

COMMUNITY COHESION: IN NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND – PART 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Northumberland InfoNet was asked by North Sunderland & Seahouses Development Trust to carry out research around community cohesion, with a view to developing community cohesion activities in the area. The research consisted of a review of literature and policy on community cohesion; a socio-economic profile of the three localities (Berwick & Islandshire; Glendale; and Seahouses & Belford); and recommendations of a methodology to be followed in order to understand and improve community cohesion in the local area.

The term 'community cohesion' has been used for centuries, describing "a state of harmony or tolerance between people from different backgrounds living within a community". However, over the past nine years, the subject of community cohesion has become far more prominent. The report contains a history of community cohesion, describing how the definition has changed over the past few years, and outlining the various key reports that have been written on the subject.

In terms of understanding and improving community cohesion in the three localities, it is suggested that two stages are carried out:

1. Build a local understanding of community cohesion.
2. Decide on a set of actions and successfully deliver them.

The first of these stages could be carried out in different ways. A set of typologies, such as the 'cohesion family groups' developed by DTZ, could be used to describe the area. A second possibility is to carry out detailed mapping of the area, gathering as much data as possible on characteristics that may influence community cohesion. As the DTZ groups do not always fit well with local areas, and as much of the data needed for 'detailed mapping' is readily available, it is recommended that the latter approach is used.

The second stage of improving community cohesion is to decide on a set of actions and successfully deliver them. The full report gives advice based on successful initiatives to improve cohesion in other geographical areas, under the headings of:

- Strategy, vision and leadership

- Community involvement
- Complexity and sustainability
- Target groups
- Communication

A number of 'best practice' resources are also given in the report. It is recommended that these sections are read carefully and investigated further to help with deciding on initiatives to improve cohesion. It is also recommended that other activities planned for the area are examined carefully to determine their impact on community cohesion.

A profile of the three localities is detailed in the report. This profile is based on the known influences of community cohesion, with a view to aiding 'detailed mapping' of the localities. It is beyond the scope of this report to investigate all data needed for the 'detailed mapping'. Therefore, further investigation will need to be carried out to find additional data for some of the influences.

Based on the profile in the report¹, the following aspects may be negatively impacting community cohesion in the three localities:

- Berwick & Islandshire: higher than average deprivation; anti-social behaviour/drugs; low satisfaction with place to live and it's facilities, health services; lack of qualifications; perceived lack of influence.
- Glendale: low satisfaction with facilities and dentists; lack of qualifications; perceived lack of influence.
- Seahouses & Belford: high proportion of holiday homes; low satisfaction with facilities & police force; lack of qualifications; disagreement that different backgrounds get on well together; perceived lack of influence.

¹ Further investigation needs to be carried out to form a more complete picture