

# **COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY 2011-14**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background:**

In 2007 Wrexham County Borough Council and its partners began developing its initial 3-year Community Cohesion Strategy. This was a time of great change in our communities with significant numbers of new migrants coming from across the globe to live and work in Wrexham. In addition, there were small numbers of asylum seekers arriving here as part of the Home Office dispersal process. This, together with the significant number of geographical communities and communities of interest e.g. faith communities, electoral wards, Community First areas has led to a complex array of community relationships.

Through the Community Cohesion Strategy the council and its partners have worked pro-actively to support positive relationships within and between these communities in order to improve people's quality of life and their opportunities to achieve their potential.

There is now a widespread understanding and agreement that the principles of cohesion are important for all communities. They bring together traditional values around citizenship, belonging and neighbourliness. Our definition of cohesion describes the ability of all communities to function and grow in harmony together. It aims to build communities where people feel confident that they belong and are comfortable mixing and interacting with others. Building cohesion within and between communities is an essential step towards improving people's quality of life. Viewed from outside, a cohesive community is one in which people will want to live and invest.

Key indicators of community cohesion relate to how people feel about their local area. It can therefore be used as a measure of how well different communities develop and relate to each other. The process of integration is about helping positive relationships to develop between different groups and communities, towards a shared understanding and common values. Where there is no integration negative myth and rumour can dominate. If left unchecked, this can lead to unjust assumptions or fear. At worst it can lead to prejudice and intolerance.

Cohesive communities recognise that every one of us is different; each of us is a unique blend of diverse qualities, skills, background, heritage and beliefs. Wrexham's LSB is committed to equality of opportunity for all by treating people according to their needs, combating discrimination and promoting good community relations.

## **Review Methodology:**

A multi agency Community Cohesion Co-ordination Group [CCCG] was established in 2005 to ensure co-ordination of work in relation to community cohesion, to raise the profile of cohesion across Wrexham and to facilitate communication between agencies. This group continues to meet and oversee the implementation of the current Strategy.

In order to take forward a second Community Cohesion Strategy we have consulted with a wide range of partners and stakeholders, including groups that have become engaged in the cohesion debate through the work of the first strategy. This was particularly important because the cohesion debate in Wrexham includes all communities, stakeholder and interest groups.

## **Community Cohesion review**

1. Members of the CCCG attended a visioning event to shape our thinking around the second multi agency Community Cohesion Strategy 2011 – 14 [See Appendix A for membership details]:
  - Review the progress made in implementing the Community Cohesion Strategy 2008-11;
  - Identify issues that have been addressed, require further work or are newly emerging;
  - Clarifying our future priority areas - the vision for cohesion, the key strategic objectives and relevant performance measures.

The findings from the visioning event were used as the basis for wider consultation activities.

2. Consultation events were also held with a wide range of stakeholder groups including:
  - Disabled community;
  - Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender community;
  - Communities' First groups;
  - Voluntary and Community organisations;
  - Faith leaders and faith communities;
  - Asylum seekers and refugees;
  - Young people; and
  - People from a range of different ethnic and nationality groups.

[See appendix B for full details of consultative groups]

3. Feedback from the consultation events enabled the development of a draft Strategy which was considered by the Council's Corporate Governance and Policy Scrutiny Committee. The draft document was then subject to a 3-month public consultation period. Following further

amendment, the Community Cohesion Strategy 2011-14 was formally adopted by the Councils Executive Board in May 2011. It has since been adopted by all members of the Wrexham Local Service Board.

Key outcomes of Community Cohesion review:

4. Through the consultation process a number of key messages were identified:
  - Continue to deliver the priorities taken forward through the current community cohesion strategy;
  - Increase the level of engagement with children and young people around the cohesion debate, including building good relations through play;
  - Develop more explicit links with the equalities agenda;
  - Explore in more detail community cohesion issues in relation to disability and develop options for increased engagement;
  - Develop a better understanding of the links and shared priorities with community regeneration work;
  - Continue to mainstream community cohesion wherever possible; and
  - Improve monitoring and evaluation by adopting a 'Results Based Accountability' approach.

These messages have been incorporated into the priorities for 2011-14 and will be delivered through the action plans.

**REVIEW OF 2008-11 - Outcomes and Achievements:**

Outcomes:

Through the Strategy we have developed relationships that will help the council and its partners to better understand and meet the needs of Wrexham people.

A range of minority communities\* have been supported to develop their capacity and confidence to engage with the statutory and voluntary sector organisations. These communities are now better placed to access mainstream public services and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

The breadth of diversity in Wrexham is better understood by individuals, communities and people working in statutory and voluntary sector organisations. There is evidence of strong trusting relationships being developed and this will increase the resilience of communities in times of hardship.

\* minority communities within the context of the 2008-11 Strategy includes: Gypsies and Travellers; Asylum Seekers and Refugees; people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender; and people from different ethnic and nationality groups.

## Achievements:

Key achievements over the lifetime of the 2008/11 Strategy included:

- Community Champions Network: A volunteer Community Champions network has been established in order to share ideas and information in relation to community cohesion and to counter myths and rumours. Communication is via a newsletter and the network now has 78 members;
- Faith communities: It is recognised that faith groups make a significant contribution to the well being of many vulnerable or disadvantaged individuals and to the overall peace and harmony of our communities. Positive relationships have been developed with key faith leaders and this has resulted in the first Wrexham Interfaith conference. Actions arising from the conference will strengthen local interfaith dialogue and enable improved communication between the faith and secular organisations.
- Community Cohesion Reference Group: Limited communication between the statutory sector and minority communities has been of major concern to the council and its partners. Through the Strategy we have established a Community Cohesion Reference Group that works particularly with different Black and Minority Ethnic [BME] and Nationality communities. The group provides feedback on cohesion work and areas of community concern. This has enabled closer communication between communities and service providers along a number of themes e.g. education, hate crime, emergency planning, cultural competency;
- Awareness Raising Toolkit: It is recognised that community cohesion plays an important role in taking forward the equalities agenda. Central to this is raising awareness of the diversity of the Wrexham people. To do this we have developed a range of accessible resources including a Gypsy and Traveller community DVD, a Carers community DVD, quizzes, information sheets and booklets. These resources are made available to staff in local public sector and voluntary sector organisations;
- One Wrexham Charter of Belonging: The One Wrexham Charter of Belonging is a key achievement for the Strategy. It sets out the core values of the Strategy – recognition and respect for diversity. 180 individuals and organisations are now signed up to the Charter as a demonstration of their commitment to these values.
- Young People's Charter of Belonging: Working with our young people we have also developed a Young People's Charter of Belonging. This has retained the values of the original but put them into a language that is more meaningful to young people. This version of the Charter has been signed up to by all Wrexham primary and secondary schools as a demonstration of their commitment to the values it expresses ;
- Young People: With our partners we have taken forward consultation activities with young people in relation to community cohesion. This has enabled us to identify their priorities for inclusion in the next Community Cohesion Strategy and action plan;

- Tackling Hate Crime: Addressing hate crime has been a key priority for Community Cohesion Co-ordination Group and for the Wrexham Community Safety Partnership. Through the Strategy we have recruited and trained 31 Third Party Reporting Centres as part of the anti hate crime project. This has resulted in more victims coming forward, increased support being provided to victims and partner organisations achieving a better understanding of hate crime and its effects; and
- Supporting minority communities: We have continued to co-ordinate support for Migrant Workers, Gypsies and Irish Travellers and Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the County Borough. This has improved their access to services and integration into wider Wrexham activities.

## **PRIORITIES FOR 2011-14**

### **Identifying core principles:**

Through the consultation process five core principles identified in 2007 were confirmed as being key to the future cohesion agenda:

1. Engaging with the local community who have lived in Wrexham for many years (see Outcome 3 in Action Plan, appendix C);
2. Engaging with new communities (see Outcome 1 in Action Plan, appendix C);
3. Recognising that young people are important to the cohesion debate and have much to contribute (see Outcomes 4, 5, and 6 in Action Plan, appendix C);
4. Ensuring leadership and positive role models in all communities (see Outcome 2 in Action Plan, appendix C); and
5. Providing appropriate training, information and skills for partner organisations (see Outcome 2 in Action Plan, appendix C).

In addition the consultation process identified close link between community cohesion and the Council's community regeneration approach.

The Council's Community Regeneration Strategy [2008/13] describes engagement with local communities to identify and respond to opportunities to improve peoples' economic, social and environmental outlook. In this context 'community' refers to a geographical community – a village, a neighbourhood. While community cohesion takes a 'whole community approach' with specific initiatives targeted at people with protected characteristics, overall both strategies are concerned with the same people. Through the consultation process the need to explore common priorities and principles was identified as a fundamental principle for future joint working.

Key shared priorities and principles include:

- Learning and awareness raising in communities;
- Learning and awareness raising in staff teams;
- Integration opportunities within and between communities;
- Understanding needs;

- Capacity building for grassroots organisations;
- Mainstreaming in order to ensure progress is maintained; and
- Robust evaluation to ensure outcomes are met.

These shared principles will be further explored through the development of the Community Cohesion Strategy 2011-14 Action Plans.

### **Mainstreaming:**

Through the 2008-11 Strategy we helped to develop communication between minority communities and statutory and voluntary sector agencies so that service providers understand individual and community needs. As a result service providers can work together more flexibly around the needs of the individual or community; targeting scarce resources where they are really needed. This mainstreaming approach puts people at the centre, validates their needs and is more cost effective. Over time this approach enables an independent relationship to grow between the community and the service provider.

The need to support all communities with protected characteristics is clearly expressed in the Single Equality Act [2010] which reinforces the pro-active duty on public bodies to promote positive relationships between people from different backgrounds, particularly in relation to:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender;
- Sexual orientation;
- Language;
- Faith and belief; and
- Race and ethnicity.

We have worked with a wide range of individuals and groups including those with a protected characteristic to ensure their views and cohesion priorities have been taken into account in the development of this Strategy. [See appendix 2 for full details of consultative groups]

### **Monitoring and evaluation:**

Monitoring and evaluating our cohesion work is important. We need to know how effective the work we do is and whether it meets the needs of the people we serve.

#### **Monitoring:**

The Community Cohesion Co-ordination Group [CCCG] met quarterly as agreed with representation from partner agencies and council departments. The group has monitored progress in implementing the action plan and has provided guidance where requested. A traffic light system has been implemented within the action plan:

Green = on track  
Amber = slightly off track, action required  
Red = very off track, urgent remedial action required

Good progress has been made in all key areas of the multi agency action plan with quarterly monitoring reports being provided to the CCCG. The momentum generated by the first Strategy needs to be maintained as the current projects are further developed in line with our future cohesion objectives.

To improve the effectiveness of our monitoring arrangements we will adopt the Results Based Accountability approach. This means:

- being clear about what cohesion 'results' we want to achieve;
- understanding what success will look and feel like;
- agreeing the practical steps we need to take to achieve the success we want; and
- agreeing with our partners the measures we will use to test whether we have achieved the results we want.

The CCCG will monitor how well we use the Results Based Accountability approach and the results we achieve.

#### Evaluation:

A baseline for measuring the level of community cohesion in Wrexham has been established using the People's Voice Survey. This is a process of consultation and research aimed at gaining feedback from a representative sample of Wrexham residents on key issues.

This form of research has been used three times to seek the views of residents on community cohesion in their local area, in September 2005, January 2007 and again in January 2009.

The results from the surveys indicate that people are now more likely "to meet and talk to people of a different ethnic origin in everyday situations" than in 2005. In 2005, 31% of respondents said that they meet and talk with people of different ethnic origins at work compared to 41% in 2009. Resident's views of whether ethnic differences are respected have increased since 2005 from 51% to 67%. In addition, perceptions of whether people of different backgrounds get on well together have increased from 60% to 63%.

Through monitoring and evaluating community cohesion projects we are able to identify issues and take action, e.g:

- analysis of hate crime data indicated that people with a disability were not reporting hate crime. As a result we held a Disability Hate Crime conference to clarify the issue and develop an action plan;

- analysis of Community Tension reports has led additional community support being put in place where it was needed to tackle specific community tension issues;
- feedback from the Community Cohesion Co-ordination Group and Community Cohesion Reference Group has helped us to develop better relationships with a number of minority communities; and
- feedback on the One Wrexham newsletter has allowed us to provide objective information in relation to myths and rumours that can damage community relationships.

However, more information is needed to fully evaluate the impact of the work at a community level; particularly where the activities to promote community cohesion involve a number of partner agencies.

### **Community Cohesion Priorities – 2011-14**

The consultation process has confirmed that the original priority areas are still relevant and provide a sound basis for future cohesion work. We should continue to take a whole community approach together with providing targeted community support where there is an identified need, particularly in relation to people with a protected characteristic. It was also recognised that children and young people have a significant contribution to make to community cohesion. Therefore, 'Children and Young People' have been identified as an additional community cohesion priority area for 2011-14.

Using the Results Based Accountability approach to monitoring the Strategy we have developed a way of describing these priorities that helps us to show whether people are better off as a result of our actions.

#### The result we want the Strategy to achieve:

- Wrexham is a peaceful and harmonious place where people have a sense of belonging and get on well together.

#### What this result will look like:

- Wrexham is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.
- Wrexham is a place where community tensions are understood and are peacefully resolved at an early stage.

#### How well are we doing so far?

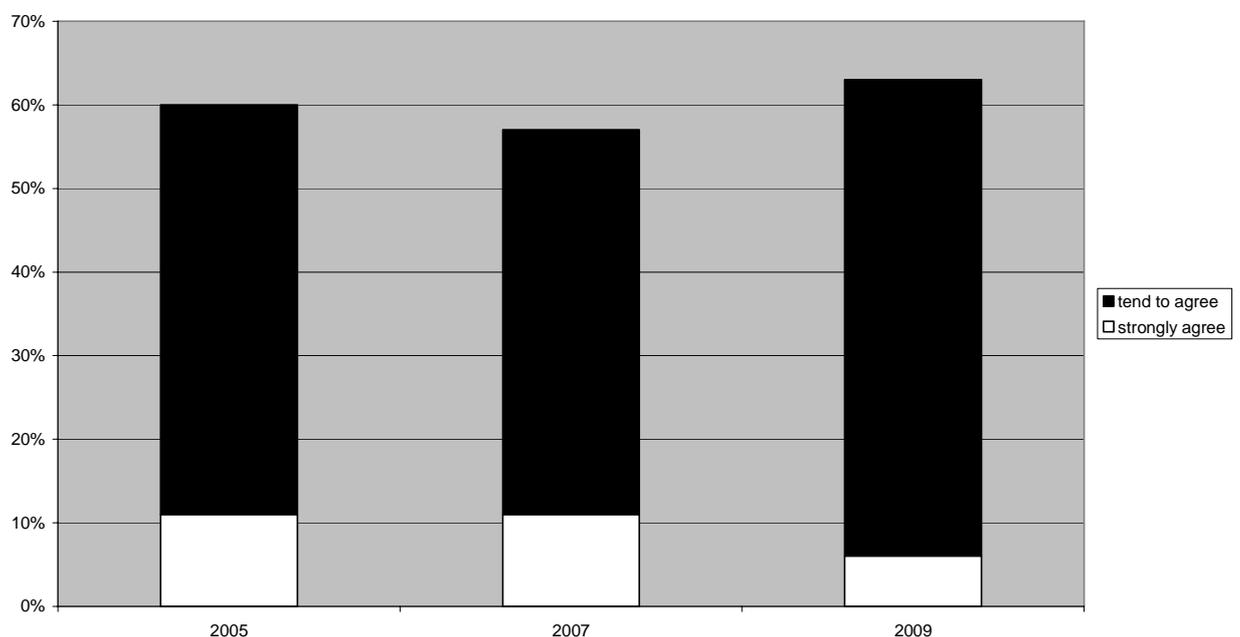
In order to agree what we will do over the next 3 years it is important to understand:

- how we have done so far; and
- what factors are likely to influence whether we are successful over the next 3 years.

Taken together, this information will help us to decide what activities we need to do to make sure we achieve the right result.

Using the People's Voice citizen consultation panel we are able to assess whether we are making progress on our aim to make sure Wrexham is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. The panel is made up of people from a cross-section of the local population and the responses are weighted to match the characteristics of the wider population in relation to a number of factors including age, gender, employment status and area of residence.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that your local community is a place where people from different backgrounds get along?



When asked whether their local community is place where people from different backgrounds get along, 63% of respondents in 2009 tended to agree or strongly agreed that it was. This is broadly consistent with 2005 and is a statistically significant increase on 2007.

While we have made progress in achieving our aim it is important to acknowledge that communities may come under increasing pressure:

- changes to services as a result of local and national public sector restructures;
- changes in local migration patterns and national immigration policy;
- changes to the local and national economic picture that impact on employment, the housing market, national and local social policy; and
- local, national and international events that influence local attitudes to different communities.

While it is difficult to accurately assess the possible impact of these factors, members of the Community Cohesion Co-ordination Group agree that they have the potential to undermine community relationships and give rise to tensions which, if left unchecked can lead to unjust assumption or fear. At worst they can lead to prejudice and intolerance. Therefore, it will be important that this Strategy helps communities to deal positively with these issues.

The actions we will take to achieve the result:

‘Wrexham is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together’

We have identified 6 key outcomes that we will be working on over the next 3 years in order to achieve this result:

<b>Outcomes:</b>	<b>What this will look like:</b>
1. Minority communities are represented on strategic partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased representation of minority communities’ views on strategic partnerships. [Wrexham Local Service Board, Health Social Care and Well-being Strategic Partnership, Community Safety Partnership, Children and Young Peoples Framework for Partnership, Local Safeguarding Children Board]</li> </ul>
2. Public, voluntary and community sector staff understand who our communities are and what they need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community views inform Equality Impact Assessments.</li> <li>• Public, voluntary and community sector staff are more culturally competent and confident to engage with minority communities.</li> </ul>
3. Different communities come together in everyday situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are confident to mix with people from different backgrounds.</li> <li>• Agencies are confident to bring together people from different backgrounds.</li> </ul>
4. People are confident to report community tensions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community tensions are reported.</li> </ul>

5. Children and young people influence the community cohesion agenda.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people from minority communities are represented on strategic partnerships.</li> </ul>
6. Children and young people are confident to mix well together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and Young people are confident to mix with people from different backgrounds.</li> <li>Agencies working with children and young people are confident to bring together children and young people from different backgrounds.</li> </ul>

Each of these outcomes will be delivered through the Strategic Action Plan which is described at Appendix C.

In addition project level action plans will be developed to deliver each of the strategic outcomes.

Monitoring and review:

Progress on implementing the Strategic Action Plan and the annual operational action plans are reviewed quarterly by the Community Cohesion Co-ordination Group and annually by the council's Corporate Governance and Policy Scrutiny Committee.

**APPENDIX A**

Members of the Community Cohesion Co-ordination Group:

- Wrexham County Borough Council [WCBC]
- Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham [AVOW]
- National Public Health Service [NPHS]
- Glyndwr University
- North East Wales NHS Trust [NEWT]
- North Wales Fire + Rescue Service
- North Wales Police
- Wrexham Local Health Board [LHB]
- Yale College
- Equalities and Human Rights Commission [Wales]
- Welsh Refugee Council
- Caia Park Partnership
- Job Centre Plus

**APPENDIX B**

Consultative groups:

- WCBC Corporate Governance and Policy Scrutiny Committee
- Community Cohesion Co-ordination Group
- Community Safety Partnership
- Community Cohesion Reference Group

Faith Leaders / Interfaith Network  
Disability groups  
LGBT groups  
AVOW / Voluntary sector network  
Local Service Board partner organisations  
WCBC departments

**APPENDIX C**

Strategic Action plan to deliver the Community Cohesion priorities 2011-14.