

Section 6.2a

Title: Draft 1 Cultural Identity & Cohesion

Overview

Community Cohesion is about supporting diverse groups of people to live, study and work successfully alongside each other. If people are secure, feel a sense of belonging, are respected and able to express themselves and celebrate their identity and beliefs, they will not be threatened by or negative toward others who are different from themselves. A key component of this is promoting understanding and harmonious relationships between existing residents and newcomers to the borough and developing a shared sense of belonging.

At its simplest the term 'community cohesion' is used to describe how everyone in a geographical area lives alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect. Where every person has the equal chance to participate and has equal access to services. It is about integration, valuing difference and focusing on the shared values that join people together. It conveys a sense of acceptance and integration and of developing shared values. It is also concerned with supporting communities to be resilient when problems and tensions arise.

Getting On Together - a Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales (Welsh Government, 2010)

Within this part of the Wellbeing Assessment we will consider a range of community issues which include emerging cohesion themes and the latest data exploring the impact of issues such as; Modern day Slavery, radicalisation and community intolerances and the influences this has on incidents of hate crime. This will include full consideration of the results of recent community engagement, this section will also explore whether existing partnership arrangements and plans can adequately address these emerging issues or whether new approaches need exploring in order to prevent these community tensions arising in the longer term.

We know that for most people Blaenau Gwent is a good place to live, study and work, but we can't take this for granted. Community cohesion often breaks down not because of differences between and within different groups of people, but because of the social, economic and environmental challenges that people face and which can, if left unchecked, help to undermine feelings of trust and security. The below emerging themes have been recognised as borough wide cohesion concerns which are also reflected at a national level.

Story behind the data

Hate Crime

Hate crimes and incidents are any crime or incident where the prejudice of the perpetrator against an identifiable person, or group of persons, is a factor in determining who is victimised. This includes anyone targeted or perceived to be targeted because of their Race or ethnic origin (this incorporates nationality or national origin), Religion or belief, Transgender status, Sexual Orientation and Disability.

Definition of hate crime

A hate incident is:

Any incident, which may or may not constitute a criminal offence, which is perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate, such as name calling or intimidation

Whilst a hate crime is defined specifically as:

Any hate incident, which constitutes a criminal offence, perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate, such as criminal damage or assault

The Association of Chief Police Officers

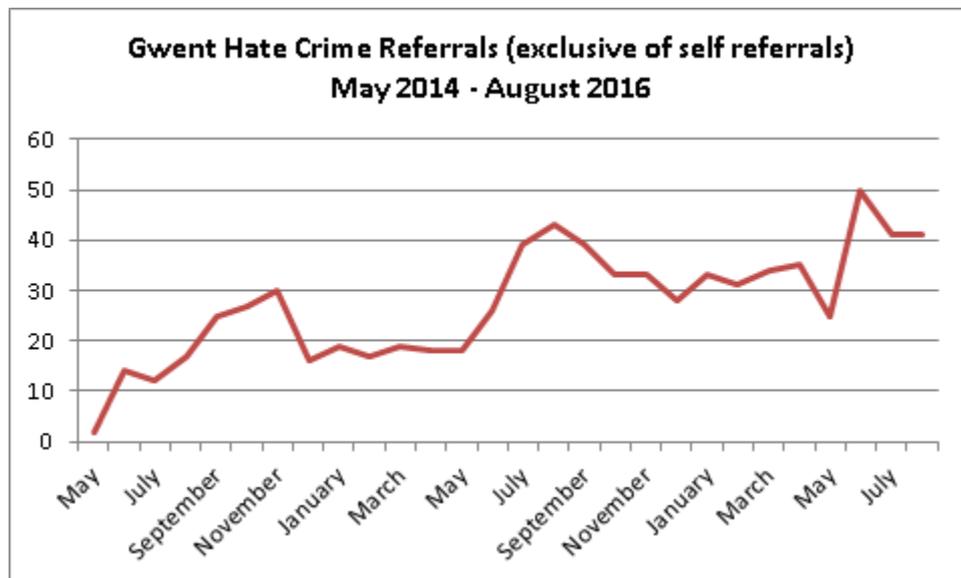
Figures released by the National Police Chiefs' Council shows that in the week following the vote to leave the EU the UK number of incidents rose by 58 per cent. Although national figures have since reduced, public attitudes and behaviours in the wake of the EU referendum have highlighted a discourse particularly in race/faith relations, indeed the period post Brexit may have been seen by a minority as an opportunity to air deep-seated hatred, this raise in hate related incidents could therefore be reflective of underlying divides in communities.

20% increase on the first two weeks of July compared with the same period in 2015

3,192 cases reported 16-30 June 2016

3,001 cases 1-14 July 2016

Source: True Vision, National Police Chief's Council



Victim Support

The above graph highlights the reported hate crime in Gwent during the lead up to and immediately after the EU referendum (May 2015 - July 2016) this information has been recorded by the National Third Party reporting organisation, Victim Support. Victim Support provide an advice and advocacy support service to all victims of hate crime, this service (funded in Wales via Welsh Government) also acts as a third party reporting organisation whereby victims can report their experiences to Victim Support (should they not choose to report directly to the police) via a secure web link (www.reporthate.victimsupport.org.uk) or by completing a referral form which can be mailed into the Victim Support PO box (detailed on their website). Victim Support also automatically receive notifications of all hate crime occurrences recorded on Niche (Police recording system) from all 4 Police forces throughout Wales, this ensures that all victims regardless of their method in reporting will receive some level support and/or advice from Victim Support.

The above graph clearly recognises a sharp increase in recording in June 2016 for the Gwent Police area, although the rate of hate crime offences in Blaenau Gwent, at 7.0 per 10,000 populations, was the same

as the rate for Wales (Source Gwent Police Local Government Data Unit) which reflected a national increase.

Whilst taking into consideration the national increase immediately post BREXIT, hate crimes rates remain statistically low, but this low level of recording may not reflect all community experiences. Under reporting rates have been attributed to a host of factors most noticeably the lack of confidence amongst victims to come forward, with some victims concerned that they won't be believed or that the involvement of services may escalate the situation. The misunderstanding amongst communities and services that a hate crime is only associated with race or ethnicity can also be a cause for under reporting. This misunderstanding may result in hate incidents being mis-recorded, particularly when victims have been targeted because of the sexual orientation, faith, disability.

Prevent

Prevent is one strand of the UK counter terrorism strategy. The overall aim of Prevent is to stop people being drawn in to supporting violent extremism by raising awareness of the issues and supporting those who may be vulnerable to radicalisation.

Extremism can flourish where different parts of a community remain isolated from each other; this has been experienced throughout the UK in a number and was recognised to be the instigating factor of the Oldham and Bradford riots (2001). More integrated communities will be more resilient to the influence of extremists. Intolerances are less likely to be accepted by communities which come together to challenge it.

The PREVENT has five main objectives:

- to challenge the ideology behind violent extremism and support mainstream voices;
- disrupt those who promote violent extremism and support the places where they operate;
- support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, or have already been recruited by violent extremists;
- increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism; and
- To address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting.

The growing far right narrative in pockets of some south wales communities has become a growing concern amongst Gwent Prevent

partners; this has been evidenced by far right groups in some areas of Wales communicating messages of racial discrimination and prejudice on open source social media. Most communities are resilient to these extremist views, however there are some areas where their influence may have increased. Whilst the reasons for this are multifaceted they may be related to the experience of poverty and perceptions of unfairness, particularly related to competition for resources (i.e. affordable housing, employment opportunities, public sector services etc.) within long established settled communities.

Research published by the Runnymede Trust in 2009 suggested that white working class communities often felt that resources were allocated unfairly, in favour of ethnic minority communities. Developing grass root level links with communities can help with early intelligence gathering. Anti poverty programmes such as Communities First who are working at this level are a useful resource of local information, however the recent review of the Communities First programme may have an impact on how well equipped we are in responding to community concerns. Public Sector partners may need to consider their role in supporting communities to reject community narratives that support and distribute messages of intolerance. This includes listening to the concerns and fears expressed in the community, such as misconceptions around preferential treatment of some groups. There may also be a need to take action to dispel myths and to ensure transparency about decision-making. This can help local people understand and accept how and why priority decisions are made.

Whilst cases remain low in Blaenau Gwent, there has been a recent and growing concern of far right rhetoric targeted towards children and young people within some communities of the South Wales Valleys; this has been evidenced on open source social media (Facebook, Twitter)

Community Cohesion, Loneliness and Social Isolation

Loneliness and isolation is a national problem that crosses all boundaries of social class, race, gender identification, sexual orientation, financial status and geography.

Ageing Well in Wales (a national programme hosted by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales) recognised that loneliness has an effect on mortality and is associated with poor mental health and conditions such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension and dementia.

Anyone can find themselves disconnected from their community however older people are one group at particular risk (Griffin, 2010). Estimates of the extent of older adult loneliness vary, with some studies suggest that 5 to 16% of people aged 65 and over are lonely (Luanaigh and Lawlor, 2008), and similarly, Age UK (2010) states that the figure of those often or always lonely is between 6 and 13%. From this research we can estimate that around 10% of UK residents aged over 65 are lonely most or all of the time (Victor, 2011), with many more at risk of loneliness (Bolton, 2012). Amongst the older old, those aged over 80 years, rates of self-reported loneliness climb steeply to approximately 50% (Age UK, 2010). With an increasing older population (by 2035 it is projected that those aged 65 and over will account for 23 per cent of the total population (ONS)) future wellbeing needs to consider the implications this may have on the individual and on community cohesion.

Modern Day Slavery

There are many different characteristics that distinguish slavery from other human rights violations, however only one needs to be present for slavery to exist. Someone is in slavery if they are: forced to work - through mental or physical threat; owned or controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse; dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property'; physically constrained or has restrictions placed on his/her freedom of movement.

Contemporary slavery takes various forms and affects people of all ages, gender and races, this includes;

- Forced Labour
- Bonded Labour
- Human Trafficking
- Descent-based slavery
- Child Slavery
- Slavery in supply chains
- Forced and marriage

A year on year national increase in recording Modern slavery crimes evidences both an increased emphasis to raise awareness amongst services to respond and persecute offences and also to improve the efforts and pathways available to support victims.

There are many challenges associated with measuring the scale of modern slavery in the UK. The Home Office's two most reliable sources of data about modern slavery are:

1. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM), a support process to which a range of organisations refer potential victims; and
2. Annual Strategic Assessments published by the National Crime Agency (NCA), which supplement NRM (National Referral Mechanism) data with additional intelligence from relevant agencies

Both data sources show a consistent and sustained increase in the detection of modern slavery in the UK since data was first collected. The most recent Strategic Assessment reported that 2,744 potential victims were encountered in 2013. This is an increase of 22 percent compared with 2012.

What we know from engagement



Engaging all community groups is often challenging we it is acknowledge that some views in the community are rarely heard, this can be because they find it difficult to participate, because they are less visible, or because they tend to be excluded. To overcome these challenges we will be actively engaging minority communities and faith groups (Gypsy and Traveller Community, Buddhist and Islamic community) to better reflect their views. This will involve utilising the methods already in place as well as adapting consultation activities to be more accessible for some audiences

Whilst these barriers may be experienced, your Community Involvement Plan may want to reflect current or planned partnerships with third party organisation, for example, disability support groups such as People's First, MenCap Cymru, Victim Support may create opportunities for people to participate in activities on behalf of CF in supportive and safe environments.

What we know from existing research

Hate Crime

Research carried out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (Hidden in Plain Sight, 2011) indicates there is significant under reporting of disability related harassment to public authorities, this may suggest a lack of recognition of Partners (Hidden in Plain Sight partially referenced local authorities) in the role they should play in encouraging reporting of harassment.

The impact of hate crimes can be far greater than other crimes without a bias motivation; victims can feel an acute sense of isolation and experience a greater fear than that experienced by other victims of crime. This concern as well as lessons learnt from a number of high profile cases (Fiona Pilkington) there been more emphasis placed on partnership collaboration to respond to cases and their underlying causes.

Community Cohesion, Loneliness and Social Isolation

Tackling loneliness and isolation is inherently preventative in terms of delaying or avoiding the need for more intensive support. While the evidence around which interventions are most effective in alleviating loneliness and isolation has limitations, we know that flexible support, ideally based within the community, and developed with the involvement of older people is effective. *Emma Collins (IRISS - Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services)*.

However the issue is not limited to older people it can impacts on younger people as well. In 2010 the Mental Health Foundation (via a study they conducted which examined how modern society has changed the way people connect with each other) recognised loneliness to be a greater concern among young people than within the elderly community. The 18 to 34-year-olds surveyed were more likely to feel lonely often, to worry about feeling alone and to feel depressed because of loneliness than the over-55s.

What this tells us about Well-being in Blaenau Gwent

As reflected within the UK Government Hate crime Action Plan (Action Against Hate, July 2016) we will only be able to drive down hate crime by tackling the prejudice and intolerance that fuel it. Unless there is great collaboration to challenge prejudice and to educate young people, hate crime will persist. This type of community prejudice also has a greater impact on cohesion, in particular how well communities get on with each other, the above narrative also acknowledging the importance of working more preventatively. Establishing good practice in Blaenau Gwent schools, to focus on breaking down intolerances before attitudes/intolerances solidify, will have a positive impact in communities. There is also a need to celebrate diversity, which brings its own challenges, through working more regionally and exploring communities that are ethnically different to those within the borough.

Social Isolation and the effects of loneliness within Blaenau Gwent may require further investigation, but as projected, the national rate for the number of over 65s is set to rise and if community isolation accompanies this growth this will have an impact on community cohesion and social wellbeing. Older people experiencing isolation may require practical support, or the provision of transport. Older people experiencing loneliness may also require social support, as well as acknowledgement of the difficulty of admitting loneliness. (*Age UK, Loneliness and Isolation Evidence Review*)