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**To:** Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Board 21/07/09

**Subject:** Community Cohesion

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** This paper outlines the Community Cohesion agenda and its implications for KCC as a whole, including the Gypsy and Traveller Unit in particular. It also highlights current good practice and suggests future opportunities for collaborative work in this area.

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## **1. Purpose of Report**

In June 2008 Kent County Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) by the Audit Commission criticised the lack of organisation and strategic vision for community cohesion. The review stated: 'the council does not have an overarching strategic approach to cohesion and this is resulting in a lack of co-ordination and some gaps, for example the lack of a county-wide approach to promoting the contribution of migrants and countering myths'. The review does not take into account the good work already being undertaken by Kent County Council, much of it taking place under the auspices of the Safer, Stronger Communities Group. This is evidenced in a number of the County's strategies including Vision for Kent and the Community Safety Framework as well as the strategy for later life. However, the current work around community cohesion seeks to make these connections more explicit by developing a framework for community cohesion and by collating the work currently undertaken around the County to aid community cohesion.

Several core strands of work have since been undertaken at a strategic level in relation to this agenda; however it remains important to proactively mainstream community cohesion and work collaboratively across the organisation.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has decided that Gypsies and Travellers will be included, in a single ethnic minority category, in the 2011 census. The data, when published, will enable correlation of that data with other census data, for the first time.

The Audit Commission and six other national regulators (which include Ofsted) are including performance within Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) on community cohesion and diversity, including in relation to Gypsies and Travellers within Comprehensive Area Assessment, which replaced the CPA process assessing individual local authorities, and began on 1 April 2009.

## **2. Background**

The community cohesion agenda has been growing since Ted Cantle's report following the race riots in three northern towns in 2002. Since then numerous national guidance documents have been published including the CLG Cohesion Delivery Framework.

The report highlighted that cohesion is not just about integration, and not just about integrating newcomers, but has a broader remit with a commitment to social justice and tackling inequalities. Community Cohesion should not be viewed as a series of one off events but as something which should be considered as belonging both to the mainstream agenda and in relation to targeted initiatives.

Local Authorities have been advised to produce a strategy in relation to community cohesion and an action plan to ensure that the strategy leads to work within the authority to mainstream community cohesion.

## 2.1 Definition

The current definition of Community Cohesion within the CLG Cohesion Delivery Framework is:

Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

It also set out a vision of an integrated and cohesive community, based on three foundations:

- People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities
- People knowing their rights and responsibilities
- People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly.

And three key ways of living together:

- A shared future vision and sense of belonging
- A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
- Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

## 2.2 Communities and Local Government Cohesion (CLG) Framework report recommendations

Along with the advice to produce a Community Cohesion Strategy, the key recommendations for local government made by the Commission on Cohesion and Integration Delivery Framework were:

- Communities were mapped
- Tensions and opportunities identified
- BVPI performance on cohesion to be monitored
- Integration and cohesion should be mainstreamed into Sustainable Community Strategies, LSP management and wider service delivery
- Consideration was given to developing welcome packs
- Communications plan to be maintained

## 2.3. Statutory Duties

There are three National Indicator targets in relation to Community Cohesion. These are:

- The percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area.
- The percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood
- The percentage of people who have meaningful interactions with people from different background

These NIs have not been selected as one of the 35 priority targets in the Kent Local Area Agreement 2; however GOSE have indicated that they may still look at these indicators even if they are not chosen.

## 3. Community Cohesion: the role of schools

### 3.1 What is the duty to promote community cohesion?

Since September 2007 schools have had a duty to promote community cohesion. By community cohesion the DCSF means:

‘working toward a society in which there is a **common vision** and a **sense of belonging by all communities**; a society in which **similar life opportunities** are available to all and a society in which **strong and positive relationships exist** and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community’<sup>1</sup>

From a school’s perspective the term “community” includes the school, the locality, the UK and the global communities. This presents an opportunity to engage the whole community, in developing a shared sense of belonging.

### 3.2 Community Cohesion in action in Kent schools

Schools have responded positively to this new duty and it has provided a catalyst for new activities including, for example:

- Engaging all members of their school community in various mapping activities in order to develop a shared sense of belonging. These identify common experiences whilst recognising diversity in cultural background and life experiences. (e.g identifying diversity in language backgrounds)
- Identifying any groups that may not be fully accessing or participating in the life of the school and taking appropriate action. (e.g monitoring of attendance at parental consultation evenings and identifying if the practice of the school excludes particularly groups)
- Identifying gaps in attainment for groups of children or individuals (e.g. monitoring of attainment outcomes for all children in Kent and taking action to address inequality)
- Advisory Service Kent led schools through the Knowing Me, Knowing You Project. This is an opportunity for schools with diverse and distinct communities to link through ICT (flash meeting, making the news, blogs), publish and share

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<sup>1</sup> (Alan Johnson: Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Speaking in Parliament on 2nd November 2006 as quoted in the DCSF Guidance: Duty to promote community cohesion, 2007)

information about their culture, customs and traditions. The project is supported by the South East Grid for Learning.

<http://www.segfl.org.uk/microsites2/kentknowing>  
<http://www.kented.org.uk/ngfl/knowningme/index.html>

- Schools have participated in the “Who Do We Think We Are? “Week from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June, celebrating identity and diversity across the UK.

<http://www.whodowethinkweare.org.uk>

### 3.3 How is community cohesion inspected by Ofsted?

From September **2008 Ofsted** have reported on the **contribution made by schools to enhancing community cohesion**. Judgements are made from inadequate (4) through to outstanding (1) based around some key questions<sup>2</sup>:

- How effective is the school in identifying what needs to be done to promote community cohesion, in particular taking into account the needs of the communities it serves?
- What is the school doing to promote the engagement of all pupils in its own community, particularly of hard to reach groups such as those for whom English is an additional language or are from more socio-economically deprived groups, or in rural schools, those who live in isolated areas?
- How effective is the school in contributing to community cohesion within the community in which it is located?
- How effective is the school in contributing to the cohesiveness of the wider community through developing learners’ understanding of the UK community, for example by promoting common identity and values, the appreciation and valuing of diversity, the awareness of human rights, and the skills for participating in society.
- How effective is the school in contributing to the cohesiveness of the wider community through developing learners’ understanding of other communities both in Europe and globally?
- How does the school know whether its strategy is successful?

The judgement relating to community cohesion informs the overall inspection rating for the school.

### 3.4 How has Children, Families and Education supported schools in implementing the duty?

The Directorate has:

- Briefed head teachers in 2007 in preparation for the new duty.
- Produced guidance for Kent schools explaining the duty, Ofsted inspection framework and strategies to support the implementation of the community.
- Designed and developed training to schools and Local Children’s Service Partnerships on the new duties.

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from Inspecting maintained schools’ duty to promote community cohesion: guidance for inspectors (Ofsted September 2008)

- Provided training as part of the Kent Children's Trust development programme under a theme of 'Building bridges with the community' within a context of integrated working.
- Designed and delivered workshops to primary head teachers facilitating the sharing of effective practice and promoting an understanding of the duty in terms of the leadership of the school.

#### **4 Where we are now**

Several strands of work have been undertaken in relation to the community cohesion agenda at a strategic level across the county.

##### Community Cohesion Steering Group:

A Kent County Council community cohesion steering group has been set up, with representatives from each directorate. Terms of reference for the group were taken to COG on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. It is hoped that the group will be a valuable asset in mainstreaming community cohesion across the Council and in championing it across Directorates. The Steering Group is chaired by Debra Exall, Head of Strategic Policy.

##### GOSE and Kent Districts:

We have secured funding from GOSE for KCC and six Districts to hire a consultant for a period of time to create either a single strategy or framework, or individual linked strategies or frameworks.

##### Community Cohesion Database

Following some preliminary research to assess general knowledge and take up of the Community Cohesion agenda across the organisation, a questionnaire was sent out to all directorates to gather information on projects or services KCC were currently running related to community cohesion, so that this could then be transferred into a database.

This database is now complete and catalogues 88 examples from across the organisation, including all directorates. Work is now being undertaken to enable the database to be placed on Knet where it will be accessible internally to all KCC staff (in the first instance), therefore aiding mainstreaming. It will be updated on a regular basis, and used to inform future Community Cohesion work.

#### **4.1 Examples of good practice across KCC**

Local Children's Service Partnerships and schools have promoted community cohesion through a range of strategies.

##### Shepway 1 Local Children's Service Partnership

Practitioners were reporting numbers of EU Roma children missing education and also a lack of engagement with EU Roma families at parents evenings, school events etc. As a result schools put strategies in place to promote participation by identifying non-threatening opportunities for families to become involved in their children's education. Teaching Assistants have been employed to support learning and home school

communication. Bespoke coffee mornings for parents were held where interpreters were available enabling discussions regarding education issues.

Cross-agency practitioners have identified activities to promote community cohesion in particular engaging the Roma. The partnership has recently employed a Roma Bilingual Teaching Assistant to support schools with families in Folkestone. A further planned development is to have a practitioner with specific responsibility to consult with the Roma community on a variety of issues.

In a number of schools parental involvement has increased and language classes have been requested to support participation. A multi-agency forum exists to review and address needs of this group. A multi-agency approach has resulted in a reduction in the number of Roma children and young people missing education.

### Community Cohesion at Sittingbourne Community College

Sittingbourne Community College became aware of the need to be proactive in engaging the Gypsy Roma and Traveller community as a result of tension in the college. Using Family Liaison Officers the school reached out to the community and as a result employed a young Gypsy Traveller man to work as a mentor for the students. The role expanded to involve pastoral work with families, running a youth club and then into mentoring for all Y9 pupils. The school welcomes links with the community, offering college facilities for adult classes run by the community in partnership with Canterbury College. This approach has resulted in an increase in the ethnic declaration of Gypsy Roma and Traveller students increased the confidence of the community who support the school knowing that any issues will be dealt with fairly and with understanding.

### Partnership work in engaging Traveller adult learners through Information Technology in Dartford

Minority Communities Achievement Service co-ordinated a project involving schools, Adult Education, school Family Liaison Officers, North West Kent College of Further Education and the Extended Schools Development Manager. The project arose from discussions with Traveller parents and grandparents and focused on the following goals:

- Enabling Traveller parents to help their children with school work
- Improving Traveller parents reading and self-esteem
- Breaking down barriers to Traveller parents access school events
- Improving Traveller parents opportunities to participate in community events
- Develop IT skills to enable access to work

Through the provision of a mobile crèche families with young children were enabled to access IT and literacy classes delivered by an Adult Education tutor (in schools and in Libraries). The group met for a whole year and all participants received accreditation certificates for their learning. Two Traveller parents joined the library, a number were supported in producing Curriculum Vitae and a Traveller Student progressed to further study. This was an outreach project with a view to developing self-esteem and confidence.

### Children and Young People's Survey 2008

In 2008 Children, Families and Education commissioned National Foundation for Educational Research to survey children and young people on their experiences of living in

Kent. The results were analysed by ethnicity. 81% of Gypsy Roma and Traveller children who responded to the survey at primary school level indicated that they felt safe in the area in which they lived.

### Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month

June 2008 was the first ever National Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month. Its aim was to explain the history and culture of the Traveller communities, challenge myths, breakdown barriers and celebrate the richness that Gypsy Roma Travellers have to contribute to everyday life.

- Kent Library and Archives placed permanent collections of Traveller books under the banner of 'Romany Roots' at Edenbridge, New Ash Green, Swanley, Cranbrook and Stanhope. As a result of the month, two further libraries requested permanent collections - Marden and Sittingbourne where collections are now in place.
- Family Liaison Officers from the Minority Communities Achievement Service supported libraries in developing their practice. Displays of photographs were exhibited at Swanley, New Ash Green and Cranbrook with a storytelling session held at Rustall. Awareness training sessions were delivered to over 40 staff.
- As a legacy of the month other library events working with the Gypsy Roma Traveller community have taken place- Edenbridge had a Travellers Art Exhibition between July and August 2008. New Ash Green, in partnership with Kent Adult Education Service, held computer taster sessions for the local Traveller community

### Kent Adult Social Services

Following on from the Awareness Training for Libraries and Adult Education Staff, similar training is taking place in June and July 2009 for staff within Kent Adult Social Services

In 2007, as part of the South Eastern Regional Assembly consultation process, two stakeholder meetings were hosted by KCC, and managed by the Gypsy and Traveller Unit in KASS. These brought together people from Gypsy and Traveller communities in Kent, borough and County Councillors, and those from other stakeholder organisations, including parish councils, Kent Council for the Protection of Rural England. These were very productive meetings.

In 2008, Kent and Medway were the only authority areas in the SE Region to host three public meetings, across the County, which discussed future pitch needs for each area. These were also productive and constructive discussions.

### Youth Clubs run by members of the Gypsy and Traveller Communities

Supported by the Youth Service, youth clubs in Sittingbourne and Canterbury have been running for some time. A number of members of the communities have been trained in youth work, and the youth clubs also now cater for other young people in those areas.

### Work with other bodies

A whole range of day to day involvement and specific events continue. Some are initiated by KCC, others by District and Borough Councils, some by Kent Police and others by local or national Gypsy or Traveller organisations. All of these provide the relationships and the goodwill which promotes community cohesion in the area.

A number of District and Borough Councils are promoting some examples of excellent practice on this subject.

## **5. Future Opportunities/Recommendations**

We recommend that the Board:

- a) support the ongoing work on community cohesion
- b) support the development of through further initiatives
- c) identify any further opportunities for promoting community cohesion
- d) receive an update report in twelve months

### **Officer details:**

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