

**Dudley Borough**

**Community Cohesion and Hate Crime Strategy and  
Action Plan**

**2017 - 2020**

**safe & sound**

Dudley's Community Safety Partnership

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## **Background**

Dudley has a proud tradition across the borough of people of all backgrounds getting on well. We have a rich mix of people living and working harmoniously within the borough and this continues to be the case despite some of the potentially disruptive influences that could have impacted negatively on the borough over the last few years. We work closely in partnership across agencies and with communities to ensure that Dudley continues to be cohesive and any threats to this cohesion are addressed quickly and appropriately.

Our hate crime levels are currently reported as one of the lowest across the West Midlands Police Force area and we are committed to reducing levels and raising awareness of hate crime and incidents, in addition to supporting individuals that have been affected by these issues.

This strategy and action plan aim to illustrate how partners will work together in order to retain high levels of community cohesion across the borough whilst identifying and responding to any arising tensions. It will also demonstrate how Dudley will continue to work to further reduce the incidence of hate crime, improve reporting and increase support for those affected. The role of partners is demonstrated through the action plan.

## **Legislation**

The legislative context is provided by the Equality Act 2010 which sets out the framework of protection from discrimination, for people defined by the protected characteristics of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

While the Equality Act applies to all organisations, section 149 of the Act – the public sector equality duties – applies only to listed public authorities (including all local authorities). These require public authorities to do more than other bodies and be at the forefront of making positive changes in respect of equality, specifically to pay due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Criminal Justice Act 2003 allow sentences to be increased if the offence is classed as a hate crime.

## **Demographics**

### **Ethnicity**

In terms of ethnicity 11.5% of people in Dudley are from ethnic groups other than White British, compared to 7.5% in 2001. The equivalent 2011 Census figure for England is 20.2%. Of the 11.5% Pakistani residents make up 3.3%, Indian 1.8%, white and black Caribbean 1.1% and other white 1%. Other Ethnic groups represent less than 1% each of Dudley's population, and total 4.1%.<sup>1</sup>

### **Religion**

65.3% of Dudley's population identify themselves as Christian, 4.1% Muslim and 1.2% Sikh. 22% identify as 'no religion'.<sup>2</sup>

### **Sexuality**

In 2015, 1.7% of the UK population identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) (The 2016 GP Patient Survey gives this figure as 2.8% for Dudley).

More males (2.0%) than females (1.5%) identified themselves as LGB in 2015. Of the population aged 16 to 24, there were 3.3% identifying themselves as LGB, the largest percentage within any age group in 2015.

### **Disability**

20% of Dudley residents stated that their day to day activities were limited to some extent by a long term health condition or disability

### **Integration of new migrants and existing communities**

As mentioned above the population of Dudley is made up of 11.5% existing and emerging BME communities, and we continue to see new and emerging communities choose Dudley as their home. It is imperative that we do our best to understand the needs of these communities, and understand how best to work together and enable integration with established communities. As part of this integration however, as outlined in the [Casey Review 2016](#), it is also imperative to ensure that communities understand common British values of tolerance, democracy, equality and respect, in addition to the expectations of our communities, both culturally and legally.

Dudley borough will at times experience unauthorised encampments which often disrupts community cohesion due to negative perceptions of such communities. The West Midlands Police District is developing a protocol which will assist police and local authorities to resolve issues arising in relation to encampments in a sensitive and fair manner, while improving collaboration, communication and developing a more common approach amongst all West Midlands Local Authority Districts.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional information can be found at <http://www.dudley.gov.uk/community/census/2011-census/>

<sup>2</sup> Additional information can be found at <http://www.dudley.gov.uk/community/census/2011-census/>

## Community Cohesion

Essentially, Community Cohesion is about human relationships, how well people get on together. In Dudley it is recognised that Community Cohesion is vital for the maintenance of a safe and peaceful community where:

- People **interact and engage** with each other in a positive way
- People are **committed** to what **we have in common** rather than focusing on things that make us different
- **Mutual respect, fairness and justice** are actively sought

The Council has a duty to promote good relations between groups and the actions identified within a variety of strategies and plans across the Authority and partners contribute to and underpin this goal.

Although racial harmony is at the core of cohesion it isn't the only issue that needs to be addressed. Economic exclusion and inter-generational issues also have a major bearing on cohesion.

Local perceptions of regional, national or international events aimed at specific communities will also influence cohesion. Therefore at the heart of any attempt to build or improve cohesion will be the necessity to influence attitudes and behaviours.

## Community Tensions

In Dudley the definition of tension is:

*"A situation arising from acts or events that cause Dudley people to feel negative towards one another and/or services provided, putting at risk public order or threatening the peace and stability of local communities."*

Good community relations cannot simply be taken for granted or left to chance and identifying tensions at an early stage is vital in order to prevent escalation, reduce conflict and avoid undermining community cohesion. Ideally, it is preferable to prevent tensions arising in the first place and mainstream community cohesion work is essential in moving towards this goal.

Tensions may manifest themselves through mistrust, miscommunication, the breakdown of community relationships, violence (hate crime, violent extremism), isolation, criminal/physical damage, damage to the reputation of organisations and communities

Tensions are considered under the following headings:-

- Political
- Community
- Immigration, Asylum and Refugee
- National and International (local links only)
- Racial and religious
- Criminal
- Future

The Community Cohesion Strategic Group (CCSG) is a multi-agency meeting and includes representatives from the Statutory, Voluntary, Community and Faith Sectors. The group reports to Safe and Sound Strategic Board (incorporating Dudley's Police and Crime Board). Key areas of work considered by the Group include:

- Tension Monitoring and responses to tensions
- Hate Crime
- Prevent
- Channel Panel
- Gang Prevention (under 18s)

The group is also responsible for the Community Cohesion Contingency Plan which sets out guidance to the Council and its partners to enable a fast coherent and proportionate response to incidents which are likely to jeopardise peace and stability within the borough. It outlines actions necessary to combat the impact of 'critical incidents', defined as:

*'Any incident where the effectiveness of the partnership response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, the family and/or the community.'*

## **Hate Crime**

There is no legal definition of a hate crime. However, the police and the CPS have an agreed definition of hate crime as:

*"any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender."*

A crime or incident is classed as 'hate' crime or incident if the person the act is aimed at, or a person witnessing the act, perceives it to be because of any of the below characteristics of the victim.

- race or ethnicity
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- disability

A victim of a hate crime/ incident does not have to be a member of a minority group or someone who is generally considered to be vulnerable. Effectively anyone can be the victim of a hate crime/ incident.

Incidents may involve physical assault, damage to property, bullying, harassment, verbal abuse or insults, offensive graffiti or letters /text messages emails/ comments over social networks

The National Hate Crime Action Plan, [Action Against Hate: The UK Government's Plan For Tackling Hate Crime \(2016\)](#) focuses on four strands:

- prevent and respond to hate crime

- increase reporting of hate crime incidents
- improve support for victims
- build an understanding of hate crime

Partners in Dudley from both statutory and voluntary, community and faith sectors work closely together to raise awareness of what constitutes a hate crime or incident and encourage those that experience hate crime or incidents to report what has happened to them.

Hate crime trends across the borough are monitored via quarterly reports received by the Community Cohesion Strategic Group and actions identified as appropriate. Existing Stereotypes need to be addressed and the reality behind negative myths needs to be exposed. Education and early intervention is also required to prevent our children and young people from growing up with prejudices against other groups within the borough.

### **Reporting Hate Crime**

National research has shown that incidents of hate crime are under-reported. Partners in Dudley are committed to offering a variety of reporting mechanisms to ensure people are able to report in confidence where they feel most comfortable. These include the traditional route of reporting to West Midlands Police, online via the true vision website or via the boroughs [Third Party Reporting Centre's](#) which allow victims to report acts of hate confidentially.

### **Resilience Forum**

Dudley's Resilience Forum is a multi-agency partnership made up of representatives from the local authority, Emergency Services, West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit, Health organisations and supporting agencies which work together to address specific local issues and build capabilities to plan, respond to and recover from a wide range of civil emergencies.

The Prepare and Protect elements of CONTEST are incorporated into the scope of this Forum in order to help reduce risk in the local area and improve community resilience.

### **Prevent**

Prevent is part of the UK's counter terrorism strategy, preventing people from becoming involved in terrorism or supporting terrorism. In recent years we have seen an increase in attacks across the world, with the perpetrators of those atrocities justifying their actions on the basis of a wide range of extremist causes. Prevent activity has been taking place in Dudley since 2007, and our priority is safeguarding individuals and communities from the risk of extremism by building resilience to extremist influences.

There is a correlation between extremist views and an increased risk of hate crime, prejudice, and fragmented communities, so it is a priority for all of us to work to prevent extremism where possible.

The prevent agenda is taken forward via the Prevent Delivery Group and detailed in the prevent strategy and delivery plan

## **Love Your Community**

As a Community Council, Dudley is committed to being an open, responsive and listening organisation. But Love Your Community is about more than that. It is about a new relationship or "deal" with Dudley's citizens. Key features of 'love your community' are:

- The Council will protect the most vulnerable but it also needs citizens to build resilience within their own communities
- We need to reduce dependence on public services, partly through communities becoming more self sufficient , but also through engendering a social enterprise culture within Dudley
- The Council, with local public and third sector partners has a major part to play in enabling communities to embrace this

Love Your Community is therefore about doing things with people not to them, and this approach should in turn have a positive impact on Community Cohesion.

## **Governance and Implementation**

The Community Cohesion Strategic Group will oversee the work included in the action plan attached to this strategy, in order to minimise the potential negative effects of tensions and hate crime, prevent escalation and reduce conflict.