



Vantagepoint is proud to be part of the Home Office's flagship Community Cohesion Pathfinder programme.

As part of the **Oakleigh Consulting Group**, we are one of the leading providers of management consulting services to the public sector.

Vantagepoint works with local authorities, housing providers, central government departments, and higher education institutions to help organisations:

- improve their business performance and service delivery;
- modernise their services;
- transform their business processes; and
- manage and implement change.

Our expertise lies in:

- **Community cohesion**
- **Housing**
- **E-government**
- **Best Value**
- **Preparing for CPA and Inspection**
- **Governance and performance management**

If you think we can help you with any of these needs, please visit our website at www.vantagemc.co.uk or contact: Louise Russell, Director on 020 7654 0400 or louise.russell@vantagemc.co.uk.

OAKLEIGH
Consulting Limited

Vantagepoint are an Oakley company.

Community Cohesion Pathfinder Programme

The first six months. October 2003





FOREWORD

It is now more than two years since disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham highlighted the need to take positive action to address the tensions and divisions that can have a profound impact on local communities. Since then much has been done - at both a local and a national level - to work towards improved community cohesion within local areas. But we all recognise that there are no quick fixes or simple answers.

The Community Cohesion Pathfinder Programme is a key element of the Government's work on community cohesion. The Home Office and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit have jointly committed £6 million of funding to a range of programmes that explore, in different local contexts, the best means of increasing levels of community cohesion in Britain. The Pathfinders are at the cutting edge of social policy, testing new and innovative methods of engagement, and adapting existing networks and expertise, all to bring people closer together.

Sharing learning and experiences is an integral part of the Pathfinder programme. The Pathfinders are pioneering new working practices for the benefit of all local areas. That is why the impact of the Programme will extend far beyond the funded areas, providing a range of lessons, toolkits and evidence for all agencies seeking to work for community cohesion.

I believe we have come a long way in two years. We are confronting the issues raised by the disturbances. We have ensured that social cohesion is now a key priority at national and local level. I am pleased to introduce the first report of the Pathfinder Programme, which summarises the early experiences of the Pathfinders as they explore and develop their responses to this challenging agenda.

Fiona Mactaggart

Parliamentary Under Secretary for Race Equality, Community Policy and Civil Renewal

CONTENTS

- 1 The Pathfinder Programme
- 2 Engaging with Leaders
- 5 Engaging with the voluntary sector and local communities
- 8 Communicating with a wider audience
- 10 Sustainability
- 12 Conclusion

Front cover images supplied courtesy of the Signal Project, the Home Office and the East Lancs Partnership

The Pathfinder Programme

A cohesive community is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Definition of Community Cohesion - LGA Guidance 2001

In the summer of 2001 disturbances occurred in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley. The ensuing debate identified the lack of understanding and common ground between communities as a significant cause of the disturbances. The violent fractures in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley placed the inevitable tensions and divisions brought by Britain's increasing ethnic and cultural diversity at the centre of Government policy. Community cohesion is not something that government – whether central or local - can impose. But government and its partners can facilitate cohesion within communities.

The Community Cohesion Unit of the Home Office manages the Pathfinder programme, a joint initiative with the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister that places the pursuit of mutual understanding and the creation of common ground between communities at the heart of community development. Fourteen local partnerships have been funded to pioneer community cohesion programmes in their geographical areas. A further fourteen authorities are designated 'Shadow' Pathfinders, unfunded but active participants in the learning elements of the Pathfinder Programme. The shared experiences of both Pathfinders and Shadows will provide a body evidence for all public and voluntary sector bodies wishing to develop community cohesion within their local areas.

The Community Cohesion Pathfinder Programme was launched in April 2003, with funding provided for the pathfinders until September 2004. The fourteen funded programmes were selected to demonstrate the potentially wide application of community cohesion principles in the pursuit of greater social cohesion. They address variously, tensions between ethnic communities in urban areas, travelling communities in rural areas and the difficulties caused by large numbers of American service personnel in the East of England. The programme outputs are similarly varied, tackling the gap between youth and age, inter-faith and intra-faith tensions, and gender differences. What binds these apparently disparate programmes together is the common objective of breaking down barriers between and within communities.

Sharing the learning from these programmes is an inherent part of the Pathfinder scheme. Some of the funding is therefore directed towards a programme of support for dissemination activities. These activities include a Conference Programme, regular action learning sets, and a self-assessment exercise through which learning experiences are collated and evaluated.

This report sets out progress made within the Pathfinder areas in developing and delivering their programmes in the first six months. In doing so it draws on experiences identified through the action learning sets and through the self-

assessment exercise conducted in October 2003.

This report is structured around the issues and challenges faced by the Pathfinders in the early stages of their programmes. These are:

- Engagement with leaders
- Working with the voluntary and community sector
- Communication
- Sustainability

Each section provides both a condensed version of the main learning experiences and practical examples of how the Pathfinders and Shadows have translated the broad principles of community cohesion into pragmatic and workable community based programmes. The report concludes with a brief description of issues identified as areas of potential future learning.

Engaging with leaders

Political engagement has emerged as an early 'theme' both in learning sets and through the self-assessment exercise. All funded Pathfinders have achieved a degree of political support through the bidding process. Nevertheless, maintaining the interest of elected Members in a Programme that is not as yet identified as an integral element of mainstream services remains a high priority.

Some Pathfinders are delivering programmes against a backdrop of extremist political activity, where a minority of local politicians seek to exploit the differences between geographical communities and communities of interest for the purposes of electoral gain. In these difficult circumstances, how have the Pathfinders managed to gain longer term political and executive support for their programmes?

Local, administrative and community leaders must feel the concept has some resonance within their local community before they can truly own the community cohesion agenda. The early experiences of the Pathfinders suggest that some political and community leaders find the concept difficult to distinguish from other related agendas such as race relations. This is particularly true where there are only very small ethnic minority communities within the area – meaning that the issue of community cohesion is seen as less important. Many Pathfinders have given a high priority to finding ways of defining community cohesion that illuminate the concept for a local audience.

Success in engaging local political and administrative leaders is also strongly linked to the long-term sustainability of projects currently funded through the Pathfinder programme. In areas that are not currently supported by Neighbourhood Renewal Funding the extent of local political support will be a key factor in deciding whether projects continue after September 2004.

Pathfinders have adopted a range of approaches in establishing the basis for longer term cross party and cross community support. These include:

- Engaging with elected members through seminars, presentations, published information and stakeholder groups.
- Involving the elected Mayor in the Pathfinder Steering Group, thus encouraging a high political profile for the issue through engagement with a powerful figurehead
- Appointing local political leaders to the Pathfinder Steering Group
- Introducing Member Training on community cohesion, in some cases using practical case studies and discussion sessions to brief Members on the application of the community cohesion guidance
- Delivering a conference on community cohesion spearheaded by the Local Strategic Partnership
- Using the Local Strategic Partnership as a means of engaging with all levels of political, local authority and community leadership
- Establishing political support through accessing existing structures, such as appointing a Cabinet Member as a champion
- Developing an all party pledge which was signed by local members from all political parties and representatives of all local communities
- Making an open call to groups operating outside the normal political and community consultation processes

CHARNWOOD PATHFINDER wanted to reach out to groups who were not necessarily engaged with or represented by their local political and community leaders. They put out an open call for prospective proposals to be funded under the Pathfinder programme. The result was effective in uncovering agencies and groups who were not known to local politicians or engaged with mainstream structures. This means the Pathfinder starts with strong 'buy in' from local groups who might not otherwise have been aware of the Pathfinder programme. The challenge now is to make sure that expectations created by this initiative are managed. Some groups lose interest when they realise there are strings attached to involvement in the scheme. But still, vigorous promotion of joint service delivery can be rewarding and lead to a sustainable legacy of co-operation and partnership.



Images supplied courtesy of the East Lancs Partnership

Engaging with the voluntary and community sectors



Image supplied courtesy of the Signal Project, London Borough of Southwark. www.signalproject.com

Learning experiences

Learning is developing around how best to engage with local political leaders, and what pitfalls might emerge for those wishing to develop their own local programmes.

- It is important to have difficult debates with Leaders at an early stage in the process. Part of the process of buying into the community cohesion agenda is recognising the importance of difficult issues and problems being confronted and challenged rather than left to extremists to claim as their own.
- It is possible to promote wider political support for social cohesion by bringing difficult debates into the public arena. Pathfinderers have used public information initiatives to stimulate debate in the public arena. One example is the annual commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day as a means of addressing anti-Semitism within communities, adopted by Rochdale Pathfinder as a means of challenging local communities to recognise and oppose anti-Semitism.
- Political engagement in its widest sense might mean looking beyond normal channels of engagement with elected members and even with community leaders. For example, community leaders might not represent sectional interests such as youth or women. This can be a sensitive issue, appearing as a challenge to those in positions of authority. It is absolutely necessary to increase the number of channels of communication, however, if the ultimate aim of improving social cohesion is to be met.

- Don't be over-cautious in addressing divisions within and between communities. Try not to set boundaries to projects that are based only on your interpretation of local sensitivity. For example, Tower Hamlets Shadow Pathfinder has initiated discussions with the East London Mosque over the breakdown of Bangladeshi marriages. As a result, they have identified further work around the counselling abilities of the Imams.
- It is wise to phase engagement with different groups, starting with smaller groups first, simply because you can't take commonality for granted even amongst a small set of community leaders. Phased engagement strategies allow you to develop clear products and strategies with the voluntary and community sector before engaging with public bodies and established politicians. It is easier for public bodies to respond to well-defined products or strategies rather than nebulous concepts or exploratory processes. This approach, adopted within the Southwark Pathfinder, can enable a clear set of foundations to be built for the pursuit of the programme objectives.
- It is important to use the community cohesion agenda as a means of celebrating diversity rather than emphasising multiculturalism as a problem. This is best brought about by frankness and transparency in communications with Members, recognising both that there is natural competition between communities and that this is not necessarily unhealthy.

- Even where engagement with political leaders has been successful it is important to think about wider community leadership when addressing community cohesion issues. For example, Middlesbrough Pathfinder have succeeded in gaining widespread political ownership of the community cohesion agenda through the Local Strategic Partnership and a Member Training programme aimed at explaining community cohesion. Nevertheless, they continue to work at engaging in particular with Community Councils and with school governors, who have less of a culture of engagement around community cohesion issues.

STOKE ON TRENT PATHFINDER developed a community cohesion charter as a statement of commitment for all local agencies in advance of developing a local strategy for community cohesion. The 'Charter' interpreted the complexities of community cohesion and presented it in a simple and user-friendly format that addressed local issues and local concerns. This was followed by a Conference at which all key stakeholders including Members were invited to discuss and sign up to the Charter. At the Conference, politicians, public sector and local agencies engaged in wide discussion of how community cohesion principles would be adapted to the local needs of Stoke on Trent.

5

A key element of all Pathfinder programmes is this high level of engagement with communities either through existing networks of voluntary and community sector networks or directly. Many Pathfinder funded projects are directly aimed at providing platforms for different communities to meet through community activities. Others address cohesion issues through delivery of community events, through myth busting, information and publicity campaigns. All programmes require the active co-operation of community and voluntary sectors for their ultimate success.

Strong voluntary sector involvement in the early stages of the Pathfinder is perceived as a key factor determining the successful launch of programmes. Voluntary sector partners bring additional expertise to the programmes, and a range of contacts at community level. The result is a number of creative approaches to addressing problems on the ground with the voluntary sector side of partnerships providing a new emphasis on responsiveness to programme delivery.

A range of innovative approaches have been adopted by local authority and voluntary sector partners in getting the maximum benefit from these unique administrative partnerships. These include:

- Setting up Pathfinder programmes as integrated programmes from the outset. Pathfinderers report that programmes have got off to a 'flying start' because of the early involvement of the voluntary sector.
- Making sure that there is general recognition of overlaps between local authority and voluntary sector programmes. Rochdale Pathfinder is commissioning projects in both sectors, avoiding an onerous

bidding process for a pot of money that is still relatively small.

- Involving local race equality councils and refugee forums in the early stages of the programme is important, as there is a clear overlap between community cohesion and the race equality and asylum agendas.
- Organising the Pathfinder programme so that the Local Authority Partner takes on an 'enabling' role, with voluntary and community sector leading and delivering on the programme.
- Engaging the community and voluntary sectors through the Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Councils.

Direct community engagement is equally important to the Pathfinderers. One of the real challenges of the programme is finding ways of engaging with hard to reach groups, possibly sections of a community marginalised from the traditional consultation and engagement routes. This area of delivery is one where innovation is seen as key to success. Approaches include:

- Working to exploit existing networks rather than invent new ones. This is seen as particularly relevant to Pathfinderers engaged in youth based initiatives where there are effective community based networks already in place.
- Developing networks which focus on involving those traditionally excluded, such as asylum seekers, black and ethnic minority communities and faith communities.
- Making target groups aware of what community cohesion means, and involving them in defining appropriate routes for achieving it.

THE WEST LONDON ALLIANCE initiated their Pathfinder Programme by leading a major piece of research titled 'What works at Community Level to support community cohesiveness'. Part of the research involved a major conference through which over 3000 voluntary sector groups across West London were contacted. 250 attendees subsequently followed up their Conference attendance with a detailed response to questionnaires on what works on the ground, and around 50 of these responses are being used to illustrate the research report with examples of good practice from voluntary sector practitioners. The research programme and Conference has been used both to explain the community cohesion programme and to reap examples of good practice from the people who will ultimately be delivering the programme.

THE EAST LANCASHIRE PARTNERSHIP has worked with stakeholders to agree a common vision of Community Cohesion within East Lancashire. This partnership Pathfinder comprises 6 geographical areas with separate voluntary sector and local authority leads. Developing a common vision was seen as a vital element of the programme set up, providing a means of simultaneously promoting and explaining the work of the Pathfinder. Another method used to engage with the wider voluntary and faith sector was to encourage groups to come up with innovative project proposals for funding under the small grants fund. One of the conditions of funding was that the organisations joined the East Lancashire Partnership and signed up to the common vision and values it had developed.



Learning experiences

Learning is developing around engagement with the voluntary and community sector, a number of key themes are emerging. These include:

- Making sure there is a common understanding between all stakeholders as to the definition of community cohesion. Similarly there needs to be a common understanding of the meaning of partnership.
- Being prepared for some initial cynicism when approaching community groups. This is one of a long line of initiatives many of which have proved unsustainable. There may be a need to persuade stakeholders that this initiative is going to be different.
- It is difficult for the voluntary and community sectors to engage on an equal footing with public sector agencies without appropriate infrastructure and support. Part of the Pathfinder programme is about finding ways to describe cohesion in ways that reflect local conditions and the local context.
- Think carefully about capacity issues when engaging with voluntary sector and community sector groups. Much is expected of the voluntary sector, often with little recognition of the significant constraints placed on their involvement by lack of resources. Lack of capacity within the voluntary sector can result in low flexibility in programme delivery and an overly bureaucratic approach.
- Sections of the community might not be engaged in mainstream political processes. There is potential tension between reaching out to these sections of the community and maintaining the support of elected politicians and established community leaders. This tension must be recognised in the early stages of planning of community cohesion initiatives. When setting up initiatives it is important to ensure that consultative meetings are widely advertised beyond traditional consultative groups.

7

- Work with youth is an important element of many Pathfinder programmes, an area that can touch on sensitivities within communities as well as wider society. Plan initiatives that empower young people without marginalising them.
- Allow sufficient lead in time when developing contact databases and communication channels. If possible be generous in the allocation of time for planning of projects. For the Pathfinders, programmes were put together quickly due to the constraints of bidding for external funds. This has meant that in some instances the original plans have had to be changed to reflect current realities such as the impact of achieving Pathfinder status on work with community champions.

MANSFIELD PATHFINDER has been working within their community to make the concept of community cohesion recognisable to target communities. In an area where only 2% of the population are from an ethnic minority background, work has focused on the 'banner' phrase of community cohesion can cause confusion and resistance. Mansfield's Healing History project is working with local community groups to explore what community cohesion means in a specifically local context. In Mansfield, this means recognising its lost culture of mining, the impact this has had on inter-generational conflict and the race-related issues that have arisen from a predominantly white, male culture.

TOWER HAMLETS SHADOW PATHFINDER has used the Pathfinder project banner as a means of bringing together organisations that would normally have little reason to communicate. This approach has already generated some interesting spin offs in relation to engaging with the wider community. For example during Ramadan a group of older Bangladeshi people living in Wapping will use the Catholic Centre for evening prayers. And similarly the local Catholic School is being engaged to 'reach out' to newer communities in the area such as those from Eastern Europe who are less familiar with the predominantly Muslim local culture.

MIDDLESBROUGH PATHFINDER are working with local faith communities to address the lack of contact and understanding between local communities. The Pathfinder has funded a range of initiatives, including appointment of a dedicated worker within the voluntary sector to oversee the development of an inter-faith council. Setting up the Council has been a slower process than expected. The new Worker has had to work with different groups within communities to tackle intra-faith issues before establishing the inter-faith network. Nevertheless this investment of time in ensuring that women and young people within Faith communities are engaged is felt to be highly valuable.

SOUTHWARK PATHFINDER produced a video of young people expressing their views about their area and the services available to them. They then invited young people, their parents and carers to view the video at a social evening attended by youth practitioners who can advertise their services face to face with potential users. The video was developed in direct response to criticisms that young people were rarely consulted or provided with an opportunity to give feedback. The video and event created a 'feedback loop' through which services users, parents and professionals could understand each other's perspectives.

ROCHDALE PATHFINDER ran a successful event called 'Equality and Diversity is good for business', the purpose being to bring together public, private and voluntary sector employers to explore the issues around establishing a business case for equalities in each sector. The event was well attended by local employers from many different communities, and provided a unique forum to bring the debate around equalities to a new audience.

Communicating to a wider audience

One of the major challenges for the Pathfinders is finding ways in which they can communicate a positive message about community cohesion to a wider audience. This in itself raises a number of difficult and sensitive issues around community cohesion. Communication is a major element of each Pathfinder programme as all, to some extent, are committed to stimulating contact and debate between groups that might not otherwise have any opportunity to meet. Communications strategies employed might include events, public information, and work with the press and local media.

The first issue that has been raised by Pathfinders is what exactly to publicise. Some Pathfinders have committed themselves to raising awareness of the community cohesion agenda through communications strategies that target the voluntary and community sectors. Others have made a conscious decision to promote individual elements of their programmes but to play down the wider community cohesion agenda. Again the slightly nebulous and shifting definition of community cohesion presents difficulties to the Pathfinders in that misinterpretation of their Programme objectives could prove counterproductive to the common aim of improving social cohesion.

Race and community relations are areas where relationships with the press and media tend to be strained. Breaking news is traditionally more likely to present newer communities in a negative light. One common example of negative press input in the past has been their involvement in sensitive and difficult debates over the allocation of local funding. Though most funding decisions are taken on the basis of need, it is sometimes easier and apparently more newsworthy to present them as favouring one or other community. In the aftermath of the Bradford, Burnley and Oldham disturbances, one reason given for poor community relationships was the degree to which older communities felt that newer communities had been singled out for special treatment. This common perception is one that too often is propagated by the local and national press.

This issue presents something of a dilemma for the Pathfinders, but one that is being actively confronted and managed in a number of different ways. The dilemma is that the Pathfinder programme itself is a newly funded programme that is directed – at least in part – towards addressing the lack of understanding between newer and older communities. Publicising the programme might in itself lead to negative press coverage and have a detrimental effect on local community relations if it was perceived as delivering more benefit to one section of the community than another. As some Pathfinders are working with traditionally very marginalised and unpopular groups such as travellers, the potential pitfalls of negative publicity increase.

Pathfinders have adopted a number of approaches to communicating a positive message about their programmes, such as:

- Developing a detailed communication, information and dissemination plan which includes proactive work with the local newspaper group. Engaging with the press before negative issues become news is an effective means of reducing community tensions and increasing the level of responsible reporting around community cohesion programmes.
- Developing a common understanding of the issues and messages around community cohesion with partners and stakeholders. In one Pathfinder a media sub-group has been set up to advise the steering group on communications issues and to develop effective media messages.

- Adopting a low-key approach until the key messages of the programme have been agreed. For example the Southwark Pathfinder worked with political and community leaders in the early stages of the programme to clarify key messages and to identify tangible products. Only when these were widely agreed within the Pathfinder did implementation of the wider communication strategy begin.
- Understanding that you might need to adopt a number of different approaches to communicating your message, dependent on the message, the audience, and the local media environment. In some Pathfinders, where there have been issues with press relations in the past, a deliberately low-key approach to communications is seen as most beneficial for the Programme in its early stages.
- Approaching local newspaper groups for sponsorship of events. In Bradford, for example, the Telegraph and Argus produced an eight page pull out on a celebratory event on community cohesion, which showed the work and commitment of everyone in the area to bringing different communities together.
- Using the Web extensively for communication. It is a useful tool for sharing best practice, and recording and publicising a wide range of community information. At times use of the web can be a more effective tool for publicity purposes than the local press who may filter messages through a lens of their own.

Images supplied
Courtesy of the
Home Office



LEICESTER PATHFINDER involved the local newspaper group, the *Leicester Mercury*, on the steering group for the Pathfinder programme. Press relations have in the past been problematic, and this active engagement with a powerful local press group at the inception of the Pathfinder project was seen as a means of changing the basis of future press relations. The overwhelming message received by Press participants is that they would publish whatever news would sell papers. This in itself is a learning experience, providing a clear message to public and voluntary sector partners that they must engage with commercial bodies in a way that recognises their commercial interests. Working with the *Leicester Mercury*, the Pathfinder is challenging the assumption that negative representations of newer communities will sell newspapers in a City where over half the population are of ethnic minority origin. More localised projects include a youth initiative in partnership with the *Leicester Mercury*, *BBC Radio Leicester* and *MATV* through which young people are given the opportunity to report good news on cohesion stories.

SANDWELL PATHFINDER had already conducted a number of early community cohesion awareness meetings before being confirmed as a funded Pathfinder. Their approach to communications has been built on this early experience. They have sought to publicise the concept of community cohesion rather than individual programme elements. Their communication strategy involves targeting publicity and information on existing networks, such as the *Sandwell CVO* and the *Scarman Trust* to gain greater understanding of the concept and scope of community cohesion and its application in Sandwell.

Learning experiences

Learning around how to communicate positive messages to a wider audience is developing rapidly in the early stages of the Pathfinder programme. Emerging themes include:

- Plan your communication strategy in advance and make sure all stakeholders in the community cohesion programme are signed up to key messages. Simplifying a complex issue will be a key factor in determining success in managing messages around the programme.
- Consider training in communication and publicity for voluntary sector participants at the start of your programme. Some Pathfinders believe in retrospect that issues around communication should be considered at the project planning stage, and some allowance should be made at that early stage for the challenges involved in communicating such a complex message.
- Be prepared to deal with negative press stories about the programme. Community cohesion initiatives touch on sensitive issues and there is always the potential for negative messages being propagated by those who do not understand the programme.
- If possible involve representatives of the local media in planning the media strategy. Educating the local press about how to manage local sensitivities might prove effective in reducing the amount of damage done to local community relations by inaccurate reporting.
- Tailor communications to good news stories printed at the right time and for the right reasons. Forcing the issue with the press can lead to a backlash against programmes such as these, identifying them as the new 'flavour of the month' and undermining the concept of community cohesion as one which is short term and unsustainable.
- The press is not the only means of communicating messages, and in some instances might not be the most effective route. Think of the existing network of contacts as a ready-made communications network. Front line staff, elected members and staff in partner organisations can all play a key role in passing on a positive message about community cohesion. Think of them as a resource when planning a communication strategy.

Sustainability

Underpinning all community cohesion initiatives is the idea that it is possible to change the way people view the world. Pathfinder programmes, though very different in nature, are all geared to changing the perceptions within their area, tackling prejudices and ignorance around communities with different histories, and creating a more positive perception of the changing nature of British society. There is tacit acceptance that changes in attitude and perception do not happen overnight. The Pathfinder's 18-month timescale provides a kick-start to community cohesion programmes, but in order to be truly successful these programmes must become part of mainstream service delivery. The potential sustainability of Pathfinder programmes is an important emerging theme for the programme, even at this early stage.

This theme is strongly linked to those of engagement with political, voluntary sector and community leaders. Strong 'ownership' of the community cohesion agenda is seen as the best way of generating long-term support for the programmes. Establishing linkages between mainstream services and community cohesion projects is similarly identified as a means of increasing the potential sustainability of programmes. And on a more strategic level, establishing the common ground between the community cohesion agenda and complementary central government policies such as Neighbourhood Renewal and Housing Market Renewal is seen as a means of integrating community cohesion programmes into longer term funding streams.

BURY PATHFINDER is working with mainstream education providers to bring community cohesion into schools and onto the curriculum. To counteract poor perceptions of asylum seekers in the media and the misrepresentation of facts about asylum issues, staff at Radcliffe High School taught lessons to mainstream pupils during Refugee Week, to encourage empathy with the situation of asylum seeker pupils. The Pathfinder also funded production of a resource pack for schoolteachers to deliver future lessons on asylum issues. The Pathfinder intends to buy in a Citizenship Pack for local schools providing the impetus for community cohesion issues to be included as part of the mainstream curriculum for the foreseeable future.

At a more local level a number of different approaches have been adopted to plan for the long term sustainability of community cohesion programmes. Agencies might consider:

- Incorporating community cohesion into the Local Strategic Partnership's agenda, establishing it as a cross cutting issue that transcends traditional service delivery barriers.
- Mapping complementary activity and joining up these activities at a local level. This approach has been adopted by Stoke on Trent Pathfinder as a means of addressing the complexities of delivering a community cohesion programme which must align to various national programmes.
- Involving the Neighbourhood Renewal Team, the Police, and Connexions in the early stages of programme development. Getting statutory agencies on board at an early stage makes it easier to find mainstream routes for funding community cohesion initiatives.
- In Neighbourhood Renewal Fund areas, synchronising community cohesion planning cycles with NRF cycles
- Include a limited policy and review strand within plans for community cohesion. This approach has been adopted by Sandwell Pathfinder who have set aside limited funding for a review of cross cutting issues such as housing, education, and community safety.

- Developing a toolkit that helps mainstream service managers incorporate community cohesion initiatives into mainstream service plans. This approach has been adopted by Rochdale Pathfinder as a means of increasing the level of understanding and buy in to the community cohesion agenda.

PETERBOROUGH PATHFINDER have used pre-existing consultation arrangements in the voluntary sector and key agencies such as the Police to provide a 'gateway' into local communities. This is an effective approach in this area due to recognised capacity issues within smaller community based organisations- building on existing mechanisms for consultation makes efficient use of the time commitment from community groups. The outcome in Peterborough has been the involvement in the Pathfinder of new participants and communities, and already evidence of aspects of the programme being picked up by mainstream funding. Cambridgeshire Constabulary has funded the appointment of a Hate Crime Co-ordinator based in the Peterborough Race Equality Council after the need for this post was identified through community engagement.



Images supplied
Courtesy of the
Home Office

KIRKLEES PATHFINDER is providing training for front line workers, managers, community activists and elected Members, so that the skills, understanding and confidence produced will assist in the process of embedding and sustaining the Community Cohesion programme. They have also linked the programme directly into the local Council Area Committee process, so that as lessons are learnt and action plans developed locally they are incorporated directly into local planning processes.

Learning experiences

Key themes are already emerging around learning to mainstream community cohesion.

- It is not project activities per se that need to mainstream. For programmes to be truly sustainable Pathfinders should be seeking to engender an underlying understanding of the issues and how these should form part of all Council (and other partner) services. This message is equally applicable to those embarking on community cohesion projects without additional funding. Working out how the principles of community cohesion interact with the mainstream should be a key element of projects.

- Be clear about the expectations and limitations of the programme. The Pathfinder is not a universal panacea to all community cohesion issues. Of paramount importance is making sure that other partners and agencies are signed up to the agenda and that there is sufficient buy in from political and community leaders to ensure support for initiatives once funding stops.

- Use the community cohesion agenda to build better channels of communication between services. In some areas, the Pathfinder Programme has been used as a means of opening better channels of communication between Council and Borough Councils, in others it has been used to integrate voluntary and community sector input on community cohesion into mainstream planning systems such as the local strategic partnership.

- Involve the local housing authority and other housing providers in your programme wherever possible. Dissatisfaction around housing can reinforce community divisions and undermine community development aimed at promoting community cohesion. Recognising this potential hurdle has been a key lesson for some Pathfinder participants.

SOUTHWARK PATHFINDER has used the existing network of youth providers to increase the sustainability of the Pathfinder programme. They have further developed a partnership with statutory and voluntary sector agencies and Save the Children to support the mainstreaming of direct youth involvement in policy and practice in sectors such as health, education and policing. Southwark Pathfinder believes that where youth is the focus of community cohesion, adults must learn to share power with young people. Their mainstreaming initiative is designed to bring young people directly into the planning process, simultaneously increasing the sustainability of community cohesion initiatives with empowerment of young people.

Conclusion

One of the outcomes of the Community Cohesion Pathfinder programme will be a body of learning which charts the problems, challenges and successes of programmes and initiatives at different stages of the Programme. This report sets out some early examples of learning and of good practice, six months into this 18-month programme. As a learning document, we have largely concentrated on practical issues that will assist other agencies in putting together workable and sustainable programmes of work around community cohesion principles.

Some areas of learning and experience, however, are unlikely to be resolved until the end of this Programme and beyond. As areas of discussion, we conclude with a brief resume of these issues, as identified by the Pathfinder participants themselves. It is useful to rehearse these issues simply because they place this programme in the context of wider governmental policy initiatives. These recurring themes are:

- Explaining the concept of community cohesion in simple, meaningful and direct terms underpins many of the engagement issues identified in this report. Some Pathfinders have worked towards finding a definition that is most appropriate to local conditions. Many now feel that using the LGA's generic definition would be the best starting point, with any local revisions arising through the engagement with stakeholders as direct result of programme initiatives. Setting out to create a new definition is too time-consuming and confusing for many participants.

- Linking cohesion work effectively to complementary national and local activities must form part of any community cohesion programme. There is a strong feeling amongst Pathfinders that central government could do more to deliver a 'joined up' approach to community cohesion. Better co-ordination between key initiatives such as Beacon Councils, Neighbourhood Renewal, and the work of the DFES on youth would assist local deliverers in implementing their programmes. There should be clear channels of communication between central government and local agencies so that central government could learn from integration of services at a local level.

We expect these themes to remain key issues for the Pathfinders as they develop their programmes over the next year.

Pathfinders

Bury Pathfinder
Charnwood Pathfinder
East Lancashire Partnership
Kirklees Pathfinder
Leicester Pathfinder
Mansfield Pathfinder
Middlesbrough Pathfinder
Peterborough Pathfinder
Plymouth Pathfinder
Rochdale Pathfinder
Sandwell Pathfinder
Southwark Pathfinder
Stoke on Trent Pathfinder
West London Alliance

Shadow Pathfinders

Barnet Shadow Pathfinder
Bradford Shadow Pathfinder
Calderdale Shadow Pathfinder
Gateshead Shadow Pathfinder
Liverpool Shadow Pathfinder
Oldham Shadow Pathfinder
Preston Shadow Pathfinder
Redbridge Shadow Pathfinder
Slough Shadow Pathfinder
Tameside Shadow Pathfinder
Tewkesbury Shadow Pathfinder
Tower Hamlets Shadow Pathfinder
Thurrock Shadow Pathfinder

Further details of Pathfinder contacts, along with case studies from the Pathfinder Action Learning Programme are available from the Community Cohesion Website at www.communitycohesion.gov.uk