

Consultation Submission Form

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion would like to ask seven key questions to national bodies, local bodies and individuals about what practical measures we can take to improve cohesion and reduce tensions in local communities. You may wish to answer all the questions or just those you feel most relevant to you. We also welcome written submissions and examples of local good practice.

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Are your comments on the questions for national bodies, local bodies or individuals?	Local bodies

Introduction -

The Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP) is a partnership of many organisations including the public, statutory, voluntary, community and business sector.

In producing this response on behalf of the HSP, representatives came together and engaged in frank debate as to their understanding and responses to the seven questions posed by the Commission. In addition, responses were also invited in writing from those who were unable to attend the consultation. As can be expected, consensus was not achieved on all points and people's understanding and interpretations varied. This final response captures the main points raised and attempts to represent all the views, but it does not represent a comprehensive summary of actions and initiatives in Harrow. Local organisations and individuals have also been encouraged to respond directly to the Commission.

Key Question 1 -

What does 'cohesion' mean to you? What does 'integration' mean to you? What might a community, which is both integrated and cohesive, look like?

What does 'cohesion' mean to you?

There are many views about what 'cohesion' means. To many 'cohesion' means tolerance (inter-community) and understanding so that there is mutual respect, support and togetherness to enable harmonious co-existence.

There is considerable debate about the word 'tolerance' and whether it is negative to simply be tolerated, or positive to be tolerated within a free society and allowed to be an individual or a member of a particular group which is respected and able to co-exist.

'Cohesion' means bringing people together to do things without needing to divide into groups (on the grounds of culture, religion, gender, age *etc*), and people being able to relate to each other as individuals rather than which group they come from. Cohesive communities are diverse, progressive and enriched through varied backgrounds and cultures.

What does 'integration' mean to you?

'Integration' does not equate to 'assimilation', or indeed the American idea of the 'melting pot'.

'Integration' is the process where people from diverse backgrounds work or come together in a society where people have a sense of belonging and being a part of the host community (although there was some discussion around what it meant to be the host community. At what point does one belong to or become part of the host community?). 'Integration' also means having positive, open and challenging interactions and developing a common purpose for one's local community, whilst retaining one's own identity. It is important that integration takes place on a cohesive basis *i.e.* without needing to divide into sub-groups based on divisional commonalities.

When discussing race and colour within the context of integration some communities are visible whilst others 'blend-in'.

The achievement of integration should also mean having developed a sense of cultural literacy.

It was agreed that language is an important tool to help one integrate into a community -in respect of schooling, employment and accessing services. However, does everyone need to be able to speak the host language to be integrated? Language must not be equated to 'belonging'.

What might a community, which is both integrated and cohesive, look like?

In an integrated and cohesive society we would all be local citizens who decide collectively how we share our resources. People would live happily with their neighbours no matter what background they came from. Institutions (statutory and voluntary) would be 'open and transparent', and encourage people to get involved and take part. They would also reflect the community and would work together to share and solve problems.

Economic inequality and issues around poverty, job opportunities and housing, must be considered in an integrated and cohesive community. Cohesion is harder to achieve where relative inequalities exist.

We should all be able to identify ourselves as English if we choose to and that there should be no racial demarcation. However, some other people felt that their 'original' identity is part of who they are and they would not feel comfortable being simply referred to as English.

The conflicts of the global community and their impact in Britain cannot and should not be ignored.

A fully cohesive and integrated community, in a scientific or historical sense, is not a realistic proposition, as it would mean that groups within a community would be merging their reason for being a 'group' together with all others and this is not how people behave. Rather the model would be for one multi-faceted community where anyone can feel comfortable joining in anything that is done in any other part of the community.

Key Question 2 -

What, if any, are the tensions between different groups in your local area? What do you think tends to cause these and what are your thoughts about how to resolve them? What role can local leaders play in tackling them? What are the organisations in your community, which would help when an incident is leading to tensions or when conflict resolution is needed?

There are many causes of tension between different groups. It is acknowledged that economic factors play a major role.

The nature of communities means that people compare themselves with each other and seek out similarities and differences, and then respond to the things they identify with. Some people respond in a territorial manner. Tensions are caused by people's responses rather than the thing they feel tense about. For

example, some people may feel there is a tension between themselves and new arrivals in the country who they may perceive as taking 'their' jobs and housing opportunities. How people respond to such issues may be by putting these differences to one side or they may seek to expose the differences and create a hostile debate.

Tensions can be created by many things including (but not exclusively) the following:

Race, culture, religion, ability/disability, sexual orientation, gender, age, anti-social behaviour, intimidating behaviour, fear of crime/crime.

Tensions are also created when there is power and control and people feel that the balance in the power and control may shift. Additionally, tension is created where people do not feel that they are part of the 'system' and do not feel that they have the opportunity to express their views, be heard or able to influence.

Realistically it is accepted that not all tensions can be completely resolved. What we can do is to try and achieve better understanding, tolerance and respect. For this we need to have a fair and sensitive system for governance. Organisations need to be proactive at dispelling myths and inaccuracies about perceived inequalities in accessing services, and agencies need to address inequalities and vulnerabilities in a timely manner. Additionally, the role of a responsible media is important – not one which whips up tensions.

In resolving tensions one firstly needs to be honest about acknowledging the tension and have a commitment to addressing these. All parts of the community need to engage with the political process and have a say in how resources are shared.

Where there are breaches, sanctions and enforcement needs to take place visibly and quickly.

Leaders can help tackle and defuse tensions by setting good examples, helping to educate people, and challenging people when they become disrespectful and destructive. We need to invest in developing leaders across all age groups.

Good links between communities have been important contributors to defusing tensions. However, groups need to ensure that they do not become complacent, and that they recognise their own prejudices and share resources. Leaders also need to remember that with power and control comes responsibility to reflect the needs of all their members.

All organisations have a role in promoting cohesiveness and reducing tension. It is expected that larger organisations have a responsibility to show leadership. This would include the Council, the police, the health authority and hospitals, education establishments and large employers. Within this, major agencies need to think carefully about engaging with community leaders who may not have any followers!

Other organisations are set up to specifically reduce tension and encourage cohesion or have an influencing role in the community. Such organisations in the voluntary and community sector include Harrow Council for Racial Equality, Harrow Refugee Forum, Harrow Women's Centre and religious establishments.

The Multi Agency Forum (MAF) on Racial Harassment and the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) and the Harrow Interfaith Council also play key roles.

Key Question 3 -

What activities help bring people together, build friendships and get a better understanding of people from a different background? Where do these activities take place – at school or college, socially, at work or in the neighbourhood? What are the shared spaces in your community where people can come together? What celebrations are there of local traditions in your area?

What activities help bring people together, build friendships and get a better understanding of people from a different background?

Friendships happen between people in different groups or even within groups when people meet. Therefore, the use of all public spaces and venues to facilitate and encourage meetings is very important. Many friendships start in the school playground where children and their parents or carers get to know each other. At their best, faith, support and interest groups can develop friendships and be a support and social structure within the same or similar groups. Universal services aimed at the whole community such as adult learning, clubs, sports events, libraries, educational activities, school fairs, community consultations, community based events and projects can all play a very important part in creating positive interactions between groups.

Events and interaction at a neighbourhood level especially tackling common issues e.g. security and access also bond and develop understanding at a human level.

The one other place you are likely to meet and get to know people from a wide background is at work, but the social experience can be very variable. For Harrow, where there are a lot of small family owned business networks, business advisors and professionals become very important in creating an alternative social life.

For some people the only interaction with other communities is through the services they use and the staff that interact with their lives, and so their view of the host community may only be through people who work in certain roles and treat them as a problem. The media's depiction of stereotypes and personal negative experiences does not always encourage people to want to be involved with other communities.

Interfaith projects/initiatives (eg Harrow's response to Tsunami, Kashmir earthquake) can make a very positive contribution to bringing people together.

Where do these activities take place – at school or college, socially, at work or in the neighbourhood?

Activities take place in a range of private and public venues.

What are the shared spaces in your community where people can come together?

Harrow schools have a rich and broad programme of cultural celebrations, often entwined with the curriculum.

People come together at schools, colleges, libraries, hospital, supermarkets, parks, shops, pubs, clubs, community centres, fairs and faith venues. Also St Anne's and St George's shopping centres in central Harrow are very popular places, and seem to attract a genuinely diverse shopping community.

What celebrations are there of local traditions in your area?

- Pinner Fair: founded by Royal Charter from King Edward III in May 1336 and is usually held on the Wednesday following the final Monday in May. The fair itself is 600 years old: *Pinner Road and surrounding streets*.
- Under One Sky: Harrow's unique cultural festival of dance, music and arts organised by Harrow Council in association with cultural groups, community organisations and artists. The event also hosts a parade drawn from the traditions of carnival and featuring samba bands, dancers, carnival performers, dancers, a Scottish marching band and hundreds of children from schools and playschemes around Harrow: *the event takes place in large open spaces in Harrow ie recreation grounds and attracts over 8000 people in July each year*.
- Remembrance Day Parade: *Procession from Civic Centre to High Road leading to services in Churches throughout Harrow*.
- Navratri: *(Harrow's Gujarati communities celebrate this dance festival for 9 days – largest gathering in London takes place at the Sri Kutch Leva Pavillion, Northolt – 1,000 attendees)*.
- Black History Month (BHM): BHM is an important community event in Harrow, which encourages community groups and voluntary organisations to put on projects and events to promote the history and contributions of the black community. This year's focus was on black scientists and inventors. Events included:
 - a seminar on the history of migration
 - African storytelling
 - talks on discovering Somali history
 - exhibition of African artefacts
 - development of Black History
 - resource packs on Asian Heritage for schools

(Events took place in schools & colleges, community centres, shopping centres and libraries)

- Harrow Refugee Week *(usually takes place mid June)*
- Religious festivals: Christmas lights, Eid - Eid-ul-Adha, Diwali – Festival of Lights, Easter, Chinese New Year
- Roxeth Show : This fun event is put together by a local charity: its focal point is a carnival parade organised by the children, parents, teachers and community groups from South Harrow: This event takes place at Roxeth recreation ground in July.
- St Georges Day celebration.

Key Question 4 -

What schemes in your community build a sense of belonging to your neighbourhood or community? What schemes in your community try to build or teach a set of values or 'ground rules' about how to live together? What schemes to address poverty, crime and anti-social behaviour in your local area have improved how people feel about one another?

What schemes in your community build a sense of belonging to your neighbourhood or community?

Celebrations of local tradition and culture (as in Q3).

Councillors have initiated a local capital programme to improve neighbourhoods by tackling issues that matter at street level. The 'Prosperity Action Team' initiative is in its first year and projects have included the installation of gates, seating in parks etc, and responds to community concerns and requirements.

There are a number of Community Centres based in some of the most deprived wards where bingo, yoga, sports and music events are organised by the community. The venues are also used by external groups. In addition, over forty venues across Harrow deliver adult and community learning programmes some are entirely run by volunteers and supported by council staff.

The Council launched the 'Countries of Origin' project in 2005, which attempts to recognise the importance of the major countries of origin of our local residents, namely: India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, East Africa and the Caribbean. To date the project has focussed largely on India and Africa, with a series of two-way exchange visits providing a transformational learning experience for a range of front line staff.

What schemes in your community try to build or teach a set of values or 'ground rules' about how to live together?

The 'Living in a Learning Community' Programme is a blended learning programme that aims to approach the idea of citizenship and a sense of belonging through a life history approach. The stages in the package include space to reflect on and discuss differences between the UK and the participants their country of origin, and of the significance of cultural differences in self-identity and how 'citizenship' can have a trans-national meaning. The initial ICT skills are delivered in Farsi, Arabic, Gujarati, and Tamil.

Sangat, a community organisation, and the Adult and Community Learning service have developed and deliver a class based training programme to help individuals prepare for the Life in The UK test.

The day-to-day work of many community and voluntary sector groups (without recognition) assist in this process.

What schemes to address poverty, crime and anti-social behaviour in your local area have improved how people feel about one another?

Other schemes to encourage a sense of belonging are neighbourhood watch,

neighbourhood wardens (particular to Rayners Lane) and safer neighbourhood teams across the borough.

Council provides grants to provide welfare advice.

The Council has also initiated and secured a number of European Social Fund projects to provide training for the most disadvantaged communities.

Community TV: a network of 10 TVs have been placed in public locations around Harrow that broadcast crime prevention messages and can provide a rapid response e.g. missing persons or anti-terrorism. The aim of the screens is to reduce fear of crime and provide public reassurance in emergency situations. The network is being expanded to 40 screens with business sponsorship.

The Council organised a series of “Community Advice Days” in partnership with local schools (one in each of the three strategic areas of the borough). The aim of the advice days was for local people and parents of school pupils to have access to a wide range of information from a number of support services and organisations.

SafeHomes: free security system of up to £1000 for vulnerable burglary victims and all people over 75 to prevent distraction burglary. In three years there has not been a successful burglary of homes fitted with the security.

Business Crime against Harrow: a business led initiative who are putting in place an information sharing system that will enable intelligence to be shared between businesses. Over 60 businesses are members and this is constantly growing.

ASB unit: are co-located at South Harrow Police station and provide the multi-agency approach to ASB that focuses on education, prevention and enforcement. Of the 1500 odd complaints to the unit under 30 have resulted in ASB orders being taken out. This is a testament to the multi-agency working and three prong approach that has been implemented.

Key Question 5 -

**What schemes in your community help new people when they arrive?
What schemes in your community aim to counteract people’s negative perceptions of and attitudes to people from different backgrounds? In what ways can communities steer people away from extremism?**

What schemes in your community help new people when they arrive?

There are some specific groups which help newly arrived people to settle in the community such as Russian Immigrants Association, Tamil Association, Association of Muslim Elders. In the Local Area Agreement action plans, under community cohesion, we are seeking to develop a pack for new arrivals that would be distributed through a range of venues and agencies.

What schemes in your community aim to counteract people’s negative perceptions of and attitudes to people from different backgrounds?

Events organised by many groups aim to counteract negativity e.g. Under One Sky, Black History Month, Harrow Inter-Faith Council events. The Council is developing a 'cultural calendar': that captures the breadth of events for a range of local communities, faiths and traditions.

Where specific issues are recognised we have put in place a number of projects to tackle them, including:

- N'Kanda, a community organisation, has been involved in an innovative and dynamic programme to promote and strengthen the relationships of children of African and refugee background with local children through football.
- Chandos area event and community policing to improve relationships. The Multi-Agency Forum (MAF) identified and analysed issues that were unique to the area within a wider context of social deprivation and social exclusion. These specific issues combined with the effects of international and national tensions led to a breakdown of understanding between the communities that sought to undermine community cohesion. MAF invited representatives from the Irish Traveller Movement, Harrow Asylum Team and Edgware Safer Neighbourhoods Team to have their say along with the community on community issues in the Chandos area. The Safer Neighbourhoods team have worked in partnership with Harrow Council for Racial Equality facilitating a leaflet drop in the area encouraging victims to report racial harassment. Community tension has improved and the Safer Neighbourhoods team has been operating in the area. The Team are currently holding two public meetings a month where members of the community can come and speak about their concerns. The issues that are often addressed are intimidation, fear and non-reporting:
- Development of a common reporting form for racial and religious hate crime:
 - 11 trained reporting sites operating in the voluntary and statutory sector supported by a borough wide publicity campaign.
 - Production of a victim support pack and an information sharing protocol on the exchange of information
 - Evaluation and quality assurance by MAF, Harrow Council's Corporate Equalities Group, Crown Prosecution Service, London-Wide Race Hate Crimes Forum, Harrow Council for Racial Equality and an independent consultant each with their own remit
 - Multi-agency case panels and emergency panels
 - Setting up a multi-lingual helpline.

In what ways can communities steer people away from extremism?

Local authorities, public bodies, faith organisations and the community and voluntary sector can steer people away from extremism by generally providing them with a better knowledge about, jobs, housing systems, procedures and an understanding of local values. People come to Harrow with different sets of values and may feel isolated. They have a need to understand and formulate the necessary adjustment to local values and as a community we have a responsibility to support them in doing so. People have to realise that some

behaviour that was acceptable in other places may not be acceptable here and needs to be modified as part of the integration process.

Key Question 6 -

What schemes in your area aim to get people involved in local decision making? What role do representative organisations for communities have in building communities in your area? How are you encouraging the formation to get such organisations? How are people encouraged to get involved in your local community to make a difference?

- Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP) and sub groups
- Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector Forum
- Patient and Public Involvement
- PCT public meetings and consultations
- Harrow Council public meetings and consultation exercises, including the Council's Open Budget Setting consultation
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Safer Neighbourhood Team ward meetings

Some representative organisations have a lobbying and championing role, others identify and represent common issues to partnership organisations so that these can be fed into the planning process. Some representative organisations feel that they could be better supported.

Harrow Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS) encourages the formation of representative organisations for example by the Small Groups Development Project that it runs.

Umbrella organisations such as Harrow Refugee Forum and Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations (HASVO) support member organisations.

People are encouraged to get involved in the community in a number of ways:

- Neighbourhood watch schemes
- HAVS runs a volunteer bureau
- School governors are actively recruited

Some people feel encouraged to get involved but feel that they could be better supported and recognised.

The Council also operates a grants panel, administering up to £900k of grants to community organisations, and there is significant accommodation made available for organisations at the Council's 'Community Premises' building. The Council also has an External Funding Officer in post to assist in seeking funding, maintaining a voluntary sector funding support group.

Key Question 7 –

What role do local schools, workplaces and faith groups have in building communities in your local area? What role do local authorities, public services and charities (e.g. the Police, Hospitals, Housing Associations) have in building

communities in your area? How can the media help to build communities? What role do local schools, workplaces and faith groups have in building communities in your local area?

- We believe that schools, workplaces and faith groups all have critically important roles to play in building THE community, rather than communities, but their understanding of their contribution varies considerably. All organisations should be pro-active in eliminating extremism and negativity while improving accessibility to their services, activities and establishments.
- Increasingly, Harrow schools are taking a leading role in community development. They are based in the heart of local communities and bring people together through formal and informal interaction. Schools develop the minds of the young, teaching values of tolerance and facilitate the safe exchange and understanding of cultures across the world and within the school. As employers, schools offer local employment and training and provide role models of success from the local community.
- Workplaces can promote inter-community links if there is a mixed workforce, but it may not be a local work force as people commute long distances. Legislation and corporate social responsibility have made some very positive contributions in some organisations. However, employment patterns mean that quite often there are limited opportunities for positive interaction and the workplace becomes a reflection of society.
- Faith groups vary while most serve their own community; some are exclusive and attendance or usage of facilities by non-believers is not allowed. Some faith venues are shared spaces used for bringing communities together - not exclusive but not pro-actively inclusive: *i.e.* services, brownies, scouts, rainbows, nurseries, social events, and parties.
- Faith venues are important places for new arrivals. Most faith organisations exist for creating 'their' community not necessarily 'the' community. Interfaith dialogue is critical to good community development.

What role do local authorities, public services and charities (e.g. the Police, Hospitals, Housing Associations) have in building communities in your area?

Public services, local authorities and charities are the 'face' of the host community and they should be encouraging the development of the community: sometimes that can be as simple as greeting people with a smile so they feel 'I am not a problem'. These organisations need to use the powers and resources that they have to deal with the perpetrators of extremist behaviour, not the victims. They need to develop policies that recognise the person *e.g.* housing that people need, continuity to put down roots and not short leases so that every few months you have to move house, change school and have no sense of belonging. People need continuity and safety. The need to provide leadership, especially by example, in terms of behaviour, attitude and make-up. Organisational workforces need to reflect the diversity of their customers, at every tier and not just the bottom rungs of the ladder to have 'legitimacy' with

their communities. Organisations need to build trust between themselves and people so that they believe they are trusted and heard.

How can the media help to build communities?

We recognise the considerable power of the media. We can help by celebrating and promoting positive stories and news. The media needs to give a more balanced and considered analysis of negative or destructive events, and recognise its impact on cohesion.

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