
- Having several partnerships greatly increased the amount of information available (e.g. from CAB and the Refugee Council) as well as specialist knowledge about migration (e.g. West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership) and technical expertise for creating the website (Digital Birmingham).

Comment

This easy to use, informative website is available to all new arrivals to Birmingham and can be viewed in a variety of languages so it is accessible to those who speak Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish, Polish, Pushto, Russian, Somali and English. It is a practical, positive contribution to good relations between communities.

We particularly like way the website has been tested with users and improvements have been incorporated throughout. In addition, lessons learnt have been shared with localities, giving them a headstart on their own initiatives. Finally, success can also be measured in terms of being able to develop the new 'Welcome to the West Midlands' website.

Contact

For more information please go to the [Welcome To Birmingham](#) website or email [Clare Daley](#). Alternatively you can phone 0121 678 1078.

Appendix 2

OPEN Project Case Study

Seminar: Ethnic Minorities and Immigrants – actions to promote tolerance and respect

Case Study Title: Time to Play

Organisation

Community Integration Partnership (CIP)

Summary

Time to Play is a project designed to enhance play opportunities and activities for newly arrived and host communities in targeted areas of Birmingham.

The project had a vision for more and improved play provision for isolated refugee children. Bringing refugee and host community children together in a safe environment to play and learn together was designed to build positive relationships between people from different communities, religious and ethnic backgrounds.

The challenges

- Create opportunities for play between children of newly arrived backgrounds and 'host' community children to encourage positive experiences between these two groups and their parents.
- Initial engagement from families from newly arrived communities and ongoing participation in the sessions.
- Encouraging children to play with other children, which was uncommon for children that did not attend very often.

The solutions

Initial engagement and participation of newly arrived families was achieved through close partnership working with support workers and childrens centres, who signposted and encouraged families to attend.





Parents were encouraged to contribute to the planning of the following sessions and share play methods used within their countries, incorporating the interests of both child and parent. This led to more frequent attendance and helped children to play with other children.

Sessions were advertised in partner agencies newsletters, in health centres, schools, places of worship and libraries to increase maximum exposure.

Work with housing providers identified a significant need for play provision in hostels. 'Time to Play' delivered an additional session within a hostel.

Develop innovative and culturally diverse (including UK culture) play activities at outreach settings and within the CIP nursery in Birmingham.

Promote the participation of parents/carers of newly arrived children in play opportunities to enhance their skills, knowledge and confidence in encouraging play.



Develop skills and knowledge of accepted UK theory of play and its practical application amongst women from newly arrived communities who are volunteering in the nursery, to build their confidence in bringing cultural play into their planning of activities and build the skills of future bi-lingual childcare practitioners

Produce and disseminate 'best practice tip sheets' for practitioners working with children from diverse backgrounds.

Run child-led play activities designed to meet the needs of children affected by war and torture.



Share best practice with other groups supporting refugee children by inviting practitioners into their settings to view how they deliver cross-cultural play activities. The practitioners participated in parent led sessions where parents use play activities used in their home countries.



Hold a winter festival each year to disseminate the learning of the project to other professionals, as well as providing them with an opportunity to participate in cross-cultural play sessions and have an opportunity to see the different cultural resources used.

The results

- Engaged over 330 children over the two years.
- Recruited and supported over 20 volunteers from newly arrived communities in gaining an accredited childcare or play qualification. A number of the volunteers on the 'Time to Play' Project went on to find employment within nursery settings, having completed their NVQs. The remainder of the volunteers are currently undergoing NVQ training, and participating in other training sessions such as first aid and health and safety training to improve their prospects of employment.
- Created new play opportunities for newly arrived communities.
- Disseminated the learning gained through the project to other professionals.

Learning points

- Recognising the experiences and skills of some people from newly arrived communities, in guiding projects and services that meet the needs of clients who may not have engaged previously.
- Maintaining good communication networks and setting up effective referral routes with partner agencies played a key part in recruiting participants on to the project.
- The 'Time to Play' project worked closely with housing providers delivering NASS housing to ensure very newly arrived families were made aware of the sessions and encourage to take part.

Comment

This project is promoting tolerance and respect towards ethnic minorities and immigrants by increasing the opportunities for refugee and host community children to play together and encouraging parent participation so that activities are cross-cultural. While the project methodology is not new, this type of scheme makes a valuable contribution to

community life and the well being of young people. The learning about different types of play is an innovative feature and embeds valuable learning for all involved. The sharing with other professionals is also a strength.

Contact

For more information please go to the CIP [website](#) or email info@cip-uk.org.uk. Alternatively you can phone 0121 454 9000.