# *Getting along together*

## *Does your project promote cohesive communities?*

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July 2010

## Introduction
This document is a tool to help people assess which local services and projects improve community relations, trust and engagement, and develop active, empowered, and cohesive citizens and communities. It will help service deliverers and service commissioners make decisions on the commissioning, re-commissioning and de-commissioning of services.

This tool is based on current research and our practical experience of what builds cohesion and big society locally. Building cohesive communities is an important part of building big society. Improving delivery on material conditions, e.g. educational attainment, housing equality, crime and community safety, financial inclusion is essential to improving cohesion.
However the **way** in which local services and activities are delivered can also significantly impact on cohesion.

Overleaf are 10 criteria for helping to develop engaged, active and participating cohesive communities. If services can demonstrate that they are achieving some or all of the criteria then they will be helping local people feel a greater sense of belonging and pride in their neighbourhood, helping local people get along better with each other, and developing trust between local people and local services.

For more detailed information on building cohesive communities see the reference section.

## Who is this tool for?
This tool is for those involved in decision-making about the re-commissioning, de-commissioning, and commissioning of services. It is also for services and projects that want to assess whether their activities positively impact on cohesion as well as meeting their primary objectives.

## How to use it?
To give you a snapshot of whether a service or activity is positively impacting on cohesion.

The tool is designed to be simple and easy to use.
Work your way through the list of 10 criteria for promoting cohesive communities. Each criterion comes with some guidance notes and some examples of the kinds of evidence to look for or gather when assessing whether a project meets the criteria. Tick the box if there is evidence that the project meets the criteria.

We assume that you are already evaluating the project or service against its primary objectives.

For detailed information on assessing whether the project or service will have a **negative** impact on cohesion please see the references section.

## When to use it
When assessing whether to re-commission, de-commission or commission services.
When assessing whether a service provides additional benefit in building cohesion locally.

## Criteria for Promoting Cohesive Communities

## 1. Does this project develop 'meaningful interaction' between people of different backgrounds?

Bringing people together in meaningful interaction is one way of developing strong and positive relationships between people of different backgrounds[1]. Meaningful interaction is when the interaction is sustained over time and participants have an opportunity to really get to know each other, learn about each others lifestyles, culture and beliefs, and form friendly relationships. Research has demonstrated that prejudice is decreased, and understanding increased when groups interact meaningfully over a sustained period of time. Cohesion is higher amongst those who bridge for almost every ethnic group.

Examples of evidence include: equalities monitoring data, duration and length of activities, participant evaluations demonstrating bridging

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| **If this service promotes meaningful interaction between different groups and communities then tick the box** | |

## 2. Does this project help to tackle local myths, rumours and attitudes that harm cohesion?

People's perceptions are often different from the facts, but people believe them very strongly and they influence their attitudes and behaviours. This can provide fertile ground for myths and rumors about other groups to develop. If these remain unchallenged they can become the fuel for escalating community tensions. Providing up to date accessible information about issues that concern local people, (e.g. local immigration), combined with staff who are able to address harmful myths, rumours and attitudes skillfully and confidently will help to promote local cohesion.

Examples of evidence include: participant evaluations demonstrating attitude / perception shift, accessible and clear information addressing local concerns, staff reports and feedback

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| **If this project helps to tackle local myths, rumours and attitudes that harm cohesion then tick the box** | |

## 3. Does this project help to tackle concerns about fairness and unfairness?

It is important that local people understand the way decisions are made about resource allocation, and that decision-making processes are seen as transparent and fair. When people feel they can influence and participate in local decision making and are fully engaged in their communities, their workplaces and everyday interactions they feel a greater level of satisfaction with their lives[2] Having discussions and debates with local people about how decisions over resources are made, and helping people understand how their neighbourhood works will help to promote local cohesion.

Examples of evidence include: staff reports and feedback, participant evaluations reporting increased voice and confidence

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| **If this project helps to tackle concerns about fairness and unfairness then tick the box** | |

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[1] http://hewstone.socialpsychology.org/
[2] M. Mean and P. Spires, State of Trust: How to build better relationships between councils and the public, (Demos, 2008), p.12

## 4. Does this project engage with hard to reach groups and communities?

Some disadvantaged groups have a greater need for services while also experiencing greater barriers to accessing them. Barriers can include a lack of access to IT, lower literacy levels, and limited social interaction outside their immediate area because of poor health, lower incomes and high unemployment. Disability, language and culture can also be factors[3]. Engaging with hard to reach groups and increasing their capacity to engage with local services and other communities and groups will help promote local cohesion.

Examples of evidence include: equalities monitoring data, monitoring data demonstrating risk of exclusion

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| **If this project engages with hard to reach groups and communities then tick the box** | |

## 5. Does this project encourage individual and social responsibility?

As well as having rights people also have responsibilities - to themselves, to each other and to the wider community. Engaging in formal volunteering opportunities, participating in local community activity and decision making, and helping others out, can positively influence cohesion, and increases individuals sense of empowerment and participation[4]. It is also an essential part of building the big society.

Examples of evidence include: service users volunteering and getting involved in activities that support the local area, and tackle local issues. E.g. organising a Big Lunch, a street or graffiti clean up, a community garden

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| **If this project encourages individual and social responsibility then tick the box** | |

## 6. Does this project encourage participants into onward progression routes?

Research shows a correlation between levels of cohesion and the overall employment rate, the numbers of people of working age on out of work benefits, and the numbers of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment and training[5]. If the service can demonstrate that it supports people to progress in terms of their education, training, and/ or employment; or that people receiving the service go on to take up formal volunteering opportunities locally then this will help promote local cohesion.

Examples of evidence include: follow up evaluations with participants, numbers into education, training or employment, partnership agreements with local colleges, employers

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| **If this project encourages participants into onward progression routes then tick the box** | |

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[3]Ide&A  http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=7816307#contents
[4] Pg 17. Cohesion Delivery Framework 2010
[5] Pg 25. Cohesion Delivery Framework 2010

## 7. Develop people's sense of belonging and pride in their neighbourhood

Belonging comes from feeling connected and loyal to a place and to the other people in that place. It is a "shared commitment to a community" brought together by "ties of common interest"[6]. Developing a sense of belonging builds confident individuals and communities and reduces tension. If the service can demonstrate that it welcomes and involves the widest range of individuals and groups in developing a story of their place, promotes both local history and an understanding of current diversity, and actively helps local people develop a sense of pride then this will help promote local cohesion.

Examples of evidence include: project reports, equalities monitoring data demonstrating diversity of participants, service users getting involved in local projects and activities

| If this project develops people's sense of belonging and pride in their neighbourhood then tick the box | |
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## 8. Develop effective community leaders

An effective community leader is someone who is in touch with and listens to all sections of their community including young people and local minorities[7]. They work in partnership, make things happen locally and make good use of resources. They are accountable to the community and are gateways rather than gatekeepers, - able to speak for the interests of their community yet able to understand and work for the benefit of all communities. They take a stand against prejudice and can calm emerging tensions. If your service develops service users voice, confidence and awareness, and encourages them to work for the good of the whole community then this will help promote local cohesion.

Examples of evidence include: participant evaluations demonstrating increased confidence and voice, and awareness of the needs of other groups and communities locally

| If this project develops effective community leaders then tick the box | |
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## 9. Develop community resilience

Resilient communities have the necessary structures and skills in place at a local level to respond rapidly to tensions and issues between communities or groups. Resilient communities have the capacity to respond to change constructively, working with others to deal with difficult community problems[8]. Resilient communities will already have developed bonding social capital and be resourceful in terms of bridging with other communities[9] If your service is helping people to manage challenges and change effectively without an increase in stress and tension between different groups and communities, and / or is developing local people's capacity and skills in conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation and community activism skills then this will help promote local cohesion.

Examples of evidence include: project activities focusing on Conflict Resolution / change management skills training; community dispute resolution activities

| If this project develops community resilience then tick the box | |
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[6] B. Parekh, What is Multiculturalism. www.india-seminar.com
[7] Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA): Characteristics of effective community leadership www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=73211
[8] M. Stein, Resilience and Young People Leaving Care, (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2005)
[9] Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC), Our Shared Future, (2007), p.111

## 10.  Work with partner agencies to provide a joined up approach to local issues

In order to deal with challenges to cohesion it is important that local agencies and services work together. Sharing information, monitoring community tensions and anxieties together, tackling misinformation, myths and rumours, being aware of what other services provide and how different services and projects complement and work with each other will all help to build an up to date and detailed picture of pressing cohesion issues. If your service or activity is part of a network of local agencies where cohesion issues are monitored, discussed and jointly addressed then it is likely that it will help promote local cohesion.

Examples of evidence include: partnership / network agreements with other local agencies and services, clear reporting procedures for frontline staff

| If this project works with others to provide a joined up approach to local issues then tick the box | |
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## Conclusion

Award a point for each ticked box and enter your total score here:

Work out your Promoting Cohesion score:

| **Excellent**<br><br>**7 – 10 points** |
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| **Good**<br><br>**5 – 7 points** |
| **Satisfactory**<br><br>**3 – 5 points** |
| **Poor**<br><br>**1 – 3 points** |

# Reference Section

**Useful Reading:**
*Cohesion Delivery Framework (revised) 2010*
Published by CLG in March 2010
This is a summary of the research and latest evidence on how to deliver community cohesion in local areas.
http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/cohesiondelivery2010overview

*Building Cohesive Communities – what frontline staff and community activists need to know*
Authors: J Broadwood & N Sugden. Published October 2009 by CLG.
This is easy to use, short guidance aimed at frontline staff and community activists. Based on the latest research and best practice it identifies the 10 key topics in building cohesive communities and gives helpful tips on how to improve cohesion locally.
http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1357439.pdf

*Community Cohesion Impact Assessment and Community Conflict Prevention Tool*
Authors: J Broadwood & N Sugden. Published January 2008
This tool helps you to assess whether activities or projects are going to make local cohesion worse or better.
http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/communitycohesiontool.pdf

**Useful websites:**

Improvement and development Agency for Local Government
Offers toolkits, guidance, research and best practice examples
http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=1

Institute of Community Cohesion
Offers toolkits, guidance, research and best practice examples
http://www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/home

**About the Authors:**
Jo Broadwood and Raj Bhari have been working with local areas across the UK since 2001, helping to build more cohesive communities and working to prevent community tensions and conflict.

We would like to acknowledge the input of Jon Underwood and Frances Jones from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, David Anderson from Communities and Local Government, and Nicola Sugden, Local Improvement Adviser for Community Cohesion.

We would like to thank Magic Me, and the St Paul's Way Development Project for trialling the first version of the tool and offering advice on improvements.

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