

## Speaking Out Briefing Paper No. 5

### Community Cohesion

**Speaking Out is a partnership between the National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO) and the National Council of Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) to build a voice for the children and young people's voluntary and community sector across Government. The project will develop closer links between Government departments and the voluntary and community sector in delivering cross departmental plans such as *Every Child Matters* and the direct implementation of initiatives which affect children and young people.**

**The project aims to support children, young people and family voluntary and community organisations to better understanding the aims and impact on their users of a wider range of government policies and provide routes to influence them. We are funded by the Office of the Third Sector part of the Cabinet Office.**

#### Who are these briefings for?

This series of briefings intends to provide members of both NCVYS and NCVCCO and other interested parties with background and analysis on specific policy items affecting the sector.

#### Other activities

In addition to these briefings we will be developing work streams around the policy themes which will include:

- web forums;
- seminars and events;
- establishing communities of interest amongst members and other organisations on specific policy themes linking them into email groups and bringing them together for small round table meetings with policy makers;
- making representations to Government; and
- linking with wider campaigns NCVYS & NCVCCO may be developing.



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# 1. Background

The Government's community cohesion programme aims to develop a common set of 'British' values that members of different race and faith communities can identify with.<sup>1</sup> The catalyst for the development of the community cohesion agenda has been a series of events since 2001, including race riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, and the more recent London bombings.

The Government strategy for developing cohesive communities is concerned with the dual aims of providing opportunities for members of all minority communities, and ensuring that barriers within mainstream communities are removed through more robust anti-discrimination legislation. As such the community cohesion agenda shares common themes with community and neighbourhood renewal strategies.

The Government has recognised that within mainstream communities significant cultural barriers remain that deter minorities from accessing services on equal terms and participating in fully within them. The *Community Cohesion* report undertaken by Ted Cante observed that a history of physical divisions between different groups has resulted in ignorance about other communities, making it easy for misunderstandings to occur and a general distrust of other groups to develop.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the Government's intention is that by developing a robust set of values that members of minority and mainstream communities can both ascribe to this can open up opportunities that will prevent the radicalisation of Muslim youths.

According to the Office of National Statistics and the 2001 census, there are 4.6 million people from ethnic minority groups in the UK.<sup>3</sup> A significant proportion of ethnic minority communities are young people - almost 40% of the Bangladeshi community are aged under 16, as are 35% of Pakistanis. Children from these communities consistently lag behind other children in terms of educational attainment during their school careers and in higher and further education.

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1 Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society, 11

2 Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team Chaired by Ted Cante

3 <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=10991>

National Statistics show that in 2004 only 27% of Black Caribbean boys achieved five or more A\*- C grade GCSEs, with Pupils from the Other Black, Black African and Pakistani groups achieving the next lowest levels of attainment. In terms of higher education only seven% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women had a university degree in 2001. Children and young people from minority communities also remain overrepresented in the youth justice system, the Youth Justice Board estimating that a greater proportion of black and Asian males are remanded in custody prior to sentence, and that Asian males are more likely to receive custodial sentences.<sup>4</sup>

This briefing will outline different aspects of the Government's agenda reviewing key policy documents such as its strategy to increase race equality and community cohesion, as well as the work of the Commission on Cohesion and Integration, which was launched last year by the Government. We will also look at how this area of policy impacts on the agenda for children and young people and voluntary and community sector organisations working with them.

## 2. Policy Context

There are three policy streams within the Government's community cohesion strategy: encouraging minority groups to have greater interaction with mainstream communities and public services; combating intolerance of different race and faiths group; and recreating mainstream communities as entities founded on a common set of interests.

In *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* (Home Office, 2005) the government identified a number of areas where significant differences in outcome exist between black and minority ethnic children and those in majority communities. Key areas of concern for children and young people include countering the low educational achievement among certain ethnic groups, and promoting inclusion through civic activities. To improve education outcomes the paper proposes better targeting of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, a £162m fund designed to raise standards among minority groups, also giving children of minority ethnic families additional English language tuition where this is an obstacle to learning.

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<sup>4</sup> Differences or Discrimination? Youth Justice Board, 2004

*Improving Opportunity* continues the idea, developed in *Youth Matters* that volunteering, sport, and out-of-school activities are important tools in bringing young people together from different backgrounds and creating a strong community ethos.

Crucially, *Improving Outcomes* ties race equality and community cohesion objectives into the government's departmental Public Service Agreement (PSA) framework, for each department.

*Improving Outcomes, Strengthening Communities, One Year On* (Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), 2006) is a progress report highlighting some of the improvements in outcomes achieved by children and young people across different minority ethnic groups. The report identified some improvements, including a higher proportion of Black Caribbean, Black African, Indian and Bangladeshi pupils getting five or more A\*–C grades, improving in each case by more than three percentage points between 2004 and 2005.

For young people from affected communities the statistics demonstrate the higher level of risk to social exclusion that many from BME communities experience.

### 3. Findings from Research/Practice

A range of research themes are relevant to community cohesion. Within the scope of this briefing key themes include the experiences of minority communities to the concept of 'Britishness' and the experiences of barriers to participation in mainstream communities.

According to *Citizenship and Belonging: What is Britishness?* (Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), 2005) attitudes to being British held by minority communities differ within the United Kingdom. While some members of minority communities in Scotland and Wales identified with the country they lived in, others in England identified themselves within a wider British context.

**‘I’m Scottish and I’m from Glasgow. I know that the Zambia’s my country and that’s where I am from. I’m African. But people here have made me feel welcome; that’s why I don’t disassociate myself from being Scottish.’**

**‘Yeah, I’m black Welsh, you know, if you’re born in Wales, you’re black, you’re black Welsh’<sup>5</sup>**

While according to the CRE report English, in contrast to Welsh or Scottish, was identified with being white, and prompted more respondents willing to identify as British:

**‘I feel British because I’m living here from quite a long time and my children are born and brought up here, born and educated here, and my next generation will be in this country. So I feel I am very much a British’.** (Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, London)

**‘We are British Asians. We are certainly not English, even if we live in this country.’** (Indians, Birmingham)

**‘The first thing that comes to mind when you say English is a white person. You don’t see a black person as English.’** (Black Africans and black Caribbeans, London)<sup>6</sup>

Other research examines the experiences of groups, such as Muslims, in identifying with wider trans-national groups. *Living apart Together: British Muslims and the paradox of multiculturalism* (Policy Exchange, 2007) explores the attitudes of British Muslims looking at some of the reasons for a rise in Islamic fundamentalism amongst the younger generation. The report explores questions of identification and being ‘British’ against the background of religion, culture, and their experiences as a minority community.

The report notes a range of different attitudes to the question of whether Muslim youth, in particular, can fully participate and identify with a wider community defined by generally shared interests:

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<sup>5</sup> Statement from Black Caribbeans, Cardiff

<sup>6</sup> Citizenship and Belonging: What is Britishness?, CRE, 2005.

**‘As an ethnically Asian Muslim, but born and bred in this country, I am unambivalently British. I have never felt a conflict between my country, my religion and my background... But somehow a British born white person is immediately accepted, whatever their parental origins, while people of colour are always different. Recently there have been British voices raised claiming that Islam is incompatible with British values. But being British and Muslim are not at odds.’**

**‘I do actually feel strongly attached to being a Muslim – culturally though, in that it does define part of my identity – and British. Islam gives me a sense of belonging but I do see myself very much as British – England is my home.’** (Female, Muslim, 22, Manchester)

**‘... I don’t feel attached to the ‘Muslim community’ at all, if such a thing exists. I think that the experiences of Muslims are so varied that you can’t group them into a community. Hmm, about the ummah... I don’t relate in that way, because I’m not religious enough’.** (Female, Muslim, 21, London)

**‘... I belong to that [Muslim] community and that should be the only community there is’.** (Female, Muslim, 23, London)<sup>7</sup>

The Home Office’s Citizenship Survey examines a broad range of attitudes that demonstrate how close citizens feel to the UK. Key findings in the survey include show that almost half of those surveyed feel racial prejudice in Britain increased in the previous five years, while 37% of people from minority ethnic groups expected worse treatment from a range of public services. While young people didn’t think that there was more racial prejudice than five years ago, adults from minority communities were the most positive about where they lived – with 76% aged 75 or over admitting they ‘definitely’ enjoyed living in their neighbourhood. The corresponding figure for young people aged 16 to 19 years was 48%.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Living apart Together: British Muslims and the paradox of multiculturalism*, by Mirza, Senthilkumaran and Ja’far, The Policy Exchange, 2007 (ISBN 10: 1-906097-02-X, ISBN 13: 978-1-906097-02-8)

<sup>8</sup> 2005 Citizenship Survey: community cohesion topic report

A recurring question raised by researchers is whether policing of minority communities is affecting the willingness or ability of minorities to engage positively with mainstream communities.<sup>9</sup> A Home Office *commissioned report Assessing the Impact of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* showed significant differences in attitudes between older members of minority communities who felt that in policing at least attitudes have changed toward the status of minority communities in the UK and young people in the same community. Where one older person claimed that:

**'The police have built upon the good relationships they developed. There's still things that are wrong. And still police officers don't always get it right. But they're more likely to advise, consult, listen, communicate...'** (Community member, Site 5)

a young person from the same area offered an alternative view:

**'I don't like no police officers, if they wear that uniform I don't like them... I call them names when I walk down the street'**  
(Focus group participants).<sup>10</sup>

## 4. Legal Context

The community cohesion programme has developed against the background of a range of legislation outlawing various forms of discrimination and creating a range of positive duties for public authorities to promote equality of opportunity.

**The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000** brings public authorities and the police within the scope of the **Race Relations Act 1976**. The 2000 Act places a general duty on public bodies to promote both equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups. Organisations now covered by the extended Race Relations Act 1976 include police forces, local authorities and government departments.

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<sup>9</sup> Research on a range of issues connected to the place of ethnic minorities in the UK can be found through the Runnymede Trust, <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/about/>  
<sup>10</sup> Runnymede Trust, <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/about/> Home Office Research Study 294. *Assessing the impact of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* Janet Foster, Tim Newburn and Anna Souhami. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/hors294.pdf>

**The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006** introduced a new offence of religious hatred, defined as *hatred against a group of persons defined by reference to religious belief or lack of religious belief*. The Act introduces a new section into the Public Order Act 1986 that makes it an offence to stir up racial hatred on religious grounds either verbally, in written materials, or through a broadcast. For an offence to have occurred material or use of words must be threatening, or intended to stir up religious status.

**The Equality Act 2006** sets out a new set of duties on public authorities 'making unlawful discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education the use and disposal of premises and the exercise of public functions' and establishes the framework for the Commission of Equality and Human Rights (CEHR). The CEHR will provide a single equality body covering discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, gender, disability, age and sexual orientation replacing the existing equality bodies.

## 5. Issues for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Children and Youth Organisations

With the ending of the Connecting Communities Plus fund there is no direct strategic government support for community based projects. The fund had been established to offer voluntary and community sector providers in the area of race equality and community cohesion three streams of funding to 2009. The community cohesion programme however incorporates a number of separate initiatives and has overlaps with other policy areas within government. As a result, while there are few specific community cohesion programmes, a number of other opportunities exist across the community and neighbourhood renewal programmes.

The New Deal for the Communities (NDC) offers funding until 2008 through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund in neighbourhoods considered particularly deprived to create opportunities for community engagement.

The governments Neighbourhood Renewal Unit has a website offering further information on the NDC and related programmes:

<http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/default.asp>

Children and young people are an important part of their communities and it is through education services and other youth activities that they access the opportunities that determine the contribution that they can make both as children and as future adults. What is clear is that not only Government but voluntary and community organisations in their service delivery and campaigning and advocacy roles need to highlight the needs of young people from these communities in the planning of services, in a more joined up manner. For example, issues such as school exclusion, mental health admissions and the high numbers in the care system will often be a precursor and/or a major influencer on the numbers of black young people in the criminal justice system. Policy development needs to give a greater overview to the causes, effects and inter-relations between these risk factors.

## 6. Resources

Department of Communities and Local Government ([www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)) has overall responsibility in government for the community cohesion programme. Many of the reports and strategies highlighted in this briefing can be downloaded from this site as can information on the Commission for Cohesion and integration.

The National Foundation for Educational Research ([www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk)) the report, *Community Cohesion for Children, Young People and their Families* can be downloaded here

The responsibility for ensuring that organisations comply with race equality duties is the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). Information and materials relating to the work of the CRE is available from [www.cre.gov.uk](http://www.cre.gov.uk).

The Runnymede Trust is a research body that looks into issues of race and inclusion. A range of related research reports and materials are available at <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/about/>





## Speaking Out Series:

**Speaking Out Briefing No. 1** – Knife, Gun, and Gang Crime

**Speaking Out Briefing No. 2** – The Government's Social Exclusion Agenda

**Speaking Out Briefing No. 3** – Children and Young People's Access to  
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**Speaking Out Briefing No. 4** – Public Service Delivery

**Speaking Out Briefing No. 5** – Community Cohesion

**Speaking Out Briefing No. 6** – The Local Government White Paper

Speaking Out is a partnership between  
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