

12 September 2016

Community cohesion

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper seeks the Board's view on the LGA's proposed work on community cohesion following the EU referendum.

David Evans, founder of The Campaign Company, will be attending the Board meeting to outline some of the findings from the firm's work supporting councils on cohesion issues.

Recommendation

That the Board agree the proposed activities outlined in the paper.

Action

Officers to take forward as directed.

Contact Officer: Ellie Greenwood
Position: Senior Adviser (Regulation / Community Safety)
Telephone No: 020 7664 3219
Email: ellie.greenwood@local.gov.uk

Community cohesion

Background

1. Concerns about community cohesion have increased following the referendum campaign on Britain's membership of the European Union. Since the vote to leave the EU in June there has been a spike in race hate crime, with police figures showing 3,192 hate crimes reported in the period between 16-30 June, and 3,001 incidents between 1-14 July. The number of incidents in the first two weeks of July represents an increase of 20 per cent on the equivalent period in 2015. For example Lincolnshire saw 22 ethnic and religiously motivated hate crime incidents in the week corresponding to the EU referendum in 2015, but 42 such crimes in the week of the referendum in 2016 and 64 crimes the week after. The recent increase follows an earlier rising trend of Islamophobic and religious hate crime over 2014-5 and previous spikes after events such as the Charlie Hebdo shootings and terrorist attacks in Tunisia and France.
2. Although recent work on integration and community cohesion has tended to be focused on the need to counteract the isolation of specific communities and threat of radicalisation, the referendum has exposed a much broader set of cohesion issues. Both the campaign and result have illustrated divisions within and between communities across the country on generational, socio-economic and geographic lines, as much as between faiths, ethnicity and nationality.
3. This learning will not be new to many local councils. However, in the wake of the referendum campaign, and in anticipation of future events that could trigger further spikes in hate crime during the process of Britain exiting the EU, there is a widely accepted need to bring communities and the country together. Supporting councils in their role at the forefront of building cohesive communities is one of the LGA's key priorities following the referendum. The new Secretary of State, Sajid Javid, has also identified community cohesion as one of his top three priorities.
4. As the Board are aware, in 2015 the previous Government commissioned Louise Casey to undertake a review of how to boost opportunity and integration of the most isolated communities in our society. The review was specifically linked to the Government's Counter Extremism Strategy - acting as the fourth strand of the strategy – and is intended to inform plans for a major new Cohesive Communities Programme. Its conclusions will undoubtedly have implications and recommendations for local government, many of which will extend across the range of community cohesion issues that are now being recognised.
5. In light of the drivers outlined above, this paper sets out proposals for our initial work to support councils on the community cohesion agenda, recognising that this may need to be expanded and adjusted once the Casey review is published. The paper also introduces the work of The Campaign Company, who will be presenting to the Board to outline some of the work they have done to support councils with effective community engagement approaches.

Issues

6. Although local government's work on community cohesion clearly has links to counter extremism and the Prevent duty, it is important to be clear at the outset that this work has a much wider focus than a single community or one specific cohesion issue.
7. It is also important to recognise that that this work and the resulting outputs need to be carefully positioned. While many of the factors that undermine community cohesion are relatively straightforward to identify, the fact that these are often linked to systemic and entrenched problems make them equally difficult to tackle at both local and central level. The LGA's work in this area cannot offer councils all the answers – but it can aim to provide useful guidance and share good practice across the sector.
8. Immediately following the referendum result, we created a new website resource bringing together a range of guidance documents and case studies to support councils in building community cohesion and dealing with local hate crime:
http://www.local.gov.uk/community-safety/-/journal_content/56/10180/7878729
9. The LGA originally developed [guidance](#) on community cohesion in 2002; this was subsequently expanded and [updated](#) in 2004. [Guidance](#) for chief executives and leaders on leading cohesive communities was published in 2005.
10. Our earlier documents developed a definition of cohesive communities that was subsequently widely adopted:

'A cohesive community is one where:

 - *There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities*
 - *The diversity of peoples different background and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued*
 - *Those from different background have similar life opportunities, and*
 - *Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.'*
11. We have now begun work to renew existing LGA guidance on building cohesive communities. While the existing documents provide a solid basis from which to work, much of the tone and context is now dated and there is a clear need and demand from the sector for updated guidance.
12. The revised guidance will cover a range of themes including: leadership, engagement, bringing different parts of the community together and key services (eg, housing, schools and education, skills and the economy etc). It will focus on both the proactive measures councils can take to enhance community cohesion, as well as reacting to events and specific issues.
13. Officers are currently working with the LGA's regional Principal Advisers to identify areas and councils that can provide expertise and case studies to help illustrate an updated document. These will reflect a range of community cohesion issues, including: faith, ethnicity and nationality; and regeneration and gentrification.

14. It is hoped that a draft of the updated guidance will be completed in October, although we do not propose to publish anything until after the Casey review is published. Subject to demand from councils, and the outcome of the Casey review, there may be scope to promote the guidance alongside regional events or workshops in early 2017.
15. Alongside this, work commissioned by the LGA's productivity programme will help to support a key facet of building community cohesion: engaging with communities. The work was originally commissioned to develop tools that help councils engage with communities when dealing with difficult and complex issues (such as financial pressures and the implications for services or devolution).
16. The LGA has therefore commissioned The Campaign Company¹ (TCC) to work with four authorities or groupings of authorities on a programme called Engaging Effectively, the aim of which is to support councils to develop the effectiveness of their consultation and engagement work with communities, thereby helping to meet some of the biggest medium and long-term challenges facing local places and support transformation. The authorities involved are Oldham (with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority), Hackney, Staffordshire and Harlow.
17. Finally, the LGA's draft submission to the Autumn Statement also reflects our concerns about community cohesion, emphasising councils' pivotal role in creating the conditions in which local communities can flourish and that councils themselves are a vital part of successful, inclusive places up and down the country. The draft submission emphasises the impact that funding cuts have had on this area of work and calls for greater funding to be available to councils for community cohesion work, including through opening up existing funding streams to councils, bringing different funding streams together and providing funding on a four year basis.

The Campaign Company

18. The Engaging Effectively project builds on earlier work by TCC focused specifically on cohesion. David Evans, founder of TCC, will be attending the Board meeting to outline some of the findings from the firm's work on cohesion issues.
19. TCC is an insight company which designs, analyses and implements research so that clients (largely local authorities, health trusts, charities and campaigning organisations) can better understand and engage their target audiences.
20. TCC's cohesion work dates back ten years to Barking and Dagenham. A catastrophic breakdown in trust and confidence between a large section of the community and the council (and other bodies) was manifest, illustrated by both the lowest National Indicator 1 score in London² and local election results. The Authority saw how this lack of cohesion presented jeopardy to many of its aspirations for the place. At the time, employment levels were up, safety was high and educational attainment was rising but reputation and confidence were plummeting.
21. TCC's insight provided an evidence base as to the underlying causes of this, and confirmed that the emotional narrative of loss was trumping the facts and figures. No

¹ <http://www.thecampaigncompany.co.uk/>

² NI1 measured perception of 'the extent to which people from different backgrounds get on well together'

amount of 'myth busting' would punch through – in fact, such tactics were compounding the problem. TCC's insight provided a platform on which to rebuild rapport between the council – officers and members - and this section of the community. Working with the council TCC was able to develop a set of practical measures to address the key issues.

22. The use of social psychology – [Values Modes](#) – was key. TCC have subsequently applied the approach extensively to help improve communication, cohesion and change behaviour.
23. Following its work in Barking and Dagenham, in 2009/2010 TCC undertook a major programme of work for DCLG that involved undertaking insight and developing recommendations for action in 31 local authority areas with some of the most acute cohesion issues in the country. It was also commissioned to work with the four local authorities in London with the lowest levels of cohesion – Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Bexley and Sutton. The report of this work has recently been reissued by London Councils in light of the recent interest in cohesion.

Next steps

24. Members are asked to:
 - 24.1. Contribute their own experience of local cohesion issues and challenges and how their authorities have responded.
 - 24.2. Provide views on the proposed work outlined above.
 - 24.3. Make proposals for other activities to be considered, subject to resources being available.

Financial Implications

25. None – the plans outlined above will be delivered within existing budgets.

Implications for Wales

26. None