



IMPROVING COMMUNITY COHESION AND INTEGRATION IN STOKE-ON-TRENT

An Evaluation of Stoke-on-Trent City Council's
Community Development Initiatives

Keele Institute for Social Inclusion
January 2022

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Acknowledgements

The research team would like to thank the residents, business owners and community leaders of Normacot and Shelton for their valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by communities in Stoke-on-Trent. The participation of representatives from the charity and voluntary sector was essential to this project and we would like to thank those who offered their time to answer and discuss our questions. We are grateful for the continued support of Stoke-on-Trent city council, particularly for their understanding of the delays to data collection caused by successive Covid-19 lockdowns. Finally, we would like to thank our professional support colleagues at Keele University for providing invaluable assistance in completing the project.

1 Executive summary

The findings presented in the following report indicate three distinct, yet overlapping, accounts of integration in Stoke-on-Trent and the role that the city council, community groups, and charitable and voluntary organisations play in addressing tensions that might arise between the Pakistani and Eastern European communities residing in Normacot and Shelton.

Several possible challenges to integration were outlined by interviewees from each of the three main stakeholder groups – residents and community leaders; charity and voluntary sector workers; and public sector employees – broadly identified as:

- Limited resources, support systems, and opportunities for residents, particularly youth services and language courses.
- Lack of continuity, e.g., community development initiatives and events are short-lived and fail to embed in communities.
- Residents are largely unaware about the initiatives undertaken by the city council to support and/or improve inter-cultural community relations.

In addition to these common themes, each group identified distinct areas of concern:

- Public sector employees focused on anti-social behaviour and trust-building.
- Residents raised concerns about safety linked to drug and gang-related crime.
- Community leaders and charity and voluntary sector representatives emphasised the fragility of partnerships between community stakeholders and the city council.

Findings indicate that the city council is more likely to perceive a problem in the lack of integration between the established Pakistani community and newer Eastern European migrants that has, in its view, led to local tensions over anti-social behaviours such as fly-tipping. Yet residents and community leaders raised no real concerns about a lack of or, indeed, a need for integration between different migrant communities. Anti-social and criminal behaviours were regarded as individual rather than whole-community problems that should be appropriately managed by the authorities.

In addition to these views, community leaders and representatives from the charity and voluntary sector raised concerns about the precarious relationship between community workers and the city council, and stressed the need to ring-fence funding, services and people to establish sustainable community-led initiatives.

Despite the concerns outlined above, almost all participants expressed their affection for Stoke-on-Trent, with many referring to the friendliness of the people and an appreciation of the support systems that have evolved within migrant communities. The city council was also

praised for its commitment to improving community relations through the employment of a dedicated community development officer, and more recently for its rapid Covid-19 response.

Overall, the evaluation indicates clear structural challenges to community cohesion and integration, coupled with a lack of visibility about the work that is being done for and within communities. Nonetheless, there are also many opportunities to harness the commitment, expertise and skills of individuals and groups dedicated to improving conditions in Stoke-on-Trent. With this in mind, it is our view that the city council should seek to capitalise on existing support systems within communities, and on residents' good will towards the city, by facilitating a range of sustainable opportunities for people to connect outside of their own ethnic or faith communities.

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January 2022

2 Introduction

This independent evaluation report offers an assessment of a series of community development initiatives employed by Stoke-on-Trent city council to address community cohesion and integration issues within the settled (South Asian Pakistani) and new migrant (Eastern European) communities in Normacot and Shelton.

The purpose of this report is to support the city council in assessing its community development strategy, and to enable a range of public organisations to plan and deliver services for the future that will meet the needs of local people. To achieve this aim, the following report presents findings from interviews with key stakeholders – residents and community leaders, charity and voluntary sector workers, and public sector employees – that offer a detailed picture of the challenges and opportunities within the region. To provide a robust evaluation the following sections:

- Provide an overview of the national and local migration, community cohesion and integration context.
- Review the approach undertaken by the city council to engage communities regarding migration issues.
- Evaluate the impact of the city council's community development initiatives within the two residential communities.
- Highlight the integration challenges faced within these communities.
- Identify areas of good practice at community and public sector level.
- Make recommendations to embed good practice and encourage a more sustainable model of community-led organisation for future initiatives.

The evaluation was commissioned in October 2019. The research was suspended between March-August 2020 and again between January-May 2021 due to the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 national lockdowns. Upon restarting, the research was refocussed to include an evaluation of the city council's response to Covid-19, which is reflected in the findings.

Before coming on to the findings (sections 5 and 6), we unpack the background and context of the community cohesion and integration agenda nationally and locally (section 3), and outline our methodology (section 4). The final section of the report (section 7) presents recommendations derived from analysis of the interview data.

3 Background and context

In response to changing demographics that have seen an increase to the migrant population in parts of Stoke-on-Trent, the city council received funding from central Government to deliver a project that sought to improve community relations in the region. Amid concerns over tensions between new migrants from Eastern European countries and settled South

Asian Pakistani communities, the city council sought an assessment of the impacts of new migration on settled communities in the city, and the potential for building stronger communities and resilient community relations. The subsequent set of initiatives (outlined in section 3.4) were primarily aimed at reducing reported tensions around issues such as fly-tipping, anti-social behaviour, and frustrations about the lack of service provision for young people. The overall aim of the project was to improve engagement and interaction between residents, and between residents and local services.

To understand the national and local context within which these initiatives took place, the following sections offer a brief outline of the concepts of community cohesion and integration, provide background on Stoke-on-Trent and the local wards of Normacot and Shelton, and discuss the initiatives employed by the city council to alleviate local tensions and improve community relations.

3.1 Cohesion and integration: concepts and context

Promoting integration and building community cohesion has been a central objective of successive UK government policy agendas since the early 2000s following pockets of unrest among South Asian Muslim communities in the north of England and in response to the increased threat of Islamist terrorism after the 9/11 attacks in New York. Subsequent reviews identified ethnic and religious segregation as a contributory factor to poor race relations and the threat of extremism (Home Office, 2001; DCLG, 2012; Casey, 2016; HM Government, 2018). However, both concepts are subject to differing interpretations and have become mired in controversy in the intervening decades.

Official government reports indicate that cohesion is a process of encouraging positive social relations and interaction between different communities in society (Local Government Association, 2004: 7). The concept has been understood variably through the prism of community relations, community safety, race equality and intercultural education, a process of managing the impacts of migration, or indeed of managing extremism (Rutter, 2015). Despite criticism about how the term can be mobilised against migrant communities, the author of the 2001 Community Cohesion Report, Ted Cantle, suggests that the concept remains useful in providing a broad definition of a variety of conditions and outcomes expected to make up social cohesion and positive community relations, such as belonging, social inclusion, equality, trust, and shared values (Cantle, 2012).

Embedded in policies and debates about community cohesion is 'integration' as a precondition for cohesion to happen (Rutter 2015). The Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper suggests that integration is indicated by 'communities where people, whatever their background, live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities' (HM Government, 2018: 10). Yet, like community cohesion, there is a lack of agreement about what integration means. Although some

perspectives frame integration as the sole responsibility of migrants, others say that it is the shared responsibility of both migrants and the host society (Spencer, 2011; Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016).

In this regard integration is a multidimensional two-way process; there is 'no integration 'end-state', no 'integrated society' but rather an ever-evolving process' (Spencer and Charsley, 2016: 4). This involves understanding that integration is the outcome of legal-political, socio-economic, and cultural-religious interactions between migrants and the host society. Incorporating migrants' and mainstream society's views on integration in setting local policy is therefore vital for positive interaction and settlement.

The best way to achieve community cohesion, therefore, is to build inclusive integration policies that involve local communities in discussions about what it means to integrate (Katwala *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, while cohesion and integration policies may be planned at a national level, it is clear that integration can only happen locally – in towns and cities, in schools and workplaces, and in neighbourhoods.

3.2 Community cohesion initiatives by other councils in England

With an appreciation of what can be learned from other contexts, this section explores the context of community cohesion in Birmingham. Birmingham is the most diverse city in the West Midlands in terms of ethnic make-up, with some neighbourhoods home for more than 70% non-white residents (Casey, 2016). Understanding the complexity of community cohesion, Birmingham city council has followed the collaborative approach outlined above in setting out the community cohesion agenda for the city. Here, communities, faith organisations, public sector agencies, businesses, and individuals worked together to put a vision and understanding of community cohesion and how it can be promoted.

Birmingham's community cohesion strategy is underpinned by eight principles, namely: (1) mainstreaming cohesion and making cohesion everyday business; (2) connecting and exchanging ideas that promote cohesion and mobilise social action; (3) nurturing and supporting aspiration of young people; (4) promoting rights and responsibilities; (5) promoting equality in all spheres of social and economic life; (6) promoting inclusive economic growth that benefits everyone across Birmingham; (7) empowering and engaging neighbourhoods; and (8) uniting people and communities through cultural and sporting engagement, expression and celebration (Birmingham City Council, 2016: 6).

The agenda is not only focused on ethnic and religious difference, but also on a range of other important factors such as economic disadvantage and social mobility. In executing this strategy, Birmingham city council has launched a set of initiatives, including:

- Founding Birmingham Community Hosting Network (BIRCH) to support asylum seekers and refugees through friendship and hospitality projects.
- Launching 'Places of Welcome' which is a community-led initiative where local community groups run community spaces (e.g. community centres) that are open for all groups/communities to go, feel belonged, and connect to others. The initiative aims to create welcoming spaces where people from different backgrounds come together and connect as equals.
- Establishing the 'Feast' which is a charity offering a space for Christian and Muslim young people (age 11-16) to interact, build friendship, and explore and dialogue religions.
- Setting up the Financial Inclusion Partnership to support the financial capability of local individuals and families through a range of activities across the city such as digital and financial trainings and employing young people in partnership with other charities and organisations.
- Arranging programmes for students in years 12 and 13 to uplift educational attainments and help them make competitive applications to medical school.
- Establishing the Smart Women Community Training Centre, a venue offering support for women who are victims of domestic abuse and with mental health issues; and offering a range of activities such as coffee mornings, gym and fitness, sewing, and national and international trips.
- Developing 'a Living Strategy' that's a knowledge bank to help build collective knowledge and understanding to support evidence-based policy and practice.
- Setting up 'Sparkbrook Clean Up' which is run by the Sparkbrook Neighbourhood Forum to tackle litter and fly-tipping through an on-street community-led campaign which runs every three months and has up to 100 local volunteers. Volunteers include families with children, local organisations (e.g., local churches, Mosques and community organisations). Children participating in the cleaning activities are rewarded with healthy treat bags or activities such as a visit to the Safari Park, London Science Museum, or other thrill activities. In addition to the benefits of cleaning-up the neighbourhood, this initiative helps bring people together and promote their sense of ownership to the area.

3.3 Stoke-on-Trent demographics

The city's population was 249,008 in the 2011 census, which had increased to 255,833 (6.4%) by 2018 (City of Stoke-on-Trent, 2019: 2). According to 2011 Census data, 95.1% of the population identified their ethnic background as white British. The second largest group was Polish (1,900), followed by Pakistani (1,300), Indian (1,200), and Chinese (560) (City of Stoke-on-Trent 2019: 36).

This ethnic make-up is reflected in the language spoken at individual and household levels, with English being the main language spoken by 94.1% (224,600) of the population (aged 3 and over). The second most spoken language is Urdu (2,400), followed by Polish (1,700) and

Punjabi (1,420), Kurdish (850) Tagalog/Filipino (510), Chinese - not Mandarin or Cantonese (490), Bengali (480), and Arabic (430) (City of Stoke-on-Trent 2019: 35).

Until recently, South Asian (Kashmiri Pakistani) migrants made up the majority of migrant settlers in the region. This is a long-established migrant population, with many arriving in the UK between 1950s and 1960s to work in local industries or to pursue entrepreneurial occupations (Dahya, 1974). Pakistani migrants settled in areas close to the city centre (Hanley), and over time the development of facilities to support the population, such as The City Central mosque and numerous specialist shops and services that cater for the community, has established the community at the heart of Stoke-on-Trent.

Although the city has witnessed flows of migration over the years, current concerns about integration centre of the recent growth of Eastern European (Accession 8) migrants who began to arrive in the city after the expansion of the European Union in 2004 to include the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Romania joined the EU three years later, further contributing to migration to the UK from Eastern Europe.

According to the City of Stoke-on-Trent (2019: 2), migration from Eastern European countries, particularly Hungary, Poland and Romania, has contributed to an increased population for the first time in 70 years. Local authority figures suggest that there were an estimated 9,000 people living in Stoke-on-Trent originating from countries that joined the EU in 2004 or later (up from 4,000 in 2011) out of a total non-UK population of 30,000.

In a study on public views on immigration in Stoke-on-Trent and its sister ward Newcastle-under-Lyme, the arrival of migrants from Eastern Europe to the area was a source of concern for both white British and settled migrant populations. Respondents cited the lack of English language proficiency and anti-social behaviour as contributing to local tensions (British Future and HOPE, 2017: 5).

3.4 Normacot and Shelton

Normacot and Shelton are inner city areas of Stoke-on-Trent (highlighted on figure 1), and house some of the highest concentrations of Pakistani and Eastern European communities in the city (49.3% and 36.3% respectively). Both locations contain areas considered the most deprived in Stoke-on-Trent, with relative poverty being said to contribute to poor health, education and employment outcomes for many residents (Trinder, 2015).

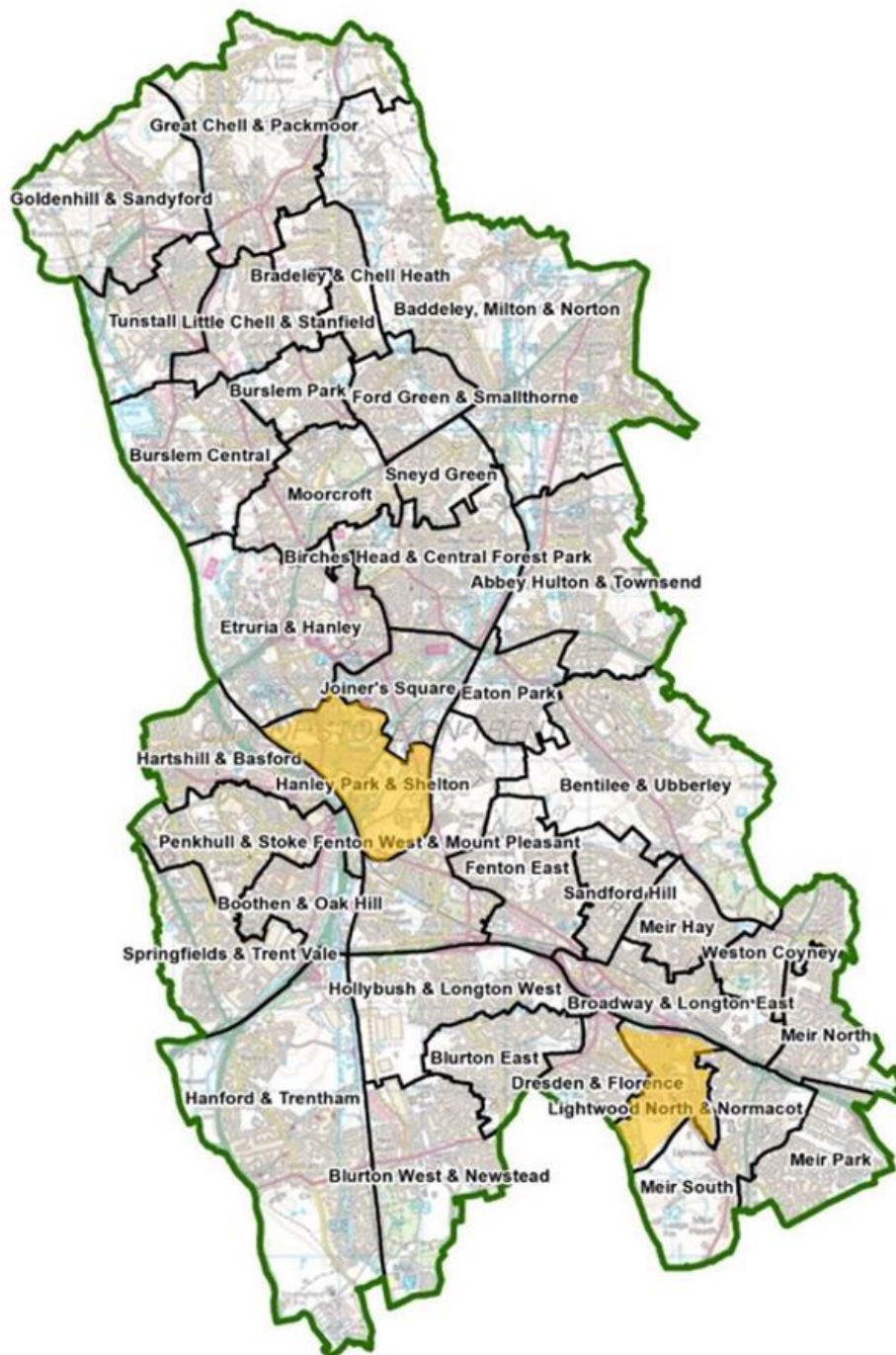


Figure 1: Stoke-on-Trent ward map

In addition to anxieties over the impacts of recent migratory flows, local residents have reported concerns about fighting, street drinking, drug dealing, criminal damage and nuisance driving, to police and the city council (British Future and HOPE, 2017; Knapper, 2021; Newman, 2011).

Following the arrival of Eastern European migrants, the city council recorded an increase in neighbourhood disputes centred on fly-tipping (figure 2). Fly-tipping has become a point of public consternation and has been the subject of ongoing coverage by the local newspaper,

The Sentinel, for several years. Public debates centre on the rising incidents of fly-tipping, but do not point the finger at any one community. Instead, stories focus on the spiralling clear-up costs to the city council, reporting that ‘£11,753 in fines have been handed out in Stoke-on-Trent over the past three years – with the council spending £100,000 on investigative actions’ (StokeonTrentLive, 2019).



Figure 2: Fly-tipped waste in Normacot and Shelton

In response to the above points Stoke-on-Trent City council have invested in a series of initiatives and events aimed at alleviating tensions between settled and newer migrant communities and encourage integration.

3.5 Stoke-on-Trent City Council community cohesion initiatives

According to the Stoke-on-Trent Community Cohesion Strategy 2016-2020, which covers the period under evaluation, community cohesion is about ‘building strong relationships between individuals and communities, giving people opportunities to realise this, then responding to change, in a thoughtful and responsible way’. This vision reveals an understanding that community cohesion is not just about integrating ethnic or faith communities into British society, it is also about building relationships and respect between all groups of society whether settled or emerging.

The council’s community cohesion agenda is based on a set of core values, namely: ownership and accountability; ambition; respect; involvement; working with others and developing strong partnerships. Aimed at strengthening the bonds within communities, building connections with people who are different and developing trusting relationships, the Stoke-on-Trent Community Cohesion Strategy 2016-2020: 3 (figure 3) is underpinned by five objectives:

- Working with communities to develop a sense of belonging.
- Educating children and young people.

- Engaging with new and established communities to develop a better understanding of their needs.
- Ensuring cohesion is integral to partnership plans and practices.
- Tackling issues that exist within and between communities’.

	Strengthen the bonds within communities	Building connections with people who are different	Building trusting relationships between agencies and communities	Outcome
Working with communities to develop a sense of belonging	Organisations to develop awareness of community cohesion when they are listening and talking to communities	Local faith networks to encourage different faith groups to meet so they can understand each other better and celebrate what they have in common	Use the experience and skills of the Voluntary Sector to help strengthen relationships between local communities and agencies	People feel valued, fulfil their potential to get on in life, have a sense of trust and pride in the city and its people
Educate Children and Young People and facilitate opportunities for CYP to build bridges between communities	Provide more opportunities for Children and Young People to learn about people who have a different background to their own.	Tell organisations that work with CYP about what work best to improve cohesion and also provide more opportunities for young people to talk about issues that affect them.	Set up a Head Teacher's Group to lead on tackling issues that impact on community cohesion such as extremism, tensions and intolerance.	Our Children and Young People confidently tackle sensitive and topical issues and develop strong friendships with others from a different background or who live in a different area of the city
Engage with new and established communities to develop a better understanding of their needs	Look at the support services we offer to communities to ensure that we are meeting current cohesion needs.	Use the voluntary, faith and community sectors experience of supporting and bringing people together	To deliver the recommendations made by Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Migrants Task and Finish Group	To develop a strong sense of responsibility and belonging in both new and established residents
Ensuring Cohesion is integral to partnership plans and practices	Provide more opportunities for people to influence organisations on how they can better support them with their issues.	Organisation to provide opportunities for people to get to know each other when they are listening and talking to communities on what is important to them.	Policy areas where delivering improvements in cohesion will lead to a positive impact on their own outcomes should develop an appropriate response.	The statutory, voluntary and community sector recognise the benefits of community cohesion as a result community cohesion is mainstreamed into policy and practice
Tackle issues that exist within and between communities	Strengthen links with communities to improve our understanding of and approach to dealing with community tensions	Make sure local area plans identify and deal with cohesion issues	Tell more people about they can report Hate Crime and determine if we need to involve more people and organisations to help tackle hate crime and intolerance.	Communities to expect that their personal backgrounds are valued and that intolerant and divisive behaviours are not allowed to flourish

Figure 3: Stoke-on-Trent Community Cohesion Plan

Comparing this understanding with the community cohesion perspectives discussed in section 3.1., it is evident that in the context of Stoke-on-Trent that cohesion and integration are understood through the prism of community relations and management of migration impacts on settled communities.

In order to fulfil the aims of the strategy, during this period community development projects were centred on Normacot and Shelton, and focussed on:

- Breaking down the barriers between young people from different cultures through targeted youth activities.

- Reducing fly-tipping.
- Improving engagement with individuals from European Union countries through links with relevant community groups.
- Increasing awareness of the needs and aspirations of individuals from European Union countries among officers and councillors.

3.5.1 Youth engagement

To address youth engagement a range of different sports-based activities and projects were introduced. These projects were created in partnership with voluntary and charity organisations such as Sporting Communities, ASHA, the YMCA and VAST. Delivering sports-based activities, for example, the Love Sport programme, was aimed at increasing a 'sense of connection and belonging' (Sporting Communities, ND: 4). Other initiatives, such as 'My Voice Youth Engagement' and 'Cook, Eat and Play' (figure 4), were introduced by Sporting Communities to provide a platform for interaction between different communities including the Eastern European community (Sporting Communities, ND: 5-6).



Figure 4: Cook, Eat, Play – Sporting Communities

3.5.2 Fly-tipping

To address resident concerns about the increase in fly-tipping associated with the arrival of migrants from Eastern Europe, the city council attended Residents Association meetings to understand community concerns, which resulted in increased patrols by the environmental officer to identify where problems existed.

The city council employed a community integration officer to talk directly with residents about the causes of fly-tipping. It was found that newer Eastern European migrants were not clear about how to properly dispose of waste, which was attributed to poor English language

skills and cultural differences. In response to these consultations, the city council had waste disposal leaflets translated into Romanian and distributed to relevant households (figure 5).



Figure 5: Fly-tipping leaflet translated into Romanian

3.5.3 The European Folkloric Festival

The European Folkloric Festival, held in September 2019 (figure 6), was an initiative to build positive community relations between settled and newer migrant communities in Normacot and Shelton.

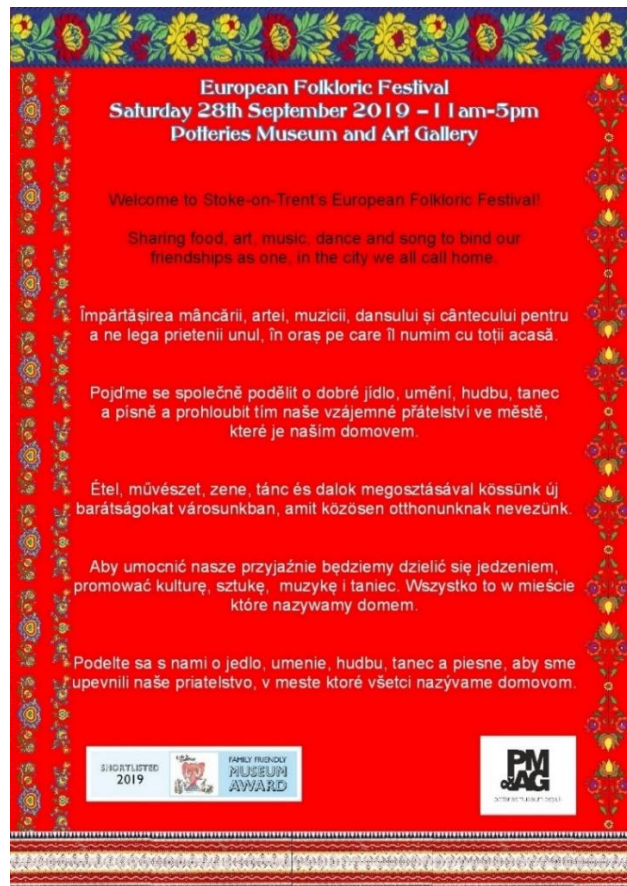


Figure 6: Flyer for European Folkloric Festival

The festival was supported by the integration officer who worked closely with Eastern European community leaders and volunteers in Stoke-on-Trent to create an event that showcased Eastern European food, music and culture. Organisers invited residents from different communities as well as local councillors and representatives from the public and charity and voluntary sectors. According to one council employee one of the functions of the event was to:

‘To engage with and help people who were born and raised in an Eastern European country. To engage with them to understand how are they, how are they finding life in England or in North Staffordshire okay? Do they know how to access services?’

The popularity of the event encouraged organisers to plan future events, including a Christmas party in December 2019 and a further Folkloric Festival to take place in June 2020. The latter event was postponed due to the national lockdown in response to Covid-19.

3.5.4 Covid-19 response

In response to national government guidelines to ‘stay home’ in March 2019, Stoke-on-Trent city council introduced a series of measures to get information and support into the different

communities that make up Stoke-on-Trent. The city council redeployed staff to a support hub and set up a helpline in conjunction with VAST (Voluntary Action Stoke-on-Trent).

Information about lockdown rules and changes to services were sent by email. While this information was not available in different languages, translated guidance in several languages was obtainable via the Staffordshire County Council website.

As a further measure, the city council mobilised community health champions in partnership with VAST. Community health champions are volunteers who provide information about health related matters where it is needed in local communities in the city.

4 Methodology

The evaluation team interviewed key stakeholders, including residents and community leaders (local business owners and representatives from faith groups), spokespersons from local charity and voluntary organisations, and public sector employees (council employees and representatives from Staffordshire police) about their views and experiences of recent community building initiatives in order to:

- Capture views from residents and community leaders (RCL) about community relations in Shelton and Normacot and of the role and services provided by the city council to improve integration.
- Explore the views of public sector (PS) employees and representatives from the charity and voluntary sector (CVS), who work closely with residents and community groups.
- Make recommendations based on findings from the data.

4.1 Methods, participants and sampling

An exploratory qualitative approach was used to uncover local experiences and narratives around issues of cohesion and integration. Qualitative methods ensure that in-depth data on local stakeholders' understandings and experiences were obtained. To achieve this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 adults aged 18 and over.

Participants were initially recruited with the help of a city council employee who acted as a gatekeeper. Further participants, particularly from the residents groups, were reached once the researcher was established in the field. Covid-19 delayed the process of interview recruitment and extended the project completion date due to the impact of successive lockdowns on the accessibility and availability of participants.

Interviews were conducted via telephone or video call to account for Covid-19 social distancing measures in place at the time of fieldwork and to ensure the safety of the research assistant and interview participants. Out of 25 interviews, 12 were with residents and

community leaders (RCL); 4 with public sector (PS) employees; and 9 with representatives from the charity and voluntary sector (CVS) (appendix a).

Interview questions followed themes identified by the council in the evaluation tender. Questions were revised slightly for each stakeholder group depending on their position in the community, and revised again after the national lockdown imposed in response to Covid-19 (see appendix b).

4.2 Ethical considerations

Informed consent was sought from interview participants after the purposes of the project were explained. Video interviews were recorded using the recording facility via the system used, e.g. Zoom. Telephone interviews were recorded using the telephone recording application. Participants have been anonymised in the report. Other information that might identify the research subjects, such as their professional position or details of their migration to the UK, has been generalised to ensure anonymity.

4.3 Analysis

Participants were coded in terms of either their residential location in Normacot or Shelton, their employment status (e.g., council officer, community leader and/or a member of voluntary or charity organisation). Data was coded and themes and sub-themes were identified based on the recurrence and relevance to the research aims outlined above. Interview data was analysed thematically, reflecting a range of different local stakeholders' views.

As part of the presentation of findings, we felt it important to present direct excerpts from interviews in order to offer a rich and nuanced consideration of the challenges faced by the key stakeholders represented in the evaluation.

5 Research findings

The sections below unpack the central findings from the interview data. The following section presents views about the barriers to integration and community cohesion experienced by residents in Normacot and Shelton. This section of the report also considers examples of positive community relations and where opportunities exist to build upon the integration work already carried out by the city council.

5.1 Challenges to community cohesion and integration

Key challenges to positive community cohesion and integration were identified in the findings. Figure 7 shows that participants from each group shared common concerns about

(a) language and cultural competence; and (b) the provision and continuity of resources; and to a lesser extent about the potential impact of negative stories on community relations.

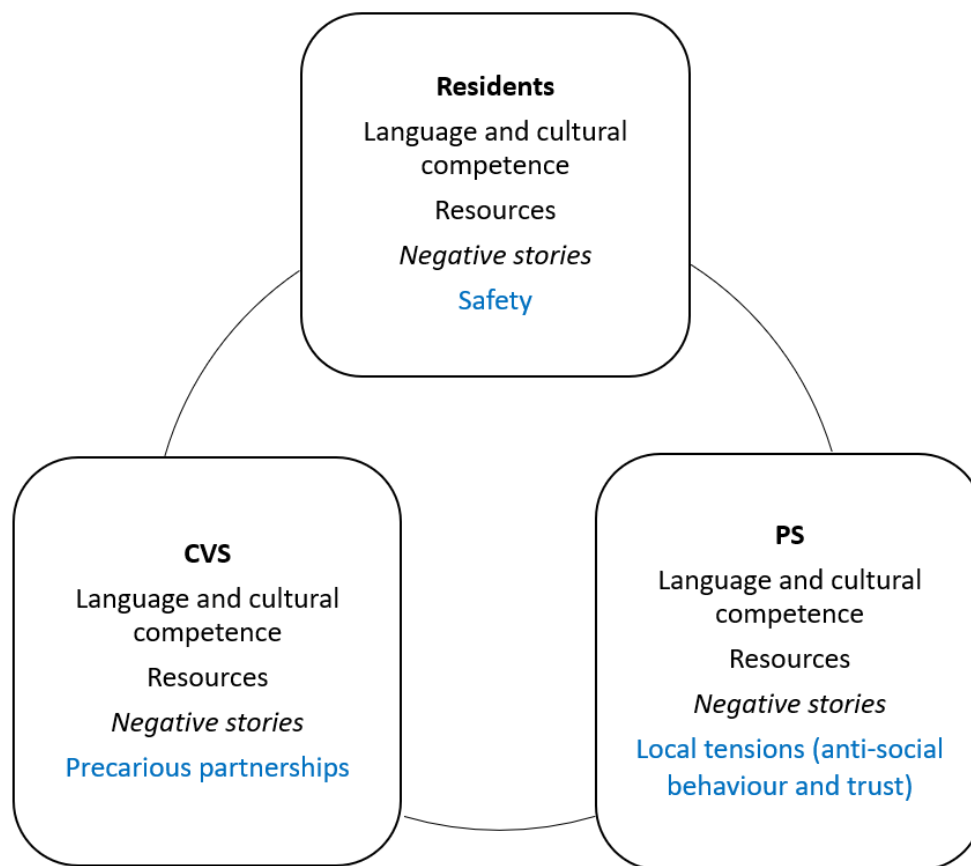


Figure 7: Perceived challenges to community cohesion and integration

In addition to these common themes, each stakeholder group identified distinct areas of concern (indicated in blue). Here, residents were more likely to link concerns about anti-social behaviour to their personal safety, while PS employees focused on anti-social behaviour as a barrier to positive interaction between migrant communities. Council officials also emphasised the important of building trust between residents and public services, whereas residents presented a more utilitarian – needs-based – assessment of their relationship with the city-council. Representatives from CVS groups placed much more emphasis on the fragility of partnerships between community stakeholders and the city council, stating that many of the problems that exist within communities could be alleviated with a collaborative approach to community development.

5.1.1 Language and cultural competence

Representatives from the public sector, charitable and voluntary sectors, and community leaders, identified lack of language proficiency as a key barrier to establishing positive

relations between residents from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and to communication with public sector organisations:

‘Of course, we get a challenge with language. And what was and still is, a time of quite a quick and rapid increase in terms of immigration, it puts challenges into communities, and it can, occasionally, add tension to communities. [...] when we do try to engage with them it might be through the Fire Service or the Council or the Police, and we often got back a brick wall, saying they didn’t understand English, etc.’ (PS)

Although concerns about language barriers were less pronounced in residents’ responses, some noted that a poor command of English could have an impact on the extent to which people connect with those outside their immediate community. One white-British convert to Islam who had moved to Stoke-on-Trent because of its good amenities for Muslims offered a view about her new community: ‘I think language is a barrier, especially for the older generations’, while one second-generation Pakistani resident felt that integration improved as generations settled and made a life in the area. Here, they suggested that Eastern European migrants were simply experiencing the same difficulties that many first-generation Pakistani migrants faced when first arriving in the UK:

‘Now we notice that more with the European community, basically, the Eastern Europeans. Because there’s massive language barriers. Many of them starting the way our parents started.’ (Normacot RCL, Pakistani).

Residents also suggested that local services could do more to help newcomers with cultural competence, or what they often called ‘education’. For residents, community cohesion does not only relate to language but also to understanding the cultural norms, values, and customs that new migrants might find difficult to identify. Helping new migrants to develop knowledge about what can be expected in a new location is therefore crucial for smoothing the process of adaptation and for lowering the chances for social inter-cultural tensions. Comparing settled communities with new migrants, one second-generation participant said:

‘Because we’re born and bred here [...] We know to go onto the website, check this, check that. [...] I think they should be given an information pack. For a new family that’s moved in, they should have an information pack ready for them. Council should do that’ (Normacot RCL, Pakistani).

This view was reiterated by Eastern European community leaders and volunteers working in Normacot and Shelton, who suggested that classes covering ‘how things work’ could be offered to new migrants:

'I think what people need to learn when they first arrive here is how things work, how they should talk to other people [...]. It looks simple in a way. [...] I know they have classes for English which help beginners, but I think there should be classes for other things like how things work in the UK, because people who come from different backgrounds, they don't know what to expect here.' (CVS)

Echoing this view, an Eastern European community leader emphasised that language supports new migrants in adapting to their new home by providing a medium to understand laws and cultural norms and values that are foreign to them. They suggested that cultural barriers could lead to several challenges, including actions considered anti-social:

'Another [integration challenge] is to explain the legislation. In this country, legislation is very strict, not like in East Europe. So once you respect the law, until you don't break the law, then you have a nice life. So, we can call that person assimilated well.'

Continuing, they suggested that a simple solution would be to:

'Make Romanian leaflets, websites in Romanian. City councils should have a Romanian website. People should find that information. I don't see why city council doesn't employ Romanian language department or Polish language department and employ one or two people to translate.' (Normacot RCL, Romanian)

In the adaptation phase of immigration interpreting and translation services could play a crucial role in enhancing cultural competence which is an important pillar of integration. In fact, we found that such interpretation activities are already taking place at an informal level within communities. Settled migrants with more language and cultural competence help newcomers to find their way around, for example to navigate bureaucratic structures, such as housing and education, and in finding employment. A few participants pointed out that it is possible that these existing informal structures could be harnessed by the city council to provide information about services and enhance a sense of belonging to the local community.

5.1.2 Resources

The theme of resource provision recurred across each set of stakeholder interviews. This theme covers concerns about the provision and continuity of funding and spaces for services and amenities. Here, the lack of physical space to meet was believed to restrict interactions between different ethnic and faith groups, which in turn was linked to residents' overall sense of wellbeing and safety.

The positive benefits of leisure and sports activities and cultural events were recognised by participants across all three stakeholder groups. Mirroring findings from previous studies into community building (Collins and Kay, 2003; Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network, 2020), participants understood that such activities can also work as preventative measures against anti-social behaviour and social exclusion and offer a way to promote social interaction, break down barriers between communities, and challenge stereotypes about others. As one participant noted:

‘Food brings people together, sport brings people together, art brings people together, let’s concentrate on those things instead of the things that divide us.’ (CVS)

Participants felt that the lack of public spaces for community activities could account for a lack of connectedness among communities. In most cases, perceived problems with division and segregation in the city were explained by the lack of facilities and structures that bring communities together rather than as a result of inter-cultural tension. Here, one resident explained that places of worship provide faith communities with a space and reason to meet, but do not necessarily facilitate cross-cultural interaction:

‘We [Muslims] have got links, like we’ve got a Friday prayer [...] at the mosque. So, everybody’s going to meet each other on a Friday. [...] We’ve got the Eid prayer on Eid twice a year, so we’re definitely going to meet each other. I think the problem with the other communities is, that’s where we’re struggling, because we haven’t got places that we’re going to meet on a regular basis. Which gives us a massive barrier in itself’ (Normacot RCL, Pakistani,).

This view was confirmed by a CVS participant, who identified the proliferation of groups that catered for particular ethnic or faith communities as a potential sticking point for promoting integration or community cohesion:

‘Most of the groups that exist at the moment will be groups that are started by community members or started by their churches or religions and therefore they are specifically for those groups. So, the mosque starts a group for Muslim women. There’s a Zimbabwean group that have started off a group for Zimbabweans. There’s a Sudanese refugee community organisation. There’s an Afghan community organisation.’ (CVS)

This was borne out by interviews with residents, who although were satisfied with the facilities and services offered within their particular ethnic and faith community, repeated concerns about the potential for structurally enforced segregation, arguing that the city

council needs to improve the provision of spaces where people can meet beyond their ethnic or faith communities:

'Community centres are closing down [...]. [The council are] doing less for people to communicate with each other. Before, it was a lot. Like I say, seven, eight years ago, it was a lot going on. Lots of activities, lots of community centres. I used to go a lot with my daughter. A lot of things being done. Now it's very, very less. Very less.' (Shelton RCL, Moroccan,)

Participants voiced particular concerns about the negative effects of the closure of spaces to meet on young people. Disappointment at the closure of a former children's centre based in Normacot was repeated across several interviews. One PS employee expressed frustration on behalf of communities about how financial decisions can impact communities for years to come:

'That's been one of the negative situations in Normacot, is selling the youth services, because, in some ways, you've sold the kids out. You sold the next generation off, and that's how they feel.' (PS)

Indeed, one Normacot resident described the positive benefits of the children's centre on their overall wellbeing, explaining how it had not only provided a space to meet with other parents, but was also the reason for the daily walk to the centre with their Pakistani neighbour. In this regard, the closure of the centre resulted in the end of multiple opportunities to mix with people from different backgrounds:

'When they started to close the children centre. Oh God! That centre really saved my life. That children centre. I didn't know what to do with the baby. That was saving women's lives. It really did. I met so many other mums who were struggling. And, that centre brought us all together and helped our children as well. That was so important!' (Normacot RCL, Polish)

Interruptions in service provision were directly associated to the availability and continuity of funding by both PS and CVS participants. For example, one council employee acknowledged that project-funding coming to an end had the potential to undo the hard work done by the dedicated integration officer, who had been in funded to manage the community development initiatives in Normacot and Shelton for a limited amount of time:

'Where we do struggle a bit at times is having the resource to actually be able to go around street-by-street, feet on the ground, that we do struggle with. And that's why it was really useful having [an integration officer] dedicated to Normacot and Shelton only, whereas the community development officers have actually got five or six Wards each.' (PS)

This view was echoed by charity and voluntary sector workers, who stated that limited funding could limit immediate needs-based projects from developing into enduring strategies to embed community cohesion. Not only does time-limited funding disrupt the continuation of the work, but it also negatively impacts on trust that may have been built between public services, community workers and residents. Referring to the work done to bring language classes to Normacot, a PS employee notes that:

I had one ESOL group, and then that was it. Their funding got pulled. And this is the problem you've got in Normacot. [The service provider has] put funding into Normacot and then as soon as the funding dries up, they just pull it out. This is not good for communities. You know that. You need continuity. You need to be building up relationships with the community. If they've done one course, there should be another one following that for the community.' (PS)

The findings suggest that spaces for social interaction within neighbourhoods encourage a sense of civic empowerment, or what we call active citizenship in the UK (Bee and Pachi, 2014), and ensure that inter-cultural contact is a common part of everyday life. Amenities, such as community centres and youth clubs, offer the opportunity for residents to meet beyond their own ethnic or faith community and provide distinct spaces to connect with others through taking part in leisure, sporting or cultural activities and events. The continuity of these services ensures that there is a chance to embed inter-cultural relationships that become part of the local culture, which in turn promotes communities' sense of ownership of neighbourhoods.

5.1.3 Negative stories

Participants were asked what they thought were the main barriers to community integration. In response, contributors from each stakeholder group spoke about the negative influence of media narratives about asylum and migration on community relations. Indeed, participants felt that the media's continual focus on immigration could promote animosity between white British residents and different ethnic and faith communities:

'Because people outside Normacot don't really mix or talk to any of the Asian community, that they have ideas that they get from the media and everywhere, and also from other people.' (CVS)

Muslim participants noted how negative media coverage of Islam could influence people's views, which in turn could impact behaviour towards Muslims:

'The media put the veil as Muslim dress code is bad in society. And blame them 100%. And that's why I don't say people are bad or why are they looking

at me like that, I don't blame them because of the media made it hard for people.' (Shelton RCL, Moroccan)

To counter this narrative, one CVS participant spoke at length about the need for the local media to highlight the positive community relations in Stoke-on-Trent to combat negative media stories coming from the national media:

'The people of Normacot are really genuine people. Very, very, very few are problems. The vast majority are absolutely great people and they do intermix, which I don't think there's enough publicity for that. [...] There's more publicity of the divisions than the actual coming together.' (CVS).

Views about the possible influence on media stories were repeated across many interviews. Here, participants concurred with conclusions from numerous studies about the negative impact of media narratives on the wellbeing of migrant communities (e.g., Blinder, 2015). Many CVS and PS participants believed that local media could be a useful tool to combat negative stories, particularly in relation to migration and asylum. Here, it was felt that more could be done by local media to promote cultural exchange events and the charity work being done within faith communities, which could help to highlight the positive contribution that migrants make to the local area.

5.1.4 Anti-social behaviour and safety concerns

Part of the remit of the evaluation was to assess the success of initiatives to inform Eastern European residents about waste disposal following an assessment suggesting that poor language and cultural competences may have contributed to an escalating problem with fly-tipping and other anti-social behaviours. Offering some background to the tensions one PS employee explained that complaints were occasionally linked by other residents to the arrival of the Roma community in the area:

'Often, we would have an issue with fly-tipping. We'd have an issue with waste disposal as a whole. We'd have some tensions regarding antisocial behaviour with people being very loud late in the day. So, that's what you get, is you sometimes get those tensions.' (PS)

However, there was very little in the findings to suggest that city council concerns about inter-community tensions connected to fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour were shared by residents. Relating to the current project, another public sector employee noted that:

'I've not particularly seen any disputes between those cultures. What you tend to find, if there is a dispute, it's within the lone culture that they are where the problem occurs. Because of disagreements within that culture

itself. It's not a case of any issues regarding religion, or social, or cultural practice, that I've seen personally.' (PS)

This may, of course, be attributed to the success of the scheme and of the efforts of the community integration officer to alleviate tensions caused by cultural misunderstandings. However, this does not mean that residents did not note the problem of fly-tipping, but rather that it was one of a number of basic service provision frustrations, that also included the disruption of ongoing road works and the management of pot holes, which they believed needed to be resolved by the council.

Instead, concerns centred on gang and drug-related activities. Residents appeared to see fly-tipping as a minor problem in comparison to their fears about street crime. Here, participants from Shelton in particular revealed that fear impeded their day-to-day activities and that of their children:

'Drugs... teenagers eat drugs in the streets... in the corners of the roads, consuming these drugs. I feel afraid if my children go for fun in Hanley Park, they may get in touch with these drug-taking teenagers. When we go to the park, we often find drug injections on the ground. This is very, very tiring. So, lately I don't like to take my children to Hanley Park, I rather get them activities at home' (Shelton RCL, Sudanese).

Another resident linked their concerns about crime to the lack of service provision for young people, suggesting that limited public spaces may be a factor in anti-social behaviour and drug-taking:

'Always, I'm thinking about the same, why the council, or those responsible for this area, why they didn't think about to provide the indoor centre for younger people. Because they have too much energy. They have to use this energy. If not, what happens? They start with these problems with drugs, and with alcohol, and with these sorts of things.' (Shelton RCL, Moroccan)

Related to issues of safety, a few residents spoke about isolated incidents of racism they had experienced and that have impacted their sense of security. While this did not form a major part of the findings, it is worth noting that such isolated incidents were understood by these residents to form part of a larger problem related to what they perceive to be a lack of concern for the wellbeing of migrant communities.

The data revealed how potential positive community relations could be curtailed by residents' undermined sense of security. Fears over safety fed insecurities about interacting beyond known communities. We found compelling evidence to support the idea that cohesion only

grows in environments where communities feel confident about their own and their children's safety and wellbeing.

5.1.5 Precarious partnerships

The final challenge to community cohesion could be found in the responses from CVS participants and community leaders, all of whom indicated that their relationships with the city council were built on a fragile needs-based foundation that did not allow the good work being done in communities to take root. Partnerships with the charity and voluntary sector were sought by the city council as and when funding became available to support community projects. As was discussed in section 5.1.2., the lack of continuity of funding was said to restrict the scope and longevity of projects and as a consequence limited the impact of the work being done by community organisations.

It was clear from the findings that CVS participants believed that the city council did its best to support community development projects with limited resources, and was praised by several participants for the dedication of individual officers to improving community relations:

'I think they understand the change that needs to happen, and they do their very best to move towards that with people and give massive encouragement to groups who are trying to do what they can do. So, I think what they do, they do well.' (CVS)

Yet, whilst CVS participants acknowledged the limits on public resources, they also suggested that the organisational culture of local authorities did not lend itself to finding more innovative and sustainable solutions to local problems:

'I think there's a culture within local authorities that doesn't promote innovation. I've worked for local authorities before, and it can be very easy to slip under the radar and go about your business. And things take a long time, because you've got to get things signed off by different people. [...] [T]hey need to be identifying and reaching out to people that do, and bringing groups together that do. And I think that rather than them leading and running on any programme, they need to be facilitating things that are sustainable.' (CVS)

In response to issues around delivering services and support directly to communities, participants recommended that the city council should acknowledge the work that charity and voluntary organisations do to support them in delivering their objectives and work with them to find more sustainable solutions to community integration. They urged the city council

to 'listen to the community. Try and listen to the VCSE sector, because they've got the expertise.' (CVS)

5.2 Opportunities for sustainable integration

Based on interviews with local stakeholders, it became clear that the potential for sustainable integration may be contained in the affection for the city and from the existing community-based networks. Participants asserted that they felt part of the city, whatever their ethnic or faith background. For some this was down to their rootedness in the history and culture of the city, for others it was because the city had evolved to meet their needs, for example, through the provision of goods and services catering to different ethnic and faith groups.

Participants often spoke with great passion about the cultural heritage of the potteries and of what they described as the compassion and creativity of the people, declaring that 'we have been voted, apparently, the kindest city in the UK, and I would go along with that. We welcome anybody and we are very kind and thoughtful' (Jack, CVS). Indeed, it was suggested that the welcoming nature of the city be incorporated into the local story:

'I think it would be really good for people to try to locate community cohesion in the city's history [...] This city has had immigrant populations for a long time, and it would be really good to look at all those contributions and to be saying, this is what united strength is stronger means.' (CVS).

The following findings suggest that the sustainability of community cohesion in the city could be based on harnessing existing networks and positive community relations.

5.2.1 For the love of Stoke

As noted in section 3.1 there is a perception, largely borne from central government agendas and popular narratives presented in sections of the mainstream media, that different ethnic and faith communities are segregated. However, when we asked participants how they felt about living in Stoke-on-Trent, there was almost universal praise, with many expressing a deep-rooted affection for the city:

'I love Stoke-on-Trent. My heart's here. I can go anywhere. The other day, we went to Birmingham. I was just dying to come back to Stoke-on-Trent. I just love Stoke-on-Trent. I was born and bred here, so my heart's here.' (Normacot RCL, Pakistani)

Stoke-on-Trent is considered home to most of the migrant residents we spoke to. They do not feel as though they need to be subject to integration projects because they are already integrated, whether within the wider Stoke-on-Trent community or within the communities

that they have built around themselves. As one CVS participant who came to live in the UK twenty years ago explains:

'Absolutely, I feel at home now. I almost have to remind myself I wasn't born here. I'm involved with everything that fulfils me. I've got friends around me that I've made. And some of them actually feel like family.' (CVS)

There was, however, a distinction in how this affection for the city relates to the broader notion of community cohesion and integration. White British participants, who made up the majority of the PS and CVS stakeholder groups, expressed feeling part of the history and culture of Stoke-on-Trent. Their affection was entrenched in their sense of belonging to the wider community of 'Stokies'. However, migrant participants' affection for, and sense of belonging to, the city was borne from their rootedness within distinct and ethnic and faith communities that have grown up alongside Stoke-on-Trent's history of migration.

5.2.2 Community champions

The dedication of individuals and community groups was highlighted by many participants and most suggested that relationships with local people, facilities and networks could be harnessed to provide community support. Referring to the integration project, one public sector employee noted the importance of local shops for distributing information about services and events:

'It was important to have the shops play a part within the community. So, I would have liked to bring the shops together to sustain and support each other.' (PS)

Referring to the frustrations of time-limited projects (and the interruption caused by the Covid-19 lockdown), where any positive effects tend to fade away once the project is complete, this participant recommended creating a network of people and places that could be used by the city council as community hubs to support neighbourhoods more effectively (Sanchez-Jankowski, 2015).

Interviews with representatives from local charity and voluntary sector organisations and community leaders revealed many examples of the commitment to providing support and activities to local communities. One participant spoke about the efforts of the Residents Association in Normacot to turn some disused land into a community garden, explaining that the project mobilised local people and schools to help with collecting donations to create the space. In a further example, the European Folkloric Festival, local Eastern European residents, community leaders, together with local artists, musicians and story-tellers came together to launch an event that was considered a successful means of bringing local communities together:

‘People came in, and they shared food together, and we were able to pay musicians and other artists in different forms of art, and it was a wonderful day. We were hoping for something like 600 to 800 people during the day, and we ended up with twice that number at least, it was brilliant.’ (CVS)

Alongside cultural events, organisations like Sporting Communities have worked with local refugee charities to set up a football tournament to offer refugees a space to meet and offer respite from their day-to-day worries. Representatives from the organisation spoke about the event as an important means for social interaction for the people that took part, who are often the most isolated society. Noting the importance of local charitable and volunteering networks in the organisation of the tournament, a charity and voluntary sector worker explained:

‘Without the support of ASHA and that relationship, we would have been completely blind. We would not have known where to go and what to do. Because we haven't got a database of people. We haven't got the trust of that community. So, we could have taken our vehicle out and helped, but we reached more people through the network and through the relationships. We reached over 100 families. We wouldn't have done that on our own,’ (CVS).

Findings revealed that local areas already contain individuals and groups with the skills and commitment to generate and participate in projects that enhance community relations. Participants recommended that the city council must find a more sustainable approach to collaborating with charity and voluntary organisations, community groups, and residents in order to capitalise on these existing networks.

5.2.3 The city council's Covid-19 response

The global Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a national lockdown in March 2020. People were told to work from home where possible and local authorities were subject to restrictions to services where they would come into direct contact with others. The city council's Covid response is outlined in section 3.5.4.

Participants were asked about the city council's response to the national lockdown and their role in disseminating information about both Covid-19 and its impact on council services during this time. Only a few residents reported being aware of the measures put in place for Covid-19 by the local authorities, with most saying that they obtained information from national news channels, websites and/or other social networks, such as family and friends. However, residents who did access information about local services were positive about the city council's response:

'The support was very, very good. We had a few phone calls. Every other day they were ringing to ask if we were all right, if we had anybody to do the shopping for us or if we needed any help. They were constantly texting us numbers if we needed any help.' (Shelton RCL, Pakistani)

Another resident noted the difficulty of staying up-to-date with changing Covid-19 guidelines, but felt well informed by the information on the city council website:

'The Covid rules do change all the time, and I think they should. They put it on the website, because I do check their website nearly every day. That they're doing. They're doing well. When I go on their website, they are quite informative.' (Nomacot RCL, Pakistani)

One CVS participant said that it was important to get into local communities to talk to people directly, explaining that people may not understand the language or have the ability to follow the constantly changing guidelines. Referring to the role of community health champions in providing such information, they explained:

'[L]ots of the times the messaging that comes down from local authorities and government is written in such a way or delivered in such a way that normal everyday people don't tend to understand the language that is used. I use myself for example. I found it difficult to listen to the government briefings when they were talking about things like efficacious, [...] and they were showing graphs, and I'm not that way minded at all.' (CVS)

Overall, findings revealed that while many of our participants did not need to access specific information or services during this time, those that did found the information to be useful and were happy with the alternative provisions made by the city council.

6 Understanding community needs

This report was founded on the perception of existing barriers to community cohesion rooted in tensions between the settled Pakistani and newer Eastern European migrant communities, and lack of trust between residents and public service providers. However, the accounts presented in interviews with residents and local stakeholders do not reveal entrenched or insurmountable inter-cultural tensions. Instead, findings point to context specific issues around the existence, continuity and visibility of services and facilities to support communities. One public sector participant acknowledged that integration and cohesion agendas are often driven by government agencies:

'I think it was us that were the drivers behind it. Both in terms of agencies and both in terms of the community. I think we wanted it more that the

community itself [...]. Ultimately, we as a service saw community cohesion a priority, something that we needed to push on with. But actually, when you're living in that community itself, it's not a priority for you and it wouldn't be something that you'd want necessarily, to partake in.' (PS)

Findings concur with this view and suggest that local authority initiatives do not always match up with local community needs. Instead, of relating to cultural mis-communication, trust issues are linked to well-founded scepticism about the continuation of the provision of services and amenities by the city council as outlined in the above findings. Therefore, what is perceived to be a lack of trust in local institutions by the city council, does not in fact indicate negative feelings towards local service providers, but rather frustration that residents' voices are going unheard.

6.1 The knowledge gap

Although all of the public, charity and voluntary sector workers, and community leaders we spoke to were aware of, and in many cases had been involved in, the various community integration projects supported by the city council, none of the residents' indicated knowledge of the events and initiatives:

'I don't know what the council do, actually, in terms of what they've been putting forward. What have they been doing? Can you tell me?' (Shelton RCL, white-British)

This response was echoed across resident interviews. However, beyond the lack of knowledge about particular initiatives, findings also suggested that there exists a more general lack of awareness about the provision of services available within communities. For example, one local business owner explained that Eastern European residents were unaware that they could send their children to nursery until they took it upon themselves to inform them:

'So, I started speaking to the Eastern European communities. [...] They were actually fearing sending their children to nurseries. They weren't aware about it. And back home in their counties, children don't go to school until they're about seven, eight. So, I then made them aware, look, we've got a nursery here. It's a safe environment for your children, start sending them in.'
(Normacot RCL, Pakistani)

Residents also explained that response could be patchy when they did interact with the city council. In one example a resident explained that they received no response to their complaint about anti-social behaviour. Such breakdowns in communication can feed into ongoing frustrations among residents that they are not being listened to where it matters to

them. Therefore, in order to gain traction with community cohesion initiatives, the city council first needs to respond to the everyday needs of the local communities.

6.2 Recognising difference

Much of the interview findings revolved around the different needs of settled and new migrants. Here, participants suggested that local organisations should differentiate between the lives of new migrants and settled communities. First generation migrants face different challenges connected to their language and cultural competences, but also in terms of their isolation from family, friends and a wider support network. One community volunteer articulated what it was like when they first arrived in the UK:

‘Because I was suddenly cut off away from my family, with just my partner and my little son, I was keen that I made those connections myself so that I could... I was missing home, I needed to make a new home for myself.’ (CVS)

Most participants understood the challenges that transitioning to new country poses, with one public sector employee explaining that new migrants were ‘very much in survival mode’. Family and work commitments may mean newcomers have little time to look for or engage in integration activities that might help them to settle, e.g., language classes. Settled migrants advocated for extra support for newer migrants to take account of this transition phase. In addition to more services for improving language and cultural competence, participants suggested setting up a support system for newcomers, including a support worker who works as a reliable reference point for them to reach out to the wider society and the services they need to access:

‘For new immigrant families, they should get some leaflets in the post to read, in whatever language they’re comfortable in reading in, definitely. You know how a struggling family gets a social worker, to work with alongside them? I think immigrants should also get a social worker available for them to speak to, to go through.’ (Normacot RCL, Pakistani)

There are clear challenges for first generation migrants that can be alleviated to some extent by providing support and services that smooth their transition into local communities and potentially lessen the effect of inter-cultural miscommunication. However, as outlined in section 6.1, for this to happen, residents must first be aware what support services are available to them.

7 Recommendations: establishing community partnerships

Community cohesion is not only about getting people together, but also about enabling people to get together by providing the resources that facilitates positive interaction and

communication. Therefore, the ability of neighbourhoods such as Normacot and Shelton, and the city of Stoke-on-Trent in general, to cope up with the challenges that follow migration relies on creating welcoming, resilient and adaptive public structures and services.

The evaluation found that the problems identified as originating from weak integration between new and settled migrant communities, are in fact linked to structural shortcomings. We found that inadequate public resources, e.g., language and interpretation services, community centres and youth engagement activities, contribute to social isolation, which can in turn limit opportunities for positive community interaction. In addition to this we found that partnerships with local charitable, voluntary and community groups, and residents are based on utilitarian ‘needs-based’ practices that fail to embed good integration practices into communities. Such challenges require collaborative thinking in order to overcome the structural limits that are often found in large institutions:

‘To the council I would say to them stop doing top-down, go back to grassroots and go to communities like mine, go to Residents Associations, go to different community groups. Speak to people, actual people.’ (CVS)

Community cohesion requires a vision that builds on unity instead of difference; and that encourages a shared pride and responsibility for the present and the future of Stoke-on-Trent and the different communities within it. It is therefore important to forge a sense of collective responsibility and ownership over local resources and organisational structures. Consequently, we recommend that the city’s vision should involve a clear plan for all stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the city council, public and business sectors, charitable and voluntary organisations, community groups, and residents, a view echoed by participants:

‘We need to make [residents] feel more in control of outside of their family units, so they feel an active part of society. And once we do that with everybody, then we will have integration. We will have people with less hatred and more love for each other.’ (CVS)

Based on an overall assessment of the findings from interviews with key stakeholder groups, the recommendations from the evaluation are for the city council to find ways to build on existing community structures – and the passion of the people, groups and organisations that form these structures – to embed sustainable integration and a sense of community cohesion in these main areas:

- Accessible, ongoing, English language courses for new migrants and those who wish to improve their language skills. Investigate the provision of translated ‘Life in Britain’ packs for new migrants.

- Involve residents and other community stakeholders, such as schools, Residents' Associations, community groups, and charitable and voluntary organisations, in the decision-making and feedback processes for community development initiatives from the outset.
- Together, identify where resources are needed to improve access to services and amenities that could encourage interaction between communities. For example, by delivering youth, leisure and sport activities, and locating venues for cultural events and activities.
- Prevent problems with continuity of services by embedding structures and processes that are resilient to organisational change and time-limited funding streams.

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9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A: List of participants

	Location: Normacot; Shelton; N/A	Role: RCL; PS; CVS	Ethnic background	Consent Obtained
1.	--	PS	White-British	Verbal
2.	Shelton	RCL	Pakistani	Verbal
3.	Shelton	RCL	Moroccan	Verbal
4.	Normacot	RCL	Pakistani	Verbal
5.	Shelton	RCL	Moroccan	Verbal
6.	Normacot	RCL	Pakistani	Verbal
7.	Shelton	RCL	British	Verbal
8.	Shelton	RCL	Syrian	Verbal
9.	Tunstall with links to Shelton	RCL	Pakistani	Verbal
10.	--	CVS	British/Polish	Verbal
11.	--	PS	White-British	Verbal
12.	--	CVS	Zimbabwean	Verbal
13.	--	PS	White-British	Verbal
14.	--	CVS	White-British	Verbal
15.	--	PS	White-British	Verbal
16.	Normacot	RCL	Pakistani	Verbal
17.	--	CVS	White-British	Verbal
18.	--	CVS	White-British	Verbal
19.	--	CVS	White-British	Verbal
20.	--	CVS	Romanian	Verbal
21.	Shelton	RCL	Sudanese	Verbal
22.	--	CVS	White-British	Verbal
23.	Shelton	RCL	Romanian	Verbal
24.	--	CVS	Romanian	Verbal
25.	Normacot	RCL	Polish	Verbal

9.2 Appendix B: Interview schedule

Interview Schedule (local residents)

Introductions

Tell me a bit about yourself – where are you from? How long have you been in the in the area? What is your current role?

Immigration / integration (national)

- How do you think immigration / integration generally works in Britain?
- What do you think impacts on negative community relations?
- Can you think of positive examples of community relations?
- Regional / local experiences of immigration / integration
- What are some of the community relations/immigration / integration challenges in Stoke-on-Trent in general?
- What are your everyday experiences of living and working in (Shelton/Normacot) with regards to community cohesion / integration (relate to particular role, e.g. educator; police; local business owner; resident)?

Community events / initiatives

- Are you aware of Stoke-on-Trent initiatives to facilitate community activities in your area? (for example the Christmas party)?
- Have you attended any of the community events that Stoke-on-Trent council have facilitated in your area?
- If yes, how did you find about the event; in what capacity did you attend (e.g. resident, local business owner, other professional capacity); what did you enjoy about the event; was there anything that you would have liked to happen differently?
- If no, what prevented you from participating in the event; what would encourage you to attend community events in the future?
- Are you aware of initiatives undertaken by Stoke-on-Trent council to foster positive relations between different groups?
- What are they?
- Were they effective? Why? Why not?
- What do you think Stoke-on-Trent council does well to facilitate integration between communities?
- What would you like to see happen in Stoke-on-Trent with regard to community events or initiatives relating to encouraging positive community relations?

Other community events / initiatives

- Are you aware of other community events / initiatives not facilitated by Stoke-on-Trent council?
- What are they?
- How did you find out about them?
- What are some of the community relations/immigration / integration challenges in Stoke-on-Trent in general?
- What are everyday challenges for residents of Shelton and Normacot with regards to community cohesion / integration (from the perspective of your particular role or organisation), e.g. educator; police)?

Community events / initiatives

- Are you aware of the council's initiatives to facilitate community activities to enhance community cohesion and integration in Normacot and Shelton? (for example the Christmas party)?
- Have you attended any of the community events that Stoke-on-Trent council have facilitated in your area?
- If yes, how did you find about the event; in what capacity did you attend (e.g. professional capacity); what did you enjoy about the event; was there anything that you would have liked to happen differently?
- If no, what prevented you from participating in the event; what would encourage you to attend community events in the future?
- Are you aware of any other initiatives undertaken by Stoke-on-Trent council to foster positive relations between different groups?
- What are they?
- Were they effective? Why? Why not?
- What do you think Stoke-on-Trent council does well to facilitate integration between communities?
- What would you like to see happen in Stoke-on-Trent with regard to community events or initiatives relating to encourage positive community relations?

Interview Schedule (PS and CVS)

Introductions

Tell me a bit about yourself – where are you from? How long have you been in the in the area/role? What is your current role?

Immigration / integration (understanding the local issues and consequences)

- What are some of the community relations/immigration / integration challenges in Stoke-on-Trent in general?
- What are everyday challenges for residents of Shelton and Normacot with regards to community cohesion / integration (from perspective of your role)?

The Impact of the events / initiatives

- Tell us about the initiatives you and your team have developed to enhance community cohesion and integration in Stoke-on-Trent and Normacot and Shelton in particular?
- What were you and your team hoping to achieve (in terms of intended impacts and outcomes) by introducing these initiatives?
- What were some of the challenges that you and your team had to overcome when introducing these projects?
- Are these initiatives going to be sustainable into the future? if so, how?
- What do you think are the major impacts of these initiatives? Who have been the primary beneficiaries of the initiatives? In what ways have they benefited from the initiatives?
- Were there any unintended outcomes and impacts from these initiatives?

Lessons learnt from the initiatives and events

- What are the opportunities to sustain, embed and mainstream the 'learning' you and your team have acquired during the processes of planning, introducing and implementing these particular initiatives?
- Following that, what advice would you give colleagues in Stoke-on-Trent or elsewhere in the UK, who were planning to introduce similar initiatives?