

# OLDHAM COMMUNITY COHESION ADVISORY GROUP



**Annual Report** 07-08

## Foreword

### Welcome to the first annual report of the Community Cohesion Advisory Group (CCAG)

The CCAG provides advice and direction to The Oldham Partnership on community cohesion in Oldham, and the development of policy and practice in support of this. The group comprises community cohesion advisors and practitioners from a range of organisations and was launched in 2006, following the restructure of the Community Cohesion Partnership.

This document aims to provide an update of the significant progress that has been made in implementing the recommendations identified within the 2006 review of community cohesion in Oldham by Ted Cattle.

Oldham is increasingly being recognised for its work to build a cohesive Oldham. We have refreshed our Community Cohesion Strategy - built around the three pillars of identity, equality and engagement – which set clear cohesion priorities and targets for the Borough, supported by a comprehensive action plan.

A range of activities have been commissioned in support of this, such as: Good Relations Oldham, Leading to Respect and the nationally acclaimed play, 'One Extreme to the Other' and this document will report on the progress of these activities. Oldham is also breaking new ground in making community cohesion integral to regeneration programmes (such as Housing Market Renewal and Building Schools for the Future).

**Father Phil Sumner** Chair Community Cohesion Advisory Group

## Community Cohesion Advisory Group Vision

The CCAG is contributing to making Oldham a Borough in which people:

- share a sense of belonging and common identity;
- are strong in their own identities and respect others;
- relate to each other; and
- play their part.

### In order to create a Borough that is:

- more equal; and
- resilient to threats and conflict

## Community Cohesion Strategy

### A place where everyone is proud to belong

Oldham's Community Cohesion Strategy 2008-2011 incorporates the key recommendations from the Cattle review of 2006. It provides clear strategic objectives, priorities and targets and includes key milestones by which we will measure our progress. The Strategy also integrates national developments, including the Local Government White Paper; the new responsibility for local government in preventing violent extremism; and the report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion. Locally, it has been linked into a range of initiatives including: the introduction of Community Councils within the Borough; the refresh of our Local Area Agreement; our Housing Market Renewal programme; Building Schools for the Future and the development of Oldham's Community Engagement Strategy. The Strategy has been consulted on widely and has been approved by the Oldham Partnership in May 2008. The CCAG will have responsibility for monitoring progress on the action plan and reporting to the Oldham Partnership.



## Shaping the Local Area Agreement

Oldham's Local Area Agreement (LAA) has been used by Government as an exemplar for other areas. The CCAG serves as a specialist advisory forum for the Oldham Partnership, contributing to the LAA development process. The group has also acted as a consultative body for the recent consultation on LAA indicators. For example, the CCAG made specific recommendations on tier one indicators relating to, the "Overall/general satisfaction with local area" and the "Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together". The Oldham Partnership concurred on both recommendations. Specific activities and initiatives to improve community cohesion are taking place within the delivery programme for the LAA and updates of those activities are included in this report.

## Cohesion and Engagement

Community Engagement is intrinsic to Community Cohesion. Community engagement is a term that refers to a range of processes and activities carried out with, or between people, that make up communities. These include interaction, information sharing, participation, consultation, involvement and empowerment. Oldham's Community Engagement Strategy was approved by The Oldham Partnership in October 2007. The Strategy aims to increase the voice of Oldham's residents, promoting equality and inclusion by relating to Oldham's Community Cohesion Strategy. Work has already begun on this, with the work of the Community Engagement Commissioning Group who has responsibility for commissioning activities around cohesion, engagement and culture within the Borough.



## Education Sub-committee of the Community Cohesion Advisory Group

This Committee came into existence in 2005, to enable the CCAG to be part of the process of driving the Community Cohesion agenda in schools. Chaired by Richard Gore from Oldham MBC, it has achieved much during the last few years. The Committee became quickly involved with other partners, after the earthquake in Kashmir, to make sure that Oldham's schools participated in the Mayor's earthquake appeal; money collected funded the building of a primary school in Kashmir.

It was also an active partner in organising a teacher training day in October 2005, addressing Community Cohesion. A lead practitioner from each curriculum area shared ideas about how to nurture different identities through the delivery of the curriculum. Maurice Coles, of the School Development Support Agency, wrote that this was "truly pioneering work". He also said that comments registered by participants were all "positive with a number effusive in their praise". Work is being continued in this area, with a Teaching and Learning Group drawing up a curriculum entitlement statement in April 2008. The co-operation of more lead practitioners is currently being sought, so as to embed good practice in this regard. It is hoped that the knowledge gained, will also aid the smooth transition of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

The sub-committee has also been a partner in developing the 'Philosophy for Children' programme in several schools, as an aid to community cohesion. It has encouraged the "Books for Schools" project, providing good quality books about Islam. It has been an active partner in developing and supporting the Oldham Young People's Inter-faith Forum and the Second Young British Muslim Conference (October 2007). It is also currently developing work between Peacemaker and the schools, training learning mentors to address and transform the behaviour of those responsible for racially motivated incidents in schools.





## Police Independent Advisory Group

Police Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) were introduced nationally in 1999, following recommendations made by the Macpherson Inquiry into the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence. IAGs play a vital role in working with the Police, to rebuild trust and confidence amongst minority communities, particularly those that are sometimes described as hard to reach. Their aim is to improve the quality of policing services to all communities. A key contribution of IAGs has been to highlight where police actions may have disproportionately impacted on particular minority communities.

The CCAG worked with Oldham Police in establishing Oldham's IAG, and supporting it during its first year. The IAG meets 6 times per year and, on occasion, a smaller group meets to discuss a specific issue. For example, the group may meet to advise on the impact that a critical incident could have on a community. Independent advisors have provided vital advice on a wide range of Police operations, from strategic advice about policy decisions, to tactical advice in major investigations. Oldham's IAG membership is made up of people who reflect the composition of their local community, not people who are asked to represent it. Consultation through representation takes place in other ways. Advisors are asked to speak with family and friends to seek their opinion. However, people from a community may have a better understanding of the issues affecting its members, than someone who is not part of the community.

## Community Cohesion Evaluation Project

This year, the Community Cohesion Evaluation project launched the Community Cohesion Evaluation Toolkit. Designed to help people involved in the delivery of projects, particularly with limited time and resources, the aim of the toolkit is to assist in the evaluation of projects and their impact on community cohesion. The materials in the toolkit are also applicable to more general evaluation work.

The project is currently overseeing a 2008 Oldham resident's survey, which incorporates community cohesion indicators (repeating substantial elements of the 2006 You and Your Community survey). This will update baselines in the Community Cohesion Strategy, and inform target setting. The survey is also providing evidence to inform the Local Area Agreement and development of Oldham's Housing Market Renewal (HMR) programme. The Community Cohesion Evaluation Officer has been closely involved in the commissioning process, sample design and survey design.

The project has also developed and presented a workshop on ‘Developing Local Community Cohesion Indicators’ at the Local Government Association Migration Matters Conference in January 2008. This workshop shared lessons learned from Oldham’s approach to building an evidence base around community cohesion, particularly around the benefits of partnership working.

In December 2007, the project organised and contributed to the Forum for Oldham Research Seminar on Economic Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers. The seminar, which presented recent research on economic migrants, undertaken by Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory, included Oldham as a case study. Steering-group involvement in follow-on research on economic migration is currently being undertaken.

The project is currently project managing the ‘Developing Community Cohesion in Areas of Housing Market Change’ project, which uses qualitative research with stakeholders and residents, to develop a model for building community cohesion in Chadderton North, which will be transferable to other areas in transition.

The project also provided advice and support around research and evaluation with relevance to community cohesion to a wide range of organisations over the year, including: the SRB6 End of Scheme evaluation, Philosophy for Children and Communities, Oldham and Rochdale HMR Pathfinder, Building Schools for the Future and many others. Further work has been carried out in promoting the mainstreaming of community cohesion across a wide range of areas, through contributions to Oldham in Profile, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and ward profiles.

## **Good Relations Oldham** What is Good Relations Oldham?

Good Relations Oldham is a network of people living or working in Oldham, who aim to; build good relations within and between the communities of Oldham, reduce community tensions and prevent conflict and support communities and organisations in managing and resolving disputes. Mediation Northern Ireland provides advice and support for the work.

The work is now led by a local management group, but with support from Mediation Northern Ireland including a half time field manager.

The project is developing a pool of practitioners who can undertake community mediation casework (e.g. to help resolve community disputes), develop longer term good relations projects (e.g. to uncover the issues underlying community tensions

and support work by local people and organisations to address these and prevent problems occurring) and holding workshops to enable discussion of issues.

The project currently only has a limited pool of active practitioners, and the focus in 2007/08 was on providing introductory training to enable this to be expanded. Over 130 people attended one day courses on Conflict Awareness, and 23 of these progressed to a two day Introduction to Mediation Course. During 2008/09 some of these will become trainee practitioners in the project, becoming involved in supervised work on cases and projects and taking part in a three day mediation skills course. Subject to satisfactory progress, they will be licensed as mediation practitioners with the project.

The project is currently working on two cases: facilitating dialogue between a local organisation and a section of the local community, and a dispute within a particular neighbourhood which has the potential to escalate more widely.

## **Oldham Interfaith Forum**

The Forum exists to create cohesion between the different religious groups represented in the Borough. Besides developing and supporting the Leading to Respect Group, through its early days of existence, the Forum has had another very busy year.

The work, for which it has become best known locally, is perhaps organising events such as the Festival of Light, or the Ramadan/Harvest Fast, which are attended by approximately 650 people. The Forum also hosts “Any Questions” events in different parts of the Borough. This year they travelled to the Saddleworth Museum for one such well-attended event, which was broadcast twice on Oldham Community Radio. The responses given at these events often help to dispel myths and to increase understanding and respect between the different religious communities.

Schools are also keen to be involved in raising awareness of these communities and the Forum has been inundated with requests to give lessons on Inter-faith issues, or to facilitate visits to different places of worship.

Having also established a Young People’s Interfaith Forum, involving most of the Secondary Schools and Colleges of the Borough, the intention now is to enable this group to organise its own Festival of Light for young people.

Recently, the quality of the work carried out by Interfaith Forum has been recognised internationally; two of its members were invited to Brazil in February, to give a lecture at the World Conference on the Development of Cities.

## Leading to Respect

Seventeen young people from some of the different ethnic and religious communities of Oldham took part in the Leading to Respect Programme. This programme was conceived by Oldham Interfaith Forum, to create future leaders for the Borough in Community Cohesion. Using John Paul Lederach's idea for creating a web of cohesion, appropriate human anchor points for the web were identified, in this case, young people with influence in their own peer groups. The young people took part in six preparatory sessions on understanding prejudice and addressing it and visited Srebrenica and Auschwitz, where they were faced more keenly with the horrific results of extremism.

Their experiences successfully galvanised them into action and they now continue to build the web of cohesion. On their return, they have met regularly and have begun to chart a way forward for future activity. They have already delivered several presentations about their programme to about a thousand people. One of the listeners was heard to say, "If they are our future, we're in good hands!" They have also given interviews for local and national radio. They now intend to enable the web of cohesion to grow even further, as they organise for a group of about 40 other young people from different backgrounds, to spend a day together on the Krypton Factor assault course. It is hoped that this will be the first of many such days involving different young people. The group is energetic, keen and organised. You can be certain that we will be hearing much more of them!

## PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Oldham is part of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) Preventing Violent Extremism programme, funded through the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Path-Finder Fund. Oldham MBC has developed a number of successful projects, which have attracted local and national attention. The following points offer an overview of the projects to date.

- Organisational capacity building - improving the ability of the Council, Police and other partners, to work with Muslim communities. A profile of Muslim communities in Oldham is being developed to assist the Police, Council and partner agencies to build a greater understanding of the community in order to develop better relationships.

- Oldham MBC has supported local voluntary faith groups, such as the Young Muslim Organisation, in developing innovative approaches to working with marginalised young people. One such project, is delivering a series of workshops and residential training with young people and the American ex-gangster rapper, Napoleon.

### Three projects have been commissioned from community groups.

- The first project involves working with the Oldham Mosque Council, various Muslim groups and other organisations to develop effective partnership working. The project has employed a local Imam as a development worker. He is currently working on residential training programmes with the representatives of Oldham's Mosque Council.
- The OAK project is delivering a citizenship programme. Currently they are developing materials on citizenship and using two mosques as pilots.
- The Peacemaker project has been commissioned to develop leadership programmes with young women and men.
- 'One Extreme to the Other' - The play 'One Extreme to the Other' was developed in partnership with GW theatre company in 2007. It focuses on extremism, both from the far right and in the name of Islam. The play is aimed at young people from year 10 upwards, but also works well with adult audiences. It is hard hitting but also a very entertaining, and funny, piece of theatre.

The play has been performed to over 2,500 year 10 pupils in Oldham secondary schools, and to students at The Oldham College, Oldham Sixth Form College and the University Centre. It is currently on a tour of 25 community venues around the Borough. A recent community performance at Corpus Christi school in Chadderton attracted over 100 residents.

A website has also been developed as part of the commission, which contains follow up material (including lesson plans for teachers in participating schools) plus comments from people who have seen the play. For example, one person commented: "the play made me think about the issue of extremism and think and respect others before the play I never really thought about the issue but it has changed my views now. The play had a strong message, it was very effective." For further information, please see [www.extremenews.org.uk](http://www.extremenews.org.uk)

Performances of the play have been commissioned in many other parts of the country, and it was also performed at the national Preventing Violent Extremism conference attended by Hazel Blears MP, the Minister for Communities & Local Government.

## We're in it Together' Community Conference

Following the highly successful 'Great People Great Place' conference in 2007, a second conference, Oldham - We're in it Together took place on Saturday, 8th March 2008. Over 200 people attended the event, over half of which were young people. The aim of the conference was for residents of Oldham to discuss how together, we can make Oldham a Borough to which we are proud to belong. The event was also an opportunity for representatives from across the Borough to showcase their projects and share ideas with other delegates. A special performance of 'One Extreme to the Other' took place and residents had an opportunity to comment on the play. Participants signed up to belong to a residents' network to join up ideas and take work forward in the future.



## To the future

The work of the Community Cohesion Advisory Group has gained significant momentum over the past twelve months. The implementation of the Community Cohesion Strategy will put into place a considerable work programme. There is a great deal to achieve, in both the delivery of activities and in measuring the impact of what we do. However, the commitment of the Community Cohesion Advisory Group to implement the strategy cannot be undervalued.