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Understanding Concerns about Community Relations in Kirklees

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Understanding Concerns about Community Relations in Kirklees

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1. Executive Summary

Research Context

- This study examined attitudes and dispositions towards greater ethnic and religious diversity, as well as community relations more generally, among residents of predominantly white British¹ neighbourhoods. It also examined people's attitudes and responses to anti-minority protest by groups like the English Defence League (EDL) and towards cohesion policy and practices.

Methodology

- A mixed methods design was used combining a (non-representative) household survey (n=434) in four selected research sites (three areas in north Kirklees, one area in south Kirklees) with six key informant interviews (across key institutions) and fifteen focus group discussions (across age-ranges and localities) with local people.

Findings

Place

- Respondents were broadly positive about their own local areas.
- Respondents in north Kirklees were, however, much more negative about Dewsbury as a town, with 'nothing' being the most common answer to the question 'what is good about your town?'
- Dissatisfaction from respondents centred on the perceived economic decline of Dewsbury and its impact on the shops and facilities available.
- For some respondents, this worry about decline and decay became connected to worries about the changing balance of communities within the town.
- Dewsbury was also seen as having an external stigma stemming from its connection with the 7/7 attacks and other terror plots, as well as the Shannon Matthews case.
- Immigration was seen as a greater problem for Britain as a whole than for their own or locality, whilst religious and political extremism were consistently seen as the least important problem amongst those identified by the survey.

Civic participation and Community Leadership

- Civil society was seen as weak in many of the areas surveyed, with the decline of Churches and religious bodies relevant here. Asian-majority areas were seen as having much stronger organisations and clearly-identifiable 'leaders' supported by large parts of their communities. In contrast, few 'leaders' with any credibility could

¹The term "white British" is used in this report to reflect the focus of the report on perceptions and attitudes within this particular demographic. It is relevant to distinguish white populations that identified primarily as British from other white populations, notably Eastern Europeans.

be detected within marginalised white British- majority areas. This was perceived to leave a vacuum for self-appointed activists claiming to speak for the community.

- In this context, local state professionals, such as community engagement officers, youth workers and housing support workers were seen as pivotal figures in communities. They were understood as playing a vital role in bringing the community together and in connecting residents to public services.
- Participation in the 2010 General Election amongst respondents was slightly lower than for the local constituencies as a whole, with strong disillusionment with all political parties evident amongst a significant portion of respondents.
- Neighbours were the most trusted group, with the Police also viewed as having significant trust. Local Government was more trusted than national government, but trust in local government was only rated at 5 out of 10

Attitudes towards anti-minority protest

- Most (63%) survey respondents had heard of the EDL (primarily through mainstream media) and some 42% of all respondents, had heard of and felt they understood what the EDL stands for.
- There was little declared support for the EDL, and focus group respondents were mostly critical or dismissive of the EDL as an organisation. The EDL's aggressive reputation, the potential for violence, and the spectacle of heavily policed street demonstrations were often cited.
- Nevertheless, a number of EDL themes did resonate with some survey and focus group participants, and these acted as a badge for the expression of more general feelings of unfairness towards, and marginalisation of, people from white British backgrounds.

Contact and integration

- This data provides some challenging messages about the current nature of cross-community contact (or the lack of it) in Kirklees, particularly in Dewsbury. However, it also contains positive and constructive messages, both about the existence of ethnic/religious diversity in towns and in the clear majority support and desire for greater contact between people of different ethnic and religious groups than there is at present.
- There was a clearly negative assessment of how well different ethnic and religious groups get on in Dewsbury at present, with an additional large group of 'Not Sures'.
- There was a clear and strong majority in favour of the proposition that there should be more contact between different ethnic and religious groups than there is at

present. The significant number of 'Not Sures' on this question also provide an important section of the community arguably open to dialogue on this issue.

- This survey data was echoed by focus group and interview respondents, who identified both superficial conviviality and considerable anxiety about, or even avoidance of cross-community contact altogether.
- Some respondents clearly identified spaces and places where contact is increasing. However, there was significant evidence of a sense of unfairness and grievance amongst some respondents, who perceive public authorities to be biased towards ethnic minority communities. Here, the behaviour and attitudes of some sections of Asian communities and a claimed lack of focus on this behaviour by public authorities is seen as fuelling this sense of unfairness.
- Schools were seen by many as an important site for cross-community integration and mixing but this was hampered both by rapidly changing demographics in some schools and a significant perception that schools do not deal with inter-ethnic disputes in an even-handed way. Out of school ethnic mixing was seen as difficult, both because of ethnic clustering in housing and because of peer, family and community attitudes within all communities.

Attitudes towards "cohesion" activities

- There was significant support amongst respondents for the idea of more active community cohesion programmes that encourage cross-community contact.
- There is already significant cohesion activity going on and respondents who'd experienced such activity were positive about it.
- Many respondents, however, strongly believe that contact cannot, and should not, be 'forced', and that it should ideally flow naturally from community activity, sporting competitions, etc.

2. Project Background

The University of Huddersfield proposed this research, with its explicit focus on mainly white British communities, as a further development of a number of well-established research agendas at the University: on understanding attitudes and dispositions within mainly white communities to ethnic diversity and greater cross-community cohesion (Thomas, 2007; Thomas and Henri, 2011; Thomas and Sanderson, 2013); on anti-minority protests and mobilisation (Busher 2013a; 2013b; Macklin 2015); on hate crime and violent extremism (Christmann 2012; Christmann & Wong, 2010; Hirschfield et al 2012b; Wilcox et al 2010) and on how policy and practice can and does respond to these issues (Thomas, 2011a; 2012).

Yet this research was not only intended to develop better academic understandings but also to produce “impact”, to aid better-informed public policy development and ground-level policy enactment. As such, like much of our research in this area, this study was designed in close collaboration with relevant policy-makers and practitioners. In Kirklees, previous surveys indicate that some people are worried about how people from different ethnic and religious communities get along together. This study provides policy-makers and practitioners in Kirklees with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the dynamics of these concerns about community relations.

A key focus for this research was a longstanding sense that some predominantly white communities locally and nationally have expressed a sense of “unfairness” alongside ambivalence both to greater ethnic diversity and to policy measures designed to ensure greater equality and cohesion (Beider 2011; Open Society Foundations 2014). Such a sense of white unfairness is not unique to the UK, with similar dispositions identified in other European states, such as the Netherlands (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2009). At its heart is a perception that “multiculturalist” policy measures mean preferential treatment for minority ethnic communities at the expense of marginalised white communities, with such racialised grievance central to the 2001 northern riots (Cantle, 2001; Thomas, 2003; 2011a). In conjunction with this there has been a “white backlash” (Hewitt 2005) amongst some white young people, often from poor economic backgrounds, in response to anti-racist educational initiatives in schools and youth work. These measures have had positive impacts amongst many white young people but it must be acknowledged that they have not worked with some young people (Thomas, 2002). The post-2001 riots policy response of “community cohesion”, based on the Cantle report (2001), acknowledged the reality of this sense of grievance and negative backlash in some white areas. It not only moved away from the problematic language of “multiculturalism” but more substantially sought to re-balance policy work towards an emphasis on commonality, cross-community partnership and greater contact between people of different ethnic, faith and social backgrounds.

However, to date there is only limited evidence of marginalised white communities participating in community cohesion and integration work, or of more positive attitudes to ethnic diversity. Alongside this, the most mono-cultural areas of the country remain white ones, with some white people, particularly in economically marginalised areas, having very little opportunity to meet people of different backgrounds. Here, policy-makers need a better sense of both attitudes within such areas towards great local diversity and cross-community contact, and of the local capacity to participate in cohesion work.

The context for local policy attempts to develop community cohesion and integration work since 2001 has been one of greatly increased immigration from Eastern Europe that has rapidly altered the demographic make-up of some areas. Since 2008 the country has also experienced a very significant economic recession. What has also shaped the current context has been a recent wave of anti-minority, specifically anti-Muslim protest, much of which has centred on the activities of the English Defence League (EDL),² a social movement group that since 2009 has staged street demonstrations in towns and cities across the UK as well as developing a significant online presence (Copsey 2010). While the EDL and most of its various off-shoots have claimed to comprise peaceful protest groups and have taken a number of measures to 'police' their own demonstrations (Busher 2013a), these events have provided significant public order challenges and have added further stress to community relations, as shown by rallies held in both Dewsbury and Batley. These mobilisations have highlighted the need to better understand how such groups are viewed within the sort of marginalised, mainly white communities that they claim to speak for, and to document how the cohesion and integration agendas are playing out in these communities.

²Some of the most prominent EDL activists have claimed that their protests concern only what they refer to as "Islamic extremists" or "militant Islam", but the rhetoric and chants used by activists on demonstrations and online conversations suggest that such a narrow definition of their protest issues is probably held only by a relatively small minority of people associated with the group.

3. Methodology

The project used a mixed methods design, combining survey-based quantitative methods with interview and focus group qualitative methods. This allowed the research team to understand a broad sweep of views on community relations and perceptions of the EDL within predominantly white areas, whilst at the same time undertaking a deeper exploration of the lived experience of local residents.

The household survey comprised 31 questions on five main themes:

- What they valued most about their locality and their town (Dewsbury/Huddersfield) as a place to live;
- The main challenges facing people in their locality, in their town and the UK;
- Community relations and integration;
- Civic participation and trust;
- Awareness of and attitudes towards anti-Muslim protest groups like the EDL.

The Kirklees survey sample comprised 434 responses. The same survey was also carried out in neighbouring Calderdale (which had a smaller sample = 212 responses), providing an overall sample of 646 responses. The survey was administered face-to-face on people's doorsteps. In Kirklees, it was carried out across four research sites: three areas in north Kirklees and one in south Kirklees. The four areas were chosen by the research team in collaboration with Kirklees Council officers to reflect priority areas for the revised Kirklees Community Cohesion strategy, alongside a comparator area from the southern area of the authority. Within each of the three northern areas, a targeted sample was used to reflect patches with challenging economic circumstances, whilst the targeted area of south Kirklees represented a more varied spread of economic circumstances. It is important to emphasise that this sample is NOT representative of Kirklees as a whole, or of the electoral wards within Kirklees within which the samples were taken.

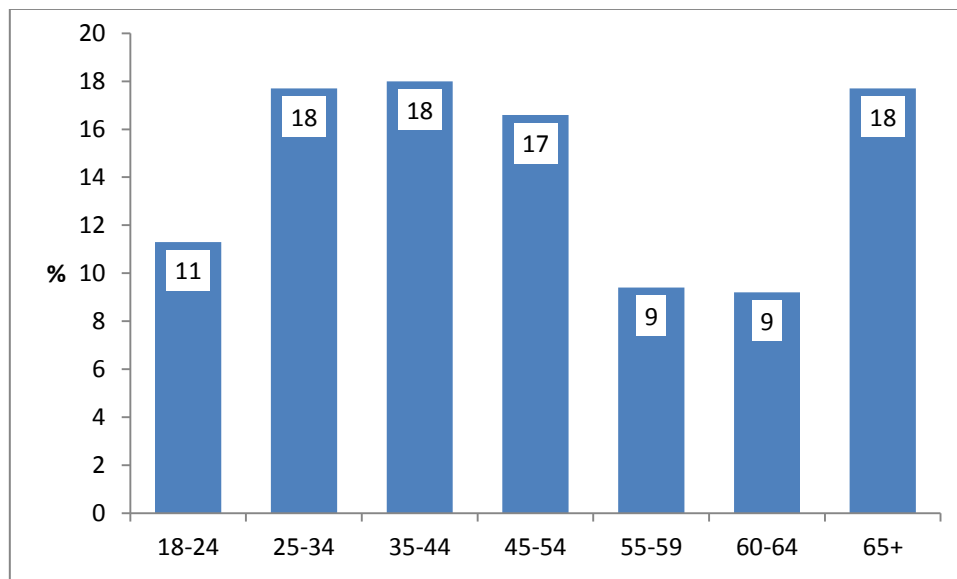


Figure 1: Map of Kirklees, West Yorkshire, displaying main towns

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Across the Kirklees sample, 60% of respondents were female and 40% male. Although a good range of age groups are covered, the 65+ age group is overrepresented (see Figure 2 below). Most of the respondents were long term residents, with half having lived in the area for 20 years or more, 15% between 10-19 years, 18% between 5-9 years, with the smallest numbers being more recent residents (8% between 3-4 years and 7% between 0-2 years). Approximately 70% of working age respondents were in paid work. The majority of respondents, 95% identified themselves as White British.

Figure 2: Age of survey respondents (N=434) (by %)



The qualitative element of the research comprised six key informant interviews and fifteen focus group discussions. Key informants were selected purposively to ensure coverage of each of the four research sites and representation from a range of different institutional stakeholders: the local authority, Police and schools. The final sample comprised one police officer, one local authority officer, two local authority youth workers, one school Head Teacher, and one local authority community worker. Interviews were semi-structured and focused on four main themes: community organisation and leadership; changing attitudes towards contact and integration with people from other ethnic and religious backgrounds; how cohesion and integration policy interventions have played out; and how, if at all, the emergence of the EDL had affected the situation. It is important to stress, respondents were asked to discuss their own views, experiences and understanding and were not asked to speak on behalf of their respective organisations.

A minimum of three focus groups were held in each area (for the purpose of the qualitative component, one with young people aged approximately 16-20 (in two of the areas a number of focus groups were held to effectively engage with young people), one with young adults (aged approximately 21-50), and one with older adults (aged 50+). The following topics were discussed: what people valued most about and the major challenges facing people living in their local area and their town; cross-community contact and community

tensions and how these have changed in recent years; and how they think the activities of groups like the EDL have affected the situation.

All the interviews and focus groups were voice-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each transcript was read and coded by at least two members of the research team. Initial coding identified themes within each of the five main research topics. Themes were then cross-checked across the research team before integrating the quantitative and qualitative analysis

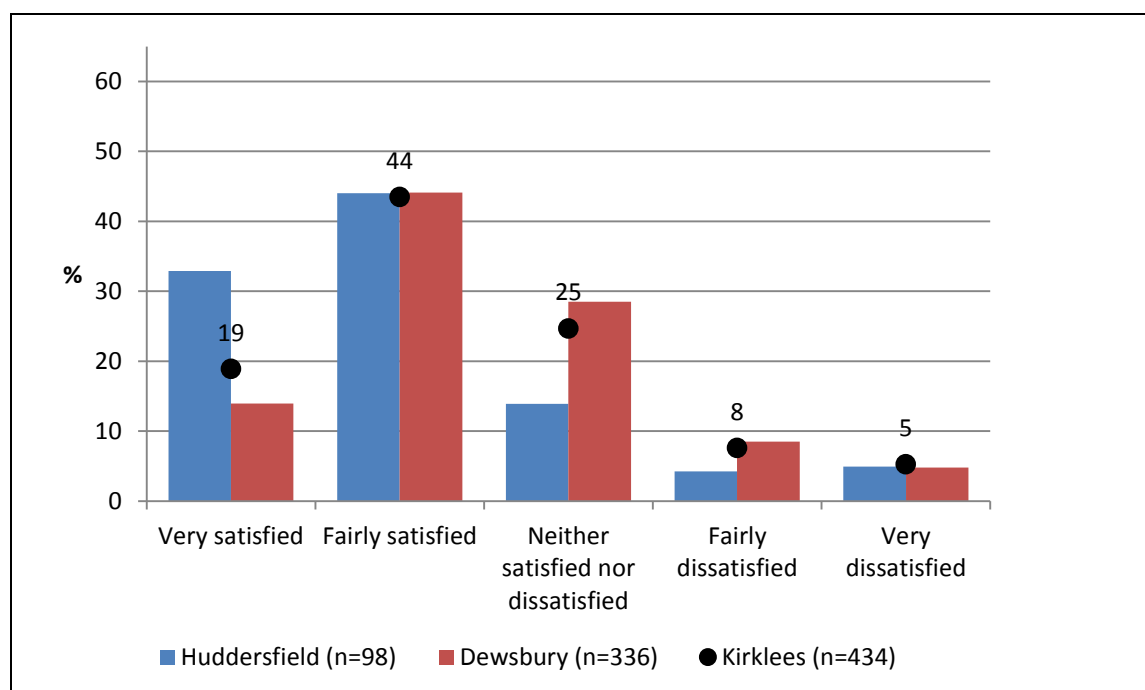
4. Findings

The discussion of the findings is based around five main topics: 1) place; 2) civic participation and community leadership; 3) attitudes towards anti-minority protest; 4) contact and integration; and 5) attitudes towards 'cohesion' activities.

4.1. Place

Participants in the survey expressed broadly positive feelings both about their local areas and about their local Town (Dewsbury/Huddersfield) in general as a place to live (see Figures 3 and 4 below).

Figure 3: Survey respondents' satisfaction with their local area as a place to live (N=434) (by %)



In discussing feelings about 'local area' here, it should be acknowledged that particular geographical localities, whether it is particular social housing estates or 'named' areas, are not necessarily experienced as being one community. Often the 'communities' identified are much smaller micro communities, identified and bounded by particular sets of streets or landmarks, and frequently having a strong sense of territoriality that can produce both strong connections to neighbours but also some wariness, or even hostility, to 'outsiders':

When we talk about Dewsbury moor, its five estates as such in Dewsbury moor (Young Adult).

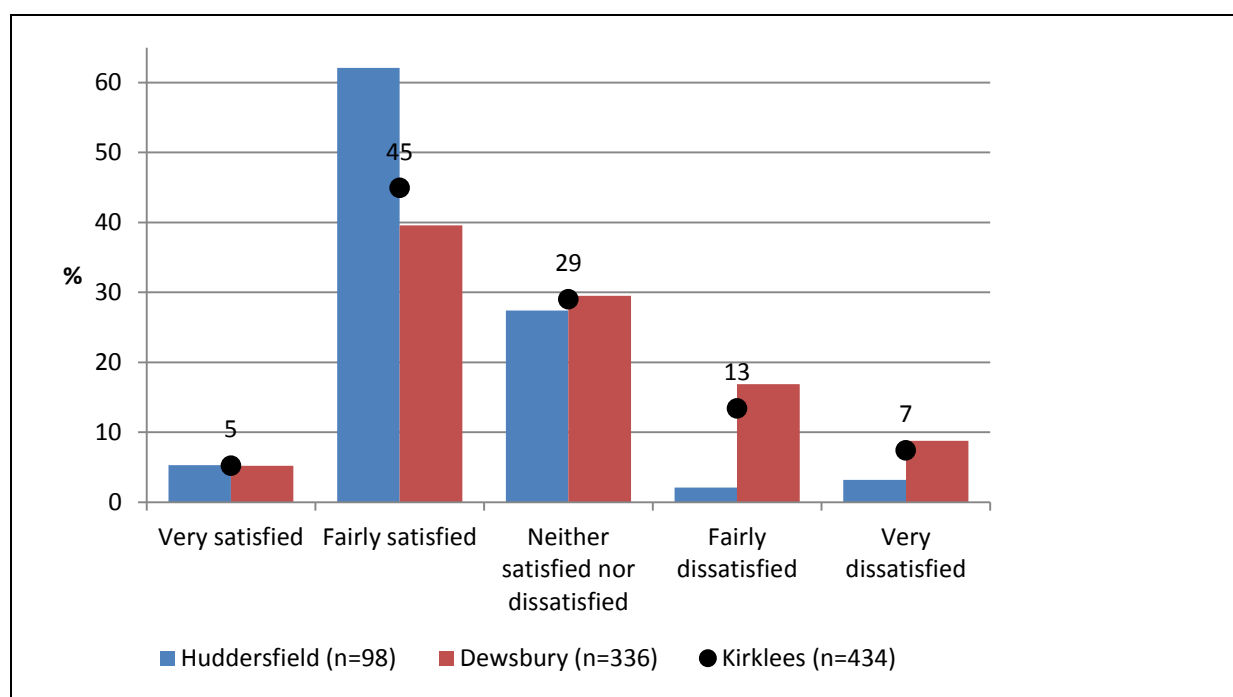
I think everyone that's moved in my experience in the last five years has been known to someone in that area anyway off that estate [...] You've got one side of the estate

who won't cross over onto the other side of the estate. Even though they're fairly close and they're white (Respondent 4).

They see themselves as separate, they want to be separate. They're not part of Dewsbury, they're not part of that, they're Thornhill and Overthorpe themselves (Respondent 5).

This reality of micro-community identification and loyalties both cautions against simplistic understandings of 'marginalised white communities' and also puts the challenge of promoting cross-community contact in to context. It suggests that there first needs to be a focus on strengthening civil society participation and 'cohesion' **within** and between distinct micro communities in some white areas before contact activity with other (non-white) communities is possible.

Figure 4: Survey respondents' satisfaction with their Town (Dewsbury or Huddersfield) as a place to live (N=434) (%)



Looking at survey respondents satisfaction with their town (Figure 4 above) we see that levels of satisfaction reduce, particularly those citing 'very satisfied' (dropping from 19% to 5% in comparison to 'satisfaction with local area') and modest increases in levels of dissatisfaction.

There was also a marked difference in how respondents from south Kirklees (admittedly living further away from their local town) viewed Huddersfield and how Dewsbury residents viewed their own town. When survey respondents were asked to describe the best things about living in Huddersfield (Figure 5 below) the amenities such as shops, restaurants and the night-time economy (pubs, theatre, night-life) figured prominently, as well as transport

Figure 7: Survey respondents' views of the best things about living in Dewsbury with 'Nothing' excluded (N= 336)



4.1.1. *Anxieties about decline and change*

Many smaller ex-industrial towns in the north of England have struggled in recent times as jobs, shops and leisure outlets have gravitated towards bigger cities such as Leeds or Manchester. The perception of Dewsbury as a town in decline was strong amongst respondents:

Lack of shops nowadays. The towns dead... It's disgusting, with all the shops and industries that's closed down. Dewsbury is like a ghost town to what it used to be (Older adult).

Dewsbury is dying slowly (Young Adult).

The shops and market stalls that do still operate in Dewsbury Town centre are increasingly run by Asian proprietors and for some respondents these two realities have merged to create a racialised and negative perception of change:

Every shop is run by Asians now, all the shops are closing (Young Person).

(Dewsbury?) Asian... Disgusting...Place to avoid (Older Adult).

One result of this general decline was a shared perception among both young people themselves and older adults of a lack of safe spaces and places for young people to go to. This was seen as understandably leading to situations of young people hanging around on

the streets and in public spaces, such as Dewsbury Bus Station, sometimes creating a nuisance for others:

Because there is nothing here [Dewsbury] all the kids hang around the bus station and stuff (Young Person).

Just before you came there was a big crowd of them gathering around the corner where you live, a really big crowd and some sat in the middle of the road (Young Adult).

I don't think there is much for the young ones [...] there's no youth club any more is there, we haven't got a youth club like we used to have (Young Adult).

This research was carried out before the fast-food chain McDonalds closed their Dewsbury Town Centre restaurant, which is likely to have would further exacerbated these concerns.

This economic decline of Dewsbury had merged with negative events, such as the Shannon Matthews controversy, one of the 7/7 bombers having lived in Dewsbury, links to other terror plots and EDL demonstrations to create an external stigma for the town and its inhabitants:

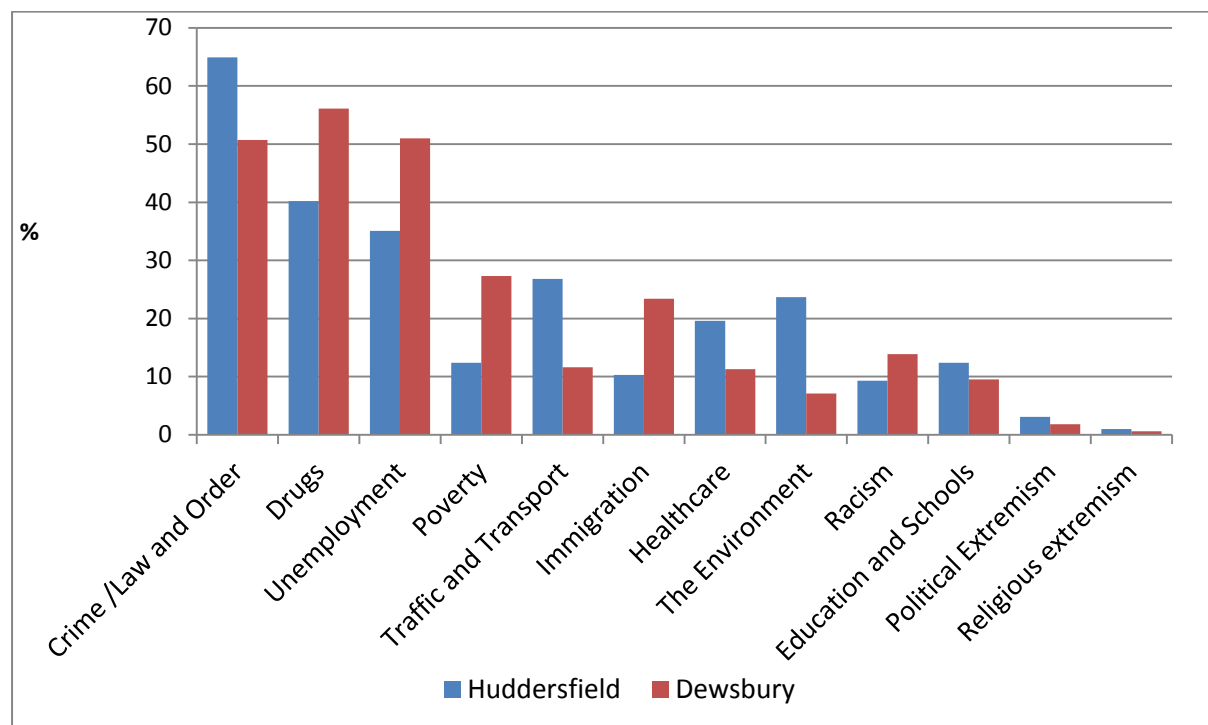
You know on my twitter page and that lot, I haven't put Dewsbury, I've put Leeds... Yeah, when I go on holiday I say, oh I'm from Leeds (Young Person).

It's what a lot of people bring to mind when you say I come from Dewsbury Moor, they say ooh Shannon Mathews [...] yes I'm thinking there's empty shops, there's the London bombers (Older Adult).

4.1.2. Local, regional and national issues

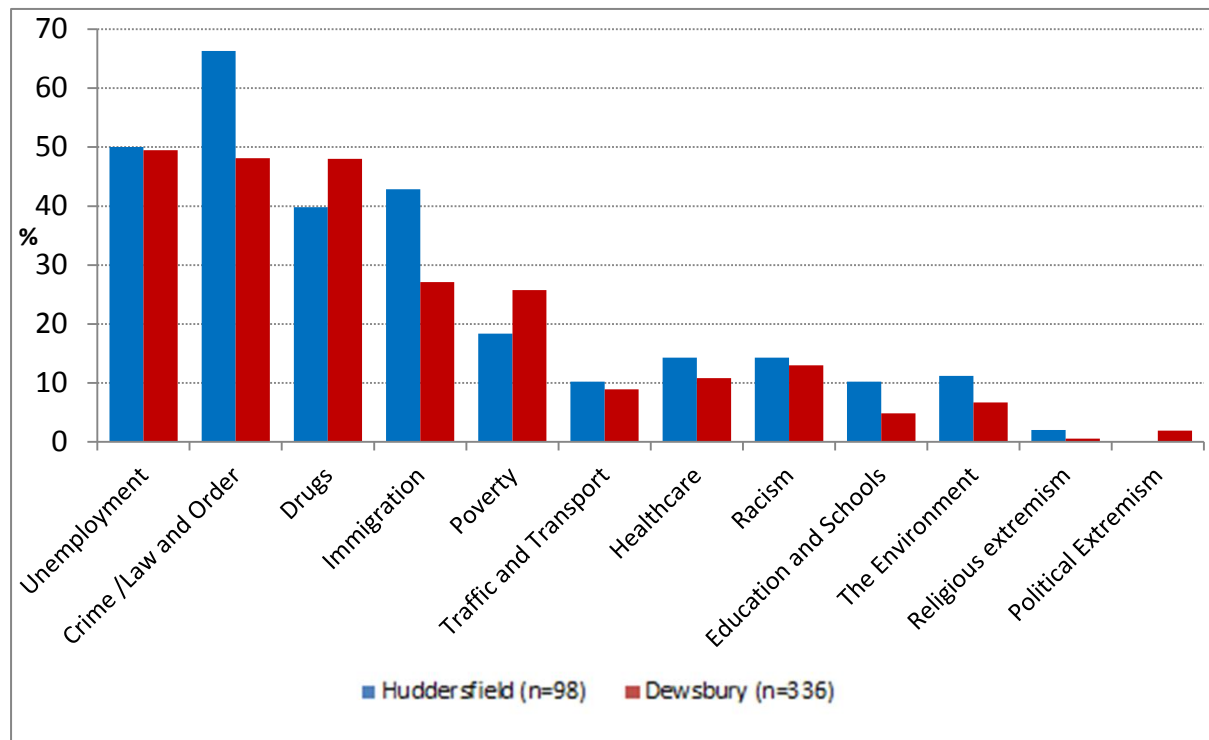
Also apparent from the findings is the fact that comments about challenges and problems were shaped by scale – by whether respondents were talking about their local areas, about their Town (Dewsbury/Huddersfield) or about Britain. Of particular relevance to this report is the way immigration and political or religious extremism were identified as a more significant issue when talking about the national rather than the local picture. When asked about the main issues facing people in their local area, immigration came 6th out of 12 options, with racism, political extremism and religious extremism coming lower still (see Figure 8 below). However, when asked about the main issues facing people in Dewsbury/Huddersfield, concern about immigration rises up to 4th (Figure 9 below), and up to 3rd when asked about the main issues facing Britain (Figure 10 below).

Figure 8: Survey respondents' rating of important issues facing people in their local area (N= 434)



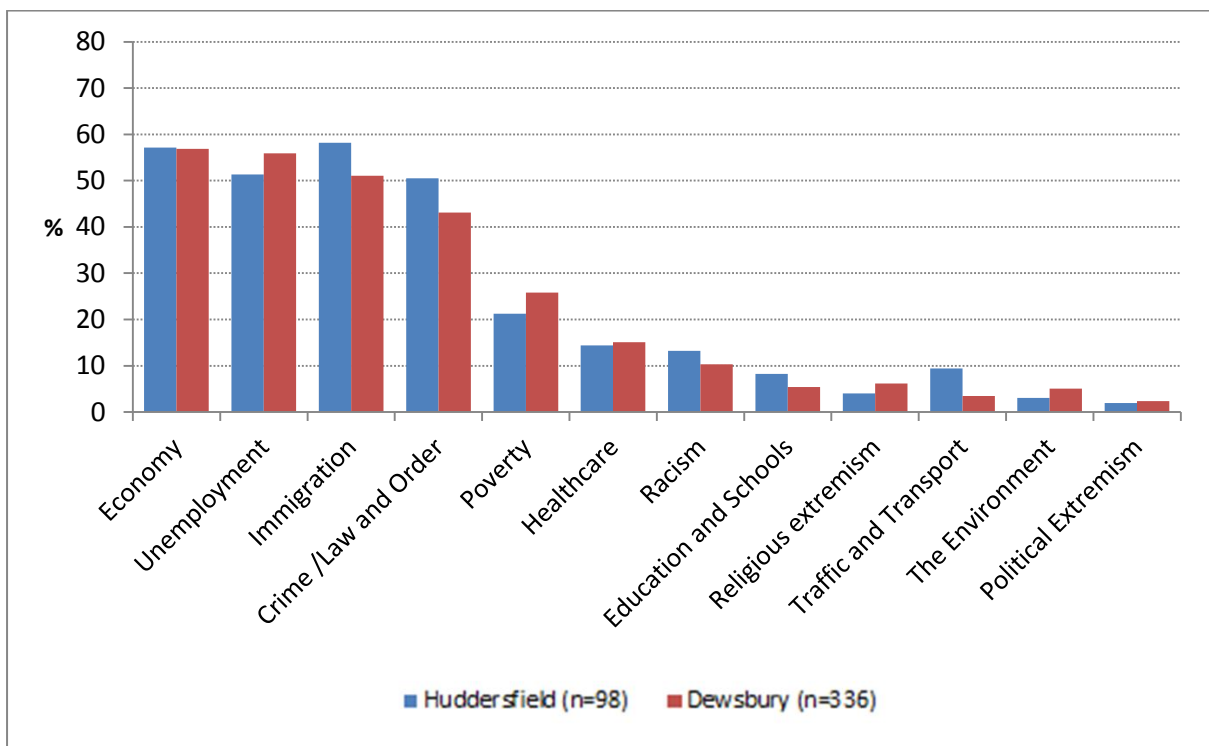
The most prominent local issues relate to concern about wider social ills, such as crime, illicit drugs (a specific sub-set of presenting crime levels, and perhaps itself functioning as a 'signal crime') unemployment, and to a lesser extent poverty, and traffic and transport links (Figure 8 above). Whilst there is a difference in emphasis between the two towns, these social problems feature large in respondent's minds. A similar picture emerges for respondents ratings of important issues facing their town, although we see a juxtaposition of relative rankings, with unemployment being the most cited problem (see Figure 9 below).

Figure 9: Survey respondents' rating of important issues facing people in their town (N= 434)



Economic ills (although less so 'poverty') are also central to perceived problems facing the nation (Figure 10 below).

Figure 10: Survey respondents' rating of important issues facing people in Britain (N= 434)



It is worth emphasising that at all three levels ‘religious extremism’ and ‘political extremism’ are viewed as either the least important issues or one of the least important. When asked about issues for people in their local areas (Figure 8 above) less than 2% of respondents in Dewsbury selected political or religious extremism as a problem, however, when asked about the main problems facing Britain, 5% of Dewsbury respondents selected religious extremism and 2% selected **political** extremism (Figure 10 above). These effects of scale are also borne out in the qualitative data. We can only speculate as to why this is the case. However, one possible explanation would be that while people might be aware of and even to some extent buy into narratives currently prominent in public and media discourse about a “clash of cultures” (see Kundnani, 2014; Adib-Moghaddam, 2011), these aren’t really borne out in people’s own personal experiences. In other words, it may be the case that even where people might be enjoying broadly positive experiences of contact and integration in the course of their everyday lives, their view of those experiences and what they represent can still be coloured by dominant political and media discourse.

4.2. Civic Participation and Community Leadership

There is broad agreement in the academic literature that where there is greater civic participation and greater social trust, people are more likely to feel able to manage the challenges faced by them and their communities, including reacting positively to demographic change and increasing community diversity. In the survey, focus groups and interviews, we discussed two aspects of civic participation: (i) the extent and nature of civil society organisations and ‘leadership’ within local communities, and; (ii) engagement with formal political structures.

4.2.1. Local civil society and community leadership

Most key informants and focus group participants were in agreement that white British communities don’t have the same degree of organised community mobilization, communication and leadership structures as do Asian heritage communities. This was attributed in part to the organising role of mosques as focal points for community structures within Asian communities, which was contrasted sharply with the declining role of churches and of community groups generally in the lives of many white British people:

The main difference as far as I’m concerned is the fact that the mosque has a massive role whereas in white communities the church has a very smaller diminished role (Respondent 1).

The one thing that does come up quite frequently, amongst white working class communities is that they have perhaps fewer groups, fewer perceived leaders and fewer opportunities to access funds, whether that’s true or not that comes up constantly (Respondent 2).

I think there are significant leaders of maybe community voluntary sector organisations but how much pull they have and how high, I don’t think there is the

strength in the networks than those in other communities, such as there might be in some of the Asian communities (Respondent 6).

More generally, community structures in less affluent white communities were described as being less formalised, more local and less integrated into larger political structures. It was noted by key informants that those playing leadership roles within these communities might be better described as “key people” or “activists” rather than “community leaders” who had clear authority, local standing and ‘buy-in’ within their communities:

In terms of speaking with people of authority, there is less of that in the white community because those particular leaders don’t have as much buy-in, I suppose, from all the community (Respondent 3).

I think there are significant leaders of many? Community voluntary sector organisations but how much pull they have and how high, I don’t think there is the strength in the networks than those in other communities that might be some of the Asian communities (Respondent 5).

This reality can lead to a leadership vacuum, sometimes filled in problematic ways:

You have so called community activists who push a right wing agenda and they’re all heavily involved, they’re the ones that try to get funding to take these young people on activities and they’ve tried to get xxxx built so they’re actively involved, they’re not only just portraying this negative message about Muslims and Savillettown and Thornhill, they’re getting young people involved in activities, so they are doing some positive things... (Respondent 5).

This suggests both that Anti-Minority protest group activists can gain credibility in the eyes of some local residents by championing local issues and that such a ‘championing’ role is possible in situations of weak local mainstream civil society structures and activity.

4.2.2. The Importance of local state professionals

Key informants and several focus group participants did make reference to attempts by professionals such as community workers, youth workers and housing officers to support the development of local community structures. These professionals were seen as pivotal local figures within the civil society reality outlined above – community-based professionals were described as providing a vital and trusted point of contact, with local service providers and youth centres and youth services frequently identified as one of the most positive and effective aspects of local areas.

I went recently on a residential to York, took them all to York and you get chatting don’t you late at night don’t you and five of them said, if it hadn’t have been for the influence of the girl’s group, god knows where I’d be today (Respondent 4).

We’d be worse off without YPS groups like this (Young Person).

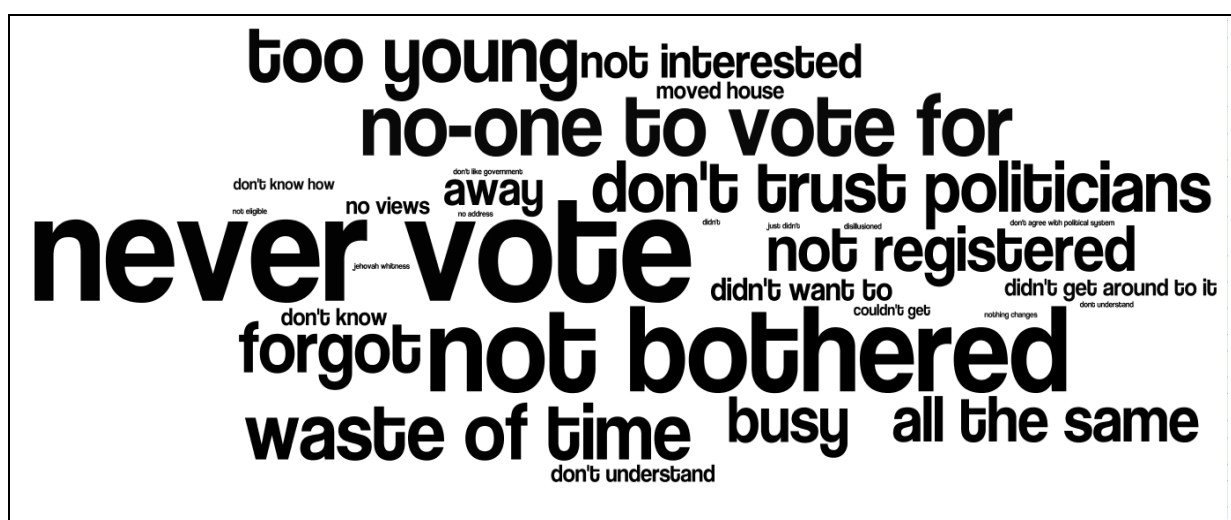
Because of the mobile unit we can get right into their estates, where they are. XXXXX is one of them, there is a massive group of young people, I think there's 50, 60, 70, 80 young people and some of them were not engaging.so I am working up there now as well (Respondent 5).

Even over the last three to five years since the small grants scheme started to reduce there's definitely been a fall in the number of community groups and activity and that's what we are starting to look at now we are trying to build some of that back up again (Respondent 6).

4.2.3. Political engagement and representation

In terms of engagement with formal political institutions, 60% of survey respondents in the Kirklees sample said that they voted in the 2010 general election, some way below the national average of 65.1%.³ As can be seen in Figure 11 (below), the most frequent reasons given for not voting was that there was 'never vote', 'not bothered' and "no one to vote for". Other common responses continue in a similar vein: that politicians are "all the same", that they "don't trust politicians", that there is "no point" or that they have "no interest".

Figure 11: Survey respondents' reasons for not voting (N=434)

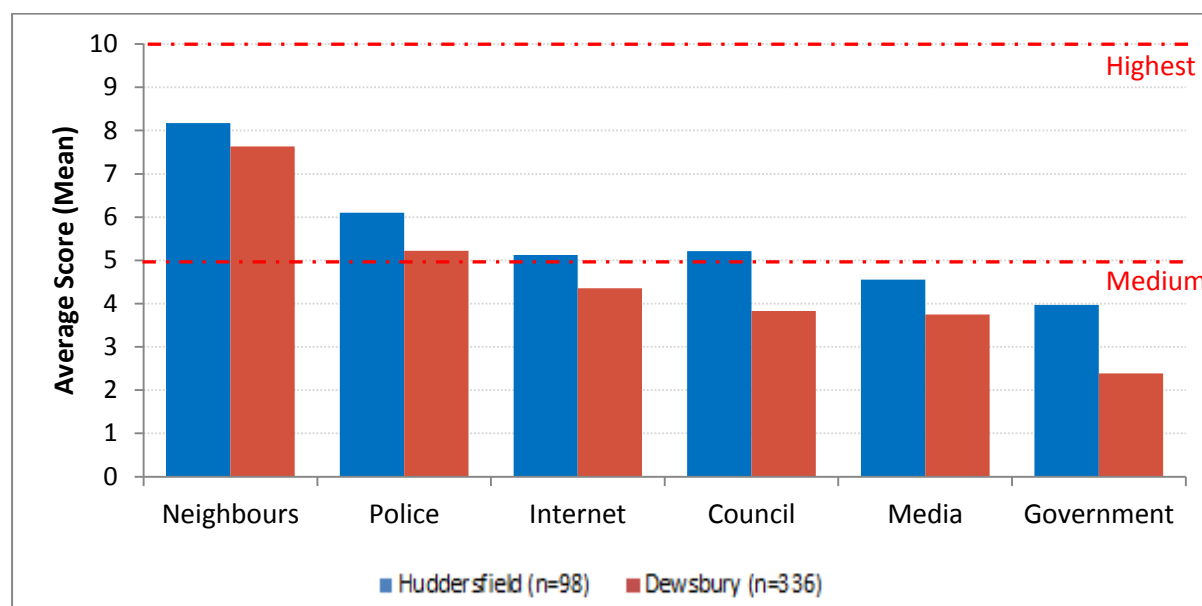


4.2.4. Trust

The survey data indicate relatively high levels of trust in one's neighbours (see Figure 12 below). Responses were less positive with regards some of the public authorities. Participants in the survey expressed particularly low levels of trust in the national government, and there was nothing in the focus group discussions that contradicts this finding.

³ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8672976.stm Voter turnout in Dewsbury constituency was 68.5%, Huddersfield, 61.1% and in Colne Valley, 69.1%.

Figure 12: Survey respondents' (by neighbourhood) level of trust in neighbours and public institutions (1 lowest, 10 highest, N=434)



Whilst local government enjoys more trust than do national government, the mean score (either combining both towns or for Dewsbury itself) still sits below 5, and as such is far from a ringing endorsement. The Police enjoy a relatively higher level of trust, a finding which broadly mirrors findings from policing research more generally (see HMIC 2012; 2011; Jackson et al, 2014).⁴

4.3. Attitudes to Anti-Minority Protests

Kirklees has experienced significant activity by anti-minority protests groups and extreme right-wing political parties in the last few years. Dewsbury's links to the 7/7 attacks and other terror plots, along with its high-profile Mosque, has attracted a number of national English Defence League rallies. Each one has caused very significant disruption to the life of the area as well, due to the scale and manner of the resulting police operations. One of these EDL rallies in Dewsbury prompted a group of young Muslim men to plan and attempt to carry out a terrorist attack on the rally. The trial resulting from this foiled plot came to a conclusion whilst field research was being conducted. As such, at the time of this research, the EDL provided the most high profile vehicle for expressing anti-minority sentiment.⁵

In the survey and during the focus groups and interviews, participants were asked questions about their attitudes towards and experiences of contact with the EDL. Most (63%) of the people who completed the survey had heard of the EDL. Unsurprisingly, awareness of the

⁴ Although trust in the police nationally has recently has started to waiver due to a host of high profile scandals

⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2013/jun/10/six-would-be-terrorists-edl-jailed>

EDL was higher in Dewsbury than in south Kirklees. In Dewsbury, 43.7% had heard of the EDL and knew what they stood for, whilst 21.6% had heard of them but were unsure what they stood for. This still left more than one third of respondents (34.7%) not having heard of them (an even larger 43.9% for the same question in south Kirklees). This awareness of the EDL was higher amongst young men in employment.

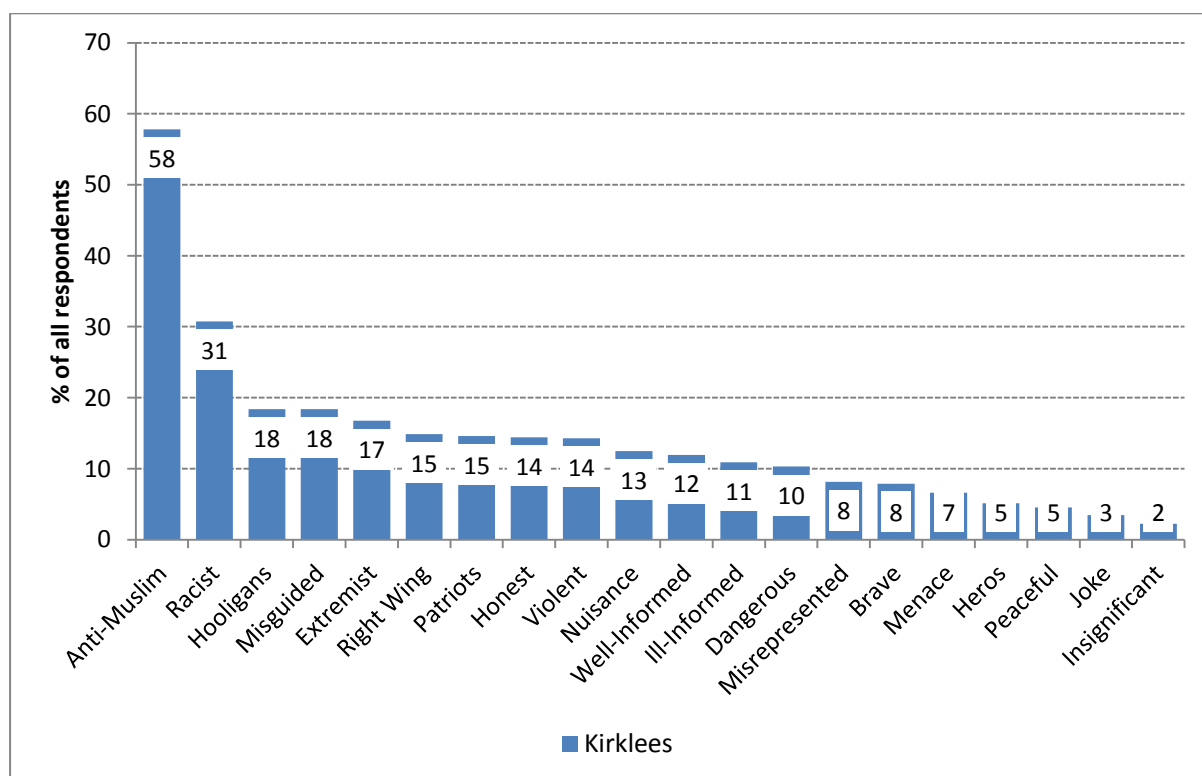
People were most likely to have heard about the EDL through mainstream media (some 43.7% had heard about them through the television, 23.5% through a national newspaper and 35.5% through a local newspaper). However, family and friends (23.2%) and social media (23.3%) were also important sources of information. Alternatively, a not-inconsiderable 11.3% of those who had heard of the EDL stated that they had learned about the group from somebody involved in the EDL.

Those who said they had heard of the EDL were asked to complete a word association exercise. They were given 20 words (with a range of more positive, negative and neutral significations), and asked to select the words they thought most accurately described the EDL. There were three main findings from the combined survey, focus group and key informant interview analysis.

4.3.1. There was only limited support and relatively little sympathy expressed for the EDL

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents in Kirklees expressed broadly negative feelings towards the EDL. Only 13% of survey participants in the Kirklees sample expressed sympathetic views towards the EDL, a little under 21% of those who had heard of the EDL. In general, responses were dominated by words with clear negative significations such as “racist”, “extremist”, “violent”, “dangerous”, or “ill-informed” (see Figure 13 below). The most frequently chosen description of the EDL as ‘anti-Muslim’ was more ambiguous. Most respondents appeared to use it in conjunction with negative words, but some used it in conjunction with more positive words.

Figure 13: Words associated with the EDL among Kirklees survey respondents (N=273)



This finding was supported by the focus group data. Most respondents were critical or dismissive of the EDL as an organisation. Much of this criticism centred on the aggressive reputation of the EDL, the potential for violence which the spectacle of street demonstrations and heavy policing carry, and the significant disruption these demonstrations cause to the wider community:

It's just causing trouble for our Town [...] it doesn't resolve anything [...] people who attend these demonstrations are not from here [...] and how much police resources and that they waste (Young Adult).

They just come bombing it and throwing stuff and wrecking the whole town centre which means that nobody can go out shopping and all the shops have to close down (Young Person).

I don't understand EDL. I think that they're all retarded. They're doing drugs, they've got balaclavas on that they probably nicked and I don't know what they're doing, they're not English Defence League, they're not defending anybody else, they're just chanting shit [...] I don't think they speak for me (Young Person).








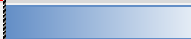



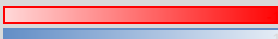
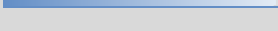
The marches they are causing friction between people, they are not helping, do you know, basically I hate it (Young Adult).

4.3.2. More sympathetic views towards the EDL were associated with low trust and hearing about the EDL through personal networks

When data for the combined Kirklees and Calderdale sample were analysed together, there were a number of variables that were statistically associated with people being more likely to express more sympathetic views towards the EDL (see Table 1 below).

It is important to emphasise that the data in Table 1 describe *statistical association* rather than causality. What we can see however and what is broadly in keeping with the findings of national survey data on EDL activists (Bartlett & Littler, 2011) is that more sympathetic attitudes towards the EDL are associated with particularly low levels of trust in public authorities, with being male and with a general dissatisfaction with where they live. Given that engagement with groups like the EDL often takes place through personal networks (Busher, 2015), the finding that greater sympathy with the EDL is positively associated with hearing about the group through friends (either offline or online) and negatively associated with hearing about the group via television, is also to be expected. The finding that there is a correlation between self-reported nationality as English rather than, for example, British, is also an interesting and would appear to correlate with research that points to the creeping racialization and increasingly exclusive, rather than inclusive, nature of English identity (Thomas, 2011b).

Table 1: Variables significantly associated with views sympathetic to the EDL

Variables associated with views sympathetic to the EDL	Relative Influence	Statistical Significance
18-24		**
65+		**
Male		**
Self reported nationality: English		**
Trust in Police		**
Trust in Government		**
Trust in Council		*
Dissatisfaction with town as a place to live		*
Heard about the EDL through Friends		*
Heard about the EDL through Social Media		**
Heard about EDL through TV		**
Key		
Statistically negative relationship		
Statistically positive relationship		
Statistically significant (p<0.05)		*

Some focus group participants rejected the view of the EDL as 'racist', seeing that negative label as undeserved:

They are not racist, it is not a racist group [...] they don't target all Muslims do they, it's the Muslim extremists (Young Person).

4.3.3. Resonances of the EDL narrative, if not the tactics

Despite the negative perceptions of the EDL (detailed in section 4.3.1 above), a number of what might be called EDL themes or concerns did resonate with some survey and focus group participants, i.e. concerns that their voices were not listened to, that there was preferential treatment of people from BME backgrounds, and that changing demographics and immigration was contributing to changing their neighbourhoods in ways with which they were not entirely comfortable with or which they objected to. It is worth noting, for example, that 19% said they were 'highly likely' to sign a petition against a new mosque in their area, and 13% 'quite likely' to sign, figures significantly higher than those relating to a petition against a new church in their area (3% and 2% respectively).

Several focus group respondents discussed the socialisation process into the EDL and the role played by local social networks:

A general thing is that whatever they have learnt hasn't come from their own knowledge. It's come from the media, it's come from something they've picked up at school, it's come from people in the community, whether it be parents, active members in the community or other friends of the family (Respondent 4).

People do talk about it in quite open terms, oh yeah, yeah. I went on the EDL march, or I support the EDL, because they are taking all our jobs, they get benefits and they can build their mosques in any direction they want [...] (Respondent 1).

For some focus group participants, the EDL were articulating wider community concerns:

I think they're only saying what the majority of people are thinking, but there isn't enough people to do anything about it (Older Adult).

These wider concerns related both to concerns about terrorism and local Muslim links to it:

I think it's a concern for the white local people whether that there are things going on in mosques around which are perpetuating this terrorists acts and I am just concerned for all of us as Dewsbury people because we don't mix very well (Young Adult).

Such concerns about terrorism were part of a wider set of anxieties over significant changes to the economy and to local community and its culture, with Asians being linked to these changes:

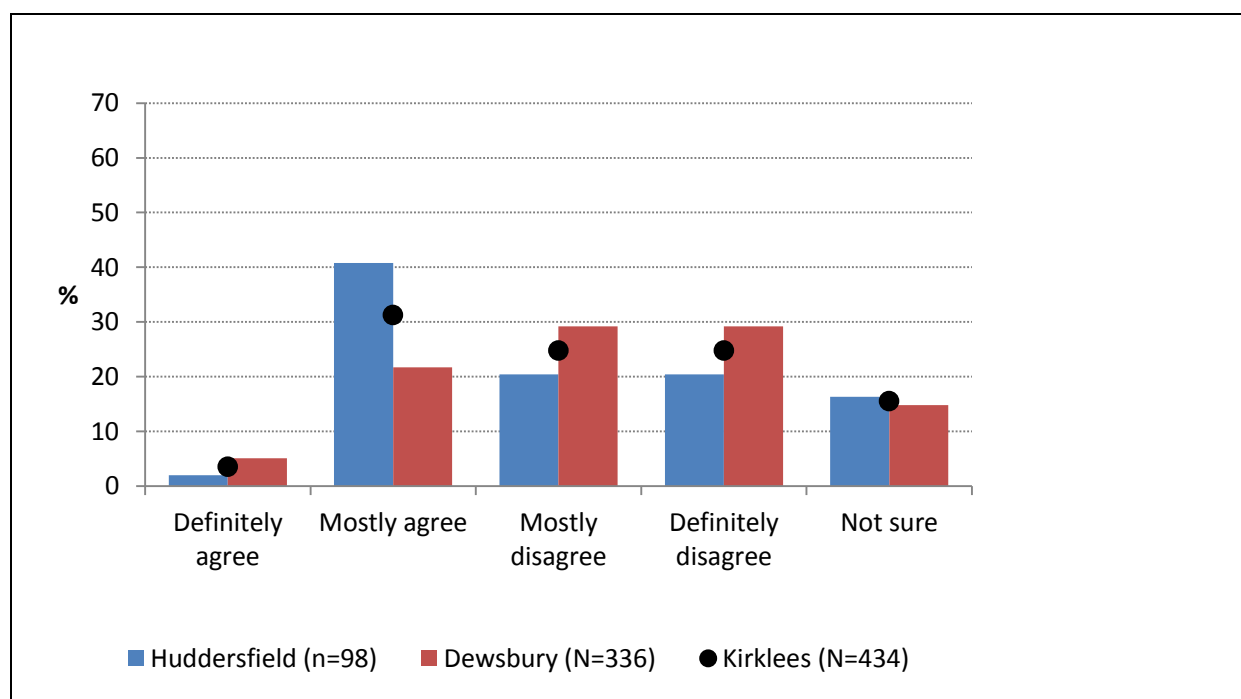
We can't get jobs cos of them [...] it's not just because of the Asians, its people like, Polish, they're working more hours for less money (Young Person).

4.4. Contact and integration

As might be expected, a rather complicated picture emerges from the data on questions about contact and integration. The survey data indicate, broadly, a positive support for increased cross-community contact and integration, whilst having more mixed views on the current extent and nature of such contact and integration. Unsurprisingly, respondents from South Kirklees were more positive than those from Dewsbury about the current state of cross-community contact and integration.

The survey utilised a standard question previously used by national government surveys such as the Place Survey, around perceptions of how people from different ethnic groups get along locally. The results (see Figure 14 below) show that more than a quarter (26.8%) of Dewsbury respondents overall agreed either definitely or mostly that Dewsbury is a place where people from different ethnic⁶ backgrounds get on, while over a half (58.4%) disagreed either mostly or definitely (Figure 13 below). In contrast, the comparable figures for Huddersfield show a slight majority, 42.8% 'definitely' or 'mostly agreeing' and 40.8% 'mostly' or 'definitely disagreeing'.

Figure 14: Survey respondents' views on whether their Town (Dewsbury/Huddersfield) is a place where people from different *ethnic* backgrounds get on well together (N=434)

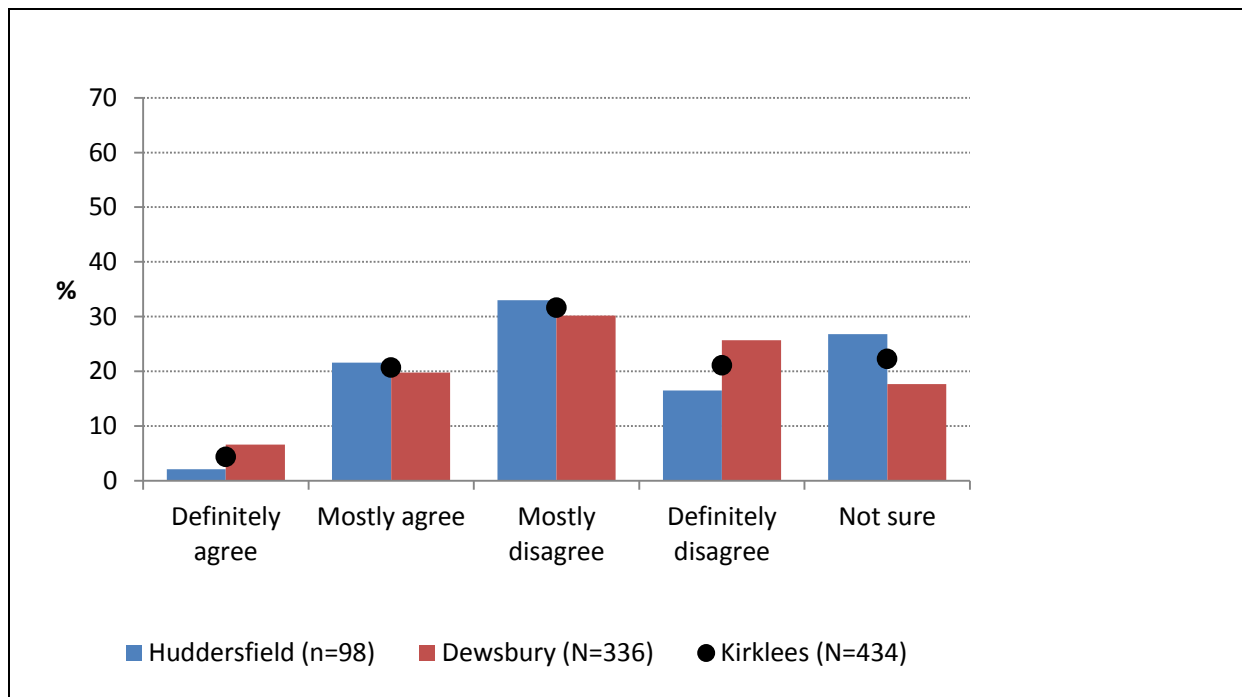


Very similar responses were given to the question of whether Dewsbury is a place where people from different religious backgrounds get on, with 55.9% disagreeing either mostly or

⁶ Respondents were asked about their attitudes towards mixing and integration both with regards to ethnic and religious groupings in order to examine the extent to which people did make a distinction between the two issues.

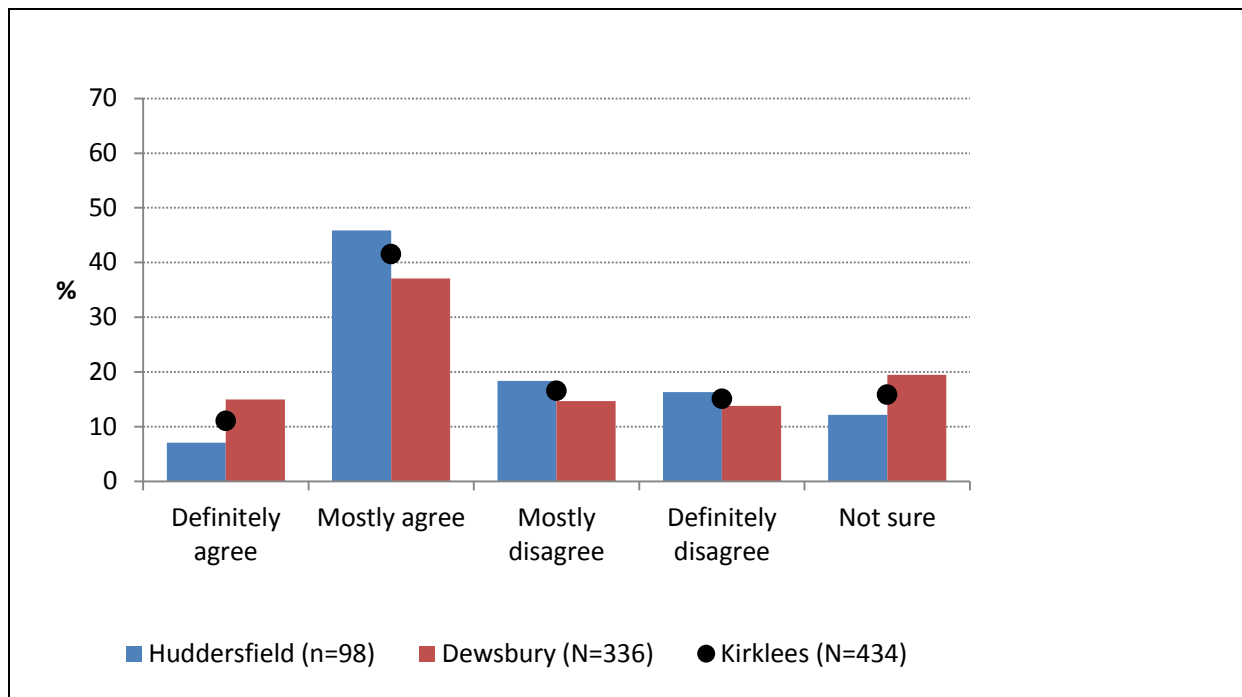
strongly (Figure 15 below). In both cases, however, interpretation of these data is problematised by the large number of “not sure” responses (14.8% for ethnic differences and 17.7% for religious differences respectively) in Dewsbury.

Figure 15: Survey respondents' views on whether their Town (Dewsbury/Huddersfield) is a place where people from different *religious* backgrounds get on well together (N=434)



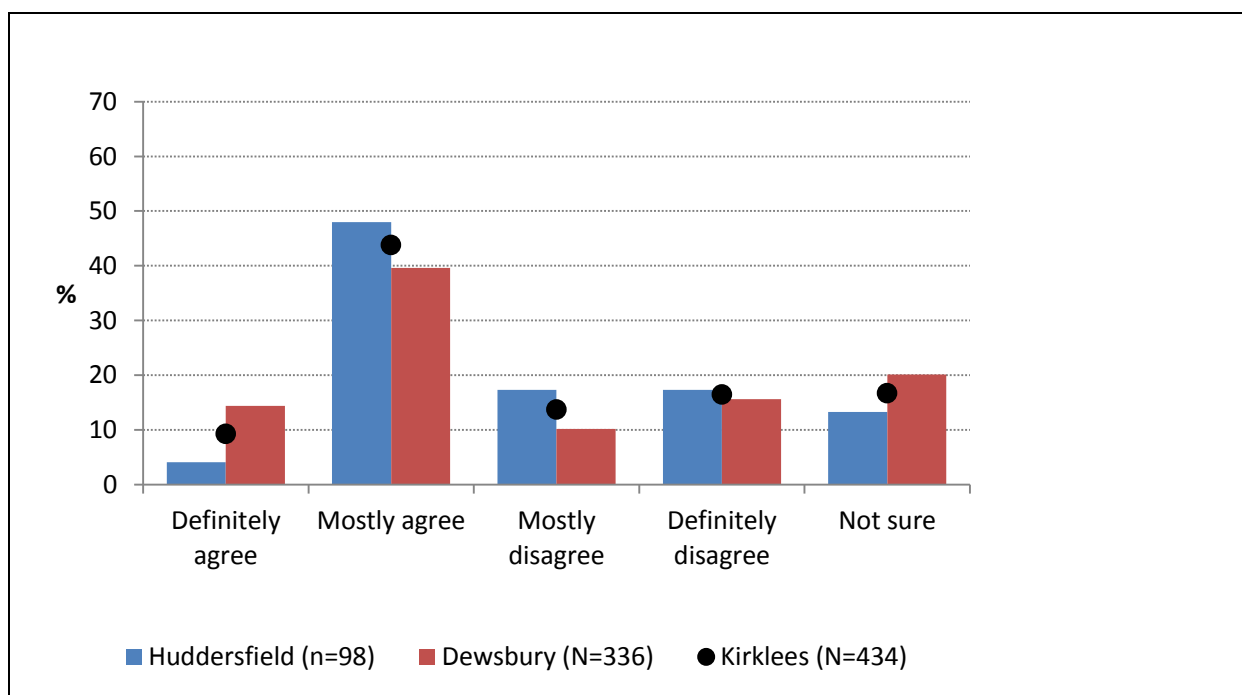
These negative perceptions of current cross-community contact and relations in Dewsbury are balanced, though, by responses to further questions. In response to the question of ‘whether it is good that there are people of different ethnic backgrounds living in their towns’, just over one half (52.1%) of Dewsbury respondents and 53% of Huddersfield respondents definitely or mostly agreed, and 28.5% and 34.7 respectively definitely or mostly disagreed.

Figure 16: Survey respondents' views on whether it is good that there are people from different *ethnic backgrounds* living in Dewsbury/Huddersfield (N=434)



A similar commitment to and acceptance of diversity was shown in the next question about the presence of religious diversity in their local town. Here, 54% of Dewsbury respondents 'definitely' or 'mostly agreed' that such local religious diversity is good, and 52.1 of Huddersfield respondents 'definitely' or 'mostly agreed'.

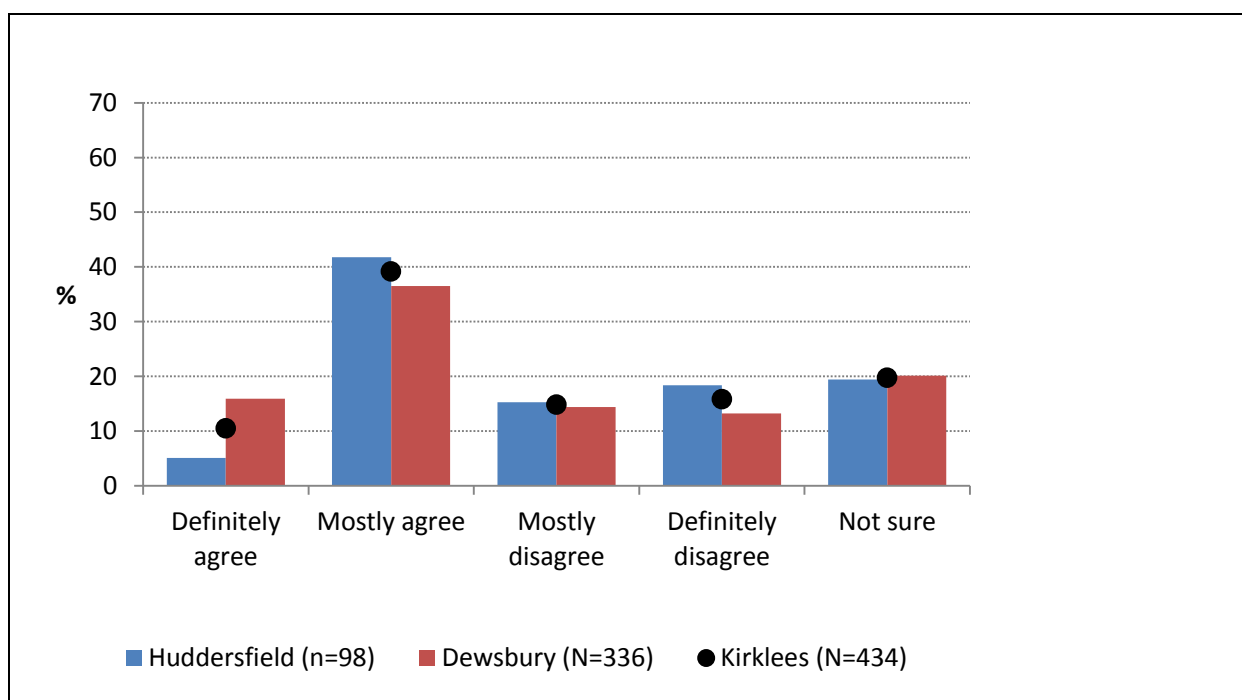
Figure 17: Survey respondents' views on whether it is good that there are people from different religious backgrounds living in Dewsbury/Huddersfield (N=434)



When asked whether it is good that there are people from different ethnic backgrounds, or religious backgrounds, living in Dewsbury/Huddersfield, on both questions, close to 20% of Dewsbury respondents answered 'Not Sure'. This may indicate respondent's reluctance to comment on such a charged issue, or even that people with negative feelings about diversity would rather say nothing at all. However, another way to interpret this response is that it is indicating both the need and a significant potential for greater community debate about and involvement in cohesion activity that demonstrates the positive benefits of diversity and contact.

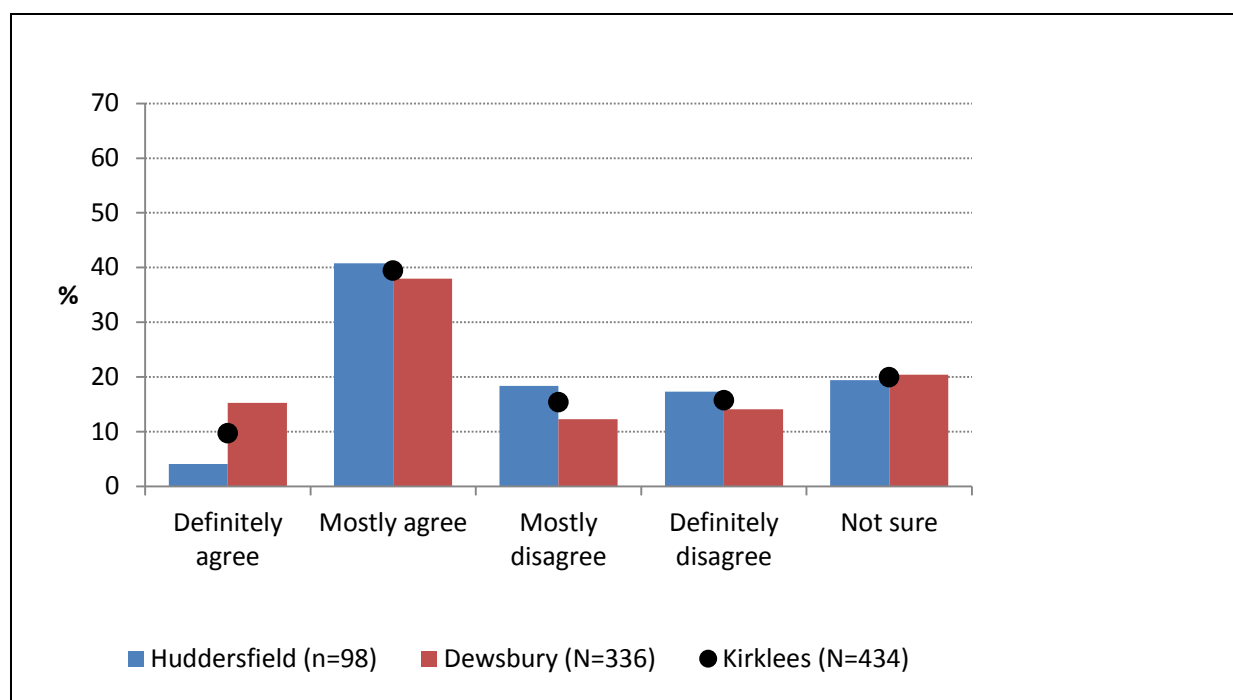
This positive support for the existence of ethnic and religious diversity in their local town extended to support for there being more contact than there is now between people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. 52.4% of Dewsbury respondents definitely or mostly agreed that there should be more contact between people of different ethnic backgrounds and 46.9 of Huddersfield respondents definitely or mostly agreed:

Figure 18: Survey Respondents' views on whether there should be more contact between people from different ethnic backgrounds in Dewsbury/Huddersfield (N=434)



Similarly, 53.3% of Dewsbury respondents and 44.9% of Huddersfield respondents definitely or mostly agreed that there should be more contact between people of different religious backgrounds.

Figure 19: Survey Respondents' views on whether there should be more contact between people from different religious backgrounds in Dewsbury/Huddersfield (N=434)

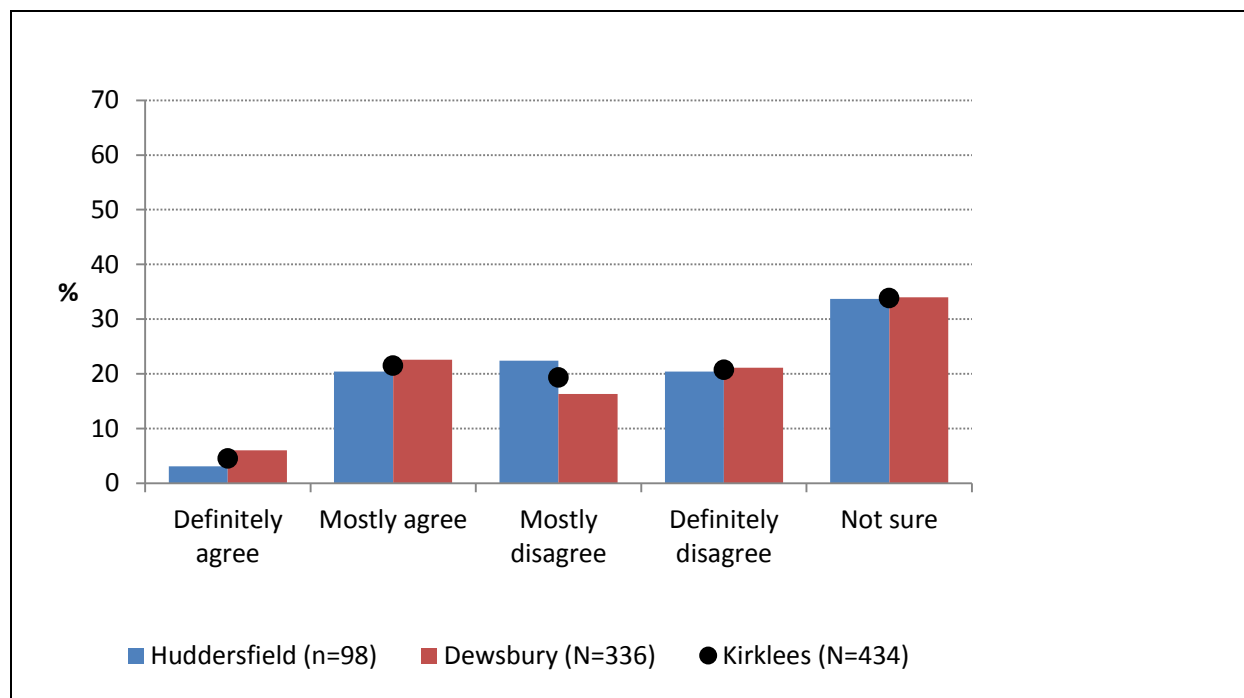


This support from a substantial portion of respondents for both the existence of local ethnic and religious diversity and for more contact between diverse communities casts a different light from the more negative perceptions of current community relations in Dewsbury. It demonstrates that there is an appetite for contact and dialogue amongst this significant portion of respondents, if policy and practice can support and encourage it in helpful, rather than unhelpful, ways. The relatively high number of 'Not Sures' throughout can be read in a number of ways. It may reflect some social desirability bias in operation, where perhaps some of these respondents are reluctant to be seen as openly disagreeing with positive diversity and cohesion messages for fear of appearing intolerant or bigoted, but may secretly favour answering in the negative. If this is the case, it would bolster the number of detractors and the size of the policy challenge. Alternatively, respondents may genuinely be unsure, perhaps reflecting unease about inadvertently generating inter-ethnic conflict or some other type of concern. These are of course conjectures but the prevalence of those stating 'not sure' about a proposition over diversity that would be viewed as unproblematic in some areas of the country remains an important finding. More optimistically, it may demonstrate the need and potential for engaging more people in dialogue and activity around these issues. However, it is also clear that a significant portion of respondents mostly or definitely disagree with both the reality of diversity and the idea of more contact between people of different ethnic or religious backgrounds.

How policy and practice responses are framed is obviously the question and here there is data around the approach of 'common values' sometimes deployed by politicians in relation to community relations. The mainly negative response to a question on uniting around

'common values', and an additional 34% of respondents being 'Not Sure' suggests that the language of 'common values' is either not understood, not supported, or both. It certainly suggests that this is not an effective way to frame cohesion policy and practice.

Figure 20: Survey Respondents' (by neighbourhood) views on whether “even though there are people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds in Dewsbury/Huddersfield, we are able to come together around a set of common values”. (N=434)



This survey data on cross-community contact and integration was explored further in the interviews and focus group discussions. The resulting findings are reported in the next section under four inter-related sub-themes.

4.4.1 Superficial conviviality

Although focus group participants and key informants spoke about how people “rub along”, scepticism was expressed about the extent to which contact and mixing goes beyond fairly superficial contact, and several research participants described a generalised suspicion of and reluctance to mix with different ethnic groups outside of a few defined social contexts

I would say the majority, do try and get on and if they can't get on they stay away from each other, which isn't always the best way but sometimes it is because if you can't get on and you don't want to get on, you stay apart, but that does nothing for community cohesion (Respondent 3).

I think behind closed doors and behind closed ears and behind closed eyes I think there is still quite a lot of scepticism about contact [...] in predominantly white communities there is distrust of anything that's not the same as them. I don't think it's any more marked round here than it is in most economically deprived areas (Respondent 1).

This included a perception that families who can exercise housing or schooling choice were doing so in some cases in order to avoid ethnic mixing:

I think in some areas in the district [...] for me the problem is growing in terms of the areas becoming more segregated, you only have to look at the education system and that is a reflection to me as to where people are choosing to live as well and that is a worry and how that will play out in terms of cohesion (Respondent 6).

Some of this apparent reluctance to engage in cross-ethnic mixing was understood as being based on pessimism about the outcomes of such mixing:

"I think it was a good idea to mix them, but in some senses it's not a good idea to mix, because it can cause friction (Young Adult).

Similar pessimistic feelings were expressed about the prospects of out-of-school mixing between young people, as discussed in 4.4.4 below.

4.4.2 Slow but steady progress?

At the same time, a significant number of respondents of all ages expressed both positive feelings about mixing and the belief that progress towards greater mixing was steadily being made through natural processes of work, social contact and sporting/leisure activity.: This included the changing reality of youth street culture, with increasing cross-ethnic alliance in street activities and conflicts, Whilst it led some respondents to urge policy activity that would speed such processes up, others felt that such steady progress illustrated how cohesion should come through natural processes of individual choice rather than being socially engineered or 'forced', as discussed further in Section 4.5 below:

Well I can't complain because where I came from I had Asian neighbours and they were good to me, I can't say a wrong word about my neighbour I had. There's good and bad in us all (Older Adult).

We have always had an Asian community to me they are just us aren't they? (Young Adult).

You've still got your West Town Warriors which consists of both White and Asian kids (Respondent 4).

In a lot of ways attitudes have changed but you have to experience it to see what benefits that social cohesion can bring (Respondent 1).

We played a game the other week against Saville town which was played in really good spirit , you know, everybody got on well, there was no animosity what so ever , you couldn't see any difference - they were just two football teams playing football smashing , to me it's the only way we are going to go forward is through sports aren't you I don't think any other way we can do it [...] what you find is in sport in general it's not forced cohesion it just happens naturally (Young Adult).

4.4.3 Negative perceptions of "Asians" and Islam, and the issue of unfairness

There is no doubt, however, that significant numbers of respondents articulated a strong sense of 'unfairness' in the way that people like them were treated by public bodies in comparison to the perceived treatment of Asian –origin individuals and communities. For some respondents, this perception has become a generalised belief that the key Asian-dominated housing area of Savillettown is always favoured by public bodies: "Savillettown get treated better than us." (Young Person). Such perceptions particularly focus on the allocation of public funds: "There is a Muslim tiddlywinks club they have just been given 30 thousand pound." (Older Adult)

Here, there was often the acknowledgement of the strength of Asian community and family structures but also a perception that public funding has facilitated these strong and supposedly well-resourced communities, whilst ignoring the needs of marginalised, mainly white communities. It was argued by some respondents that this sense of grievance has been fuelled by some local media outlets that have consistently promoted a discourse about differential treatment by public bodies:

One of the most bought publications in Dewsbury is an independent paper called The Press, I mean personally I've never seen a rag like it in the whole of North of England [...] I think that does feed in a lot of stereotypes and myths and everybody reads The Press [...] I think that when that paper runs a story on the Friday by Sunday it will be on the EDL Facebook pages. I'm not saying that there is a direct link but it's a sort of cycle (Respondent 2).

However, any such media reporting can only have impact if it is reflecting as well as creating concerns which reside within communities. Such concerns come from a mixture of such local and national media narratives, people's lived experiences and the local community 'grapevine'/ Here, the apparently increasing use of Islamic dress by Muslim Asian women in Dewsbury was understood by some respondents as a deliberate marker of separation and difference:

Well I think they seem to take over, don't you? Oh yes, I don't see why they should be walking about and driving with all this [...] with just their eyes showing, you don't know whether they're men or women! (Older Adult).

Live feeds of Karachi and Islamabad news reports and the women are running around in jeans over there and it's like sort of you know fourteen twenty here in WH Smiths (Older Adult).

Some negative perceptions of other communities are not just about superficial observations of dress but understandings taken from cross-community encounters. Some white respondents feel negatively judged and stigmatised by Asian communities:

I think that they think they're better than us [...] They think this is their country [...] They think they can do what they want (Young Person).

Young female respondents offered graphic experiences of being negatively treated and addressed by Asian youths and adult men, who were often in groups and in cars:

One time when I was walking up to sizzlers with my mum and we were walking back down they went, do you want to jump in the car you two fit lasses, they thought I was an adult and I went no, my mum started swearing and everything and they started beeping their horn at us, my granddad had to come sort them out because they wouldn't leave us alone they was following us all the way home (Young Person).

*I got stopped in broad daylight- Four Asians in a car, cos I said no, I got called a slag, a white c***, a white, white everything white (Young Person).*

I got abused because I wouldn't give someone my number (Young Person)

As a result, key informants highlighted how such experiences had led to wider racialised feelings of resentment and grievance, and even to support for groups such as the EDL:

It's surprising how many girls want to get involved in the EDL rallies [...] It's exciting, it's curiosity, they've had issues with probably Asian boyfriends or contact with Asian men... they've had issues with trying to get jobs [...](Respondent 5).

4.4.4. Contact and integration in schools

Schools proved to be the focus for considerable discussion about both the nature and trajectory of cross-community contact. Some of this reflected the reality of significant demographic change in north Kirklees and the various ways that sections of white communities were viewing and responding to this:

Around the town, there is white flight. However it might be cloaked in other reasons, some of the reasons that some of the white kids from this area do not come to this School revolve around there are too many Asian children in the school and we want to go to a predominantly white school, educate them in the white way as it were [...] I think there is a significant emphasis placed on what a school's demographic is going to look like when parents are choosing schools for their kids (Respondent 1).

Such concerns run alongside perceptions of unfairness in how multi-ethnic schools handle conflicts between pupils of different backgrounds:

I go to a catholic school we have had to start letting all the Asians in and then what they have been doing is trying to fight all white people and then we get done for it for fighting but they don't get done for anything (Young Person).

What young people say to me is, I was walking down the corridor, so and so was there, he is Asian, he kicked off, he said something to me, I called him a paki, he called me a white bitch and I got in trouble for it but the teacher saw everything [...] people are coming away feeling victimised and feeling like they can't actually do anything and people use the race card to get one over the other one (Respondent 5).

If we have a fight the white person will get excluded and nothing happens to the Asian (Young Person).

These racialised perceptions echo previous academic research⁷ that has highlighted a 'white backlash', particularly amongst white working class pupils, to school operations perceived as differential treatment in the name of 'anti-racism'. Despite such experiences, many young people identified cross-ethnic friendships within school but they also identified significantly ethnically-differentiated housing areas and racialised perceptions, both within peer groups and communities, which taken together made out-of-school contact with these friends very difficult⁸:

It's just like say if you're hanging around with an Asian person...they would say why are you hanging out with so and so (Young Person).

If we are with one of them we would get bullied... If an Asian person hangs around with a White person they get done by the brothers and that lot, it's like what are you hanging round a White person for (Young Person).

Such limitations emphasise the importance of youth projects and other spaces where young people can meet in safe and managed situations:

It's always been mixed in this youth club we do black history month and stuff like that (Young Person).

4.5. Attitudes to 'Cohesion' Activities

The final topic concerned people's attitudes towards what might broadly be conceived of as "cohesion work" taking place in Kirklees. Section 4.4 above and particularly the data

⁷ See Roger Hewitt (2005) *White Backlash: The Politics of Multiculturalism*

⁸ Very similar findings came from research carried out in Oldham and Rochdale in Greater Manchester: See Paul Thomas and Pete Sanderson (2013) *Crossing the Line? White Young People and Community Cohesion*

contained in Figure 18, highlighted the strong support amongst survey respondents for more contact between different ethnic groups than there is now. This obviously raises the issue of how cross-ethnic contact can be encouraged and supported by the local authority and other key public bodies. Community cohesion and encouraging such cross-community dialogue has been a national policy agenda since 2001 but there has been considerable national debate over what works and how contact can effectively be encouraged. While there was significant support among focus group respondents and key informants for events that promote across-community contact, and in particular for work that focused on younger people, there were a number of critical observations about such cohesion activity.

Firstly there was acknowledgement that creating greater cohesion seems straightforward in some situations but can seem so much more difficult in others:

You will walk out during the lunch break and you will see kind of sat on the kitchen step a white girl and a Muslim girl working for six pound fifty an hour just sat away chatting happily you know as if they have actually cracked the riddle the rest of us are trying to work out (Older Adult).

Enabling people of different ethnic backgrounds to go to school together or work together obviously highlights macro level, national educational policies and the state of the economy. However, even if different communities share educational or employment spaces, significantly differentiated housing areas can mean that out of school or work social interaction necessarily happens, as discussed in section 4.4.4 above. For some respondents, this reality means that there should be active programmes of community cohesion contact, such as 'school twinning' and that: *People need to be taught to mix with people (Young Person).*

At ground level, with the support of community-based professionals, significant cross-community contact and partnership work has happened:

We're already working with people who are quite engaged to a certain extent, people who are willing to make the links so my personal experience has been quite positive with a small amount of funding, I mean there's been at least sort of 15 to 20 sort of cross community activities at different levels (Respondent 2).

We have done twinning, so like from Ravensthorpe and Savillettown, they came here, ours went to theirs and it was like a twinning project [...] we worked well with them [...] it was brilliant (Young Adult).

For many respondents, though, such cohesion work must avoid the perception of 'social engineering', of people being forced or manipulated in to contact:

Mixing? 'Yes, I think provided that they want it and it's not forced upon them, I think it's when it's forced upon them [...]' (Older Adult).

It just comes down to that fact of not being forced to it's our choice [...] you can't force groups of people to get together and enjoy themselves it has to happen naturally (Young Adult).

For some respondents, more work needs to be done with residents within their own communities to strengthen local participation and civil society organisations before cohesion work can be considered:

I do think that your white working class, however you want to describe it, those residents [...] before we actually start the cohesion work we need to actually provide some activities in that area to build trust otherwise cohesion is not going to work (Respondent 2).

This is supported by academic evidence around 'contact theory' that suggests people need to feel positive and confident about their own community and identity before they engage in positive contact with other communities.

Some other respondents identified the need to avoid 'tokenism' when cohesion activity is initiated:

A lot of projects that I've been involved with or I've seen have had some impact initially but it's about sustaining the impact, it's alright bringing white kids and Asian kids together and it might work but it's about keeping it gelled together (Respondent 1).

At the same time, though, 'one off' events involving food and fun activities for children were seen as helpful, 'no pressure' forums for mixing and contact.

5. Conclusions and Points for Consideration

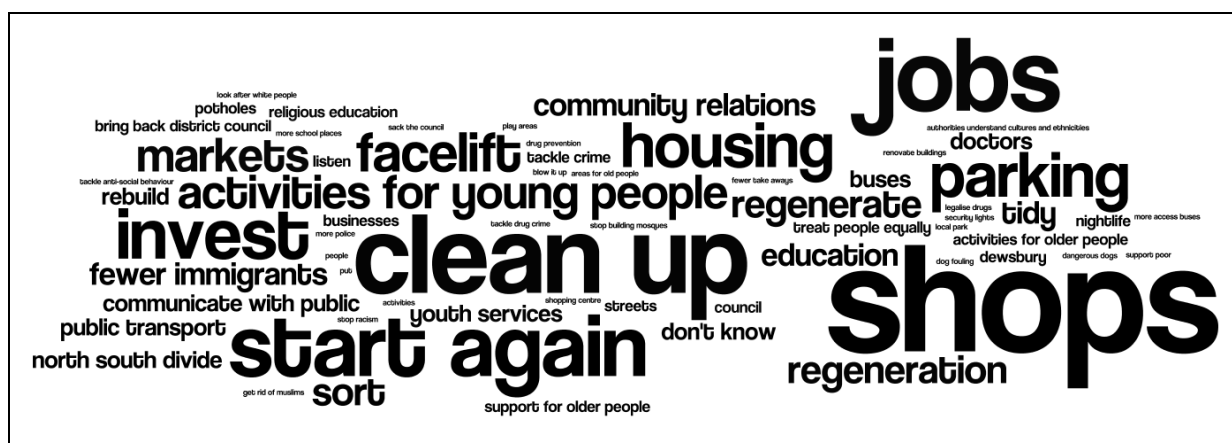
In this section we offer conclusions and points for consideration, based on the research findings.

5.1 Place

Continued efforts to regenerate Dewsbury town centre are important as negative feelings about the decline of the town centre and of neighbourhood shopping areas is impacting on perceptions of community relations.

As part of the research process we asked respondents how their Town (Dewsbury/Huddersfield) could be improved and they identified a number of clear themes. These included regeneration of the town centre and its facilities, more shops and places and spaces for young people:

Figure 21: What could be done to make the Town (Dewsbury/Huddersfield) better



5.2 Civil Participation and Community Leadership

Community capacity building work in target areas and the creation of opportunities for genuine participation in decision-making processes will help to strengthen the development of local community organisations and authentic leaders speaking for them. This is a vital pre-requisite for any successful cross-community cohesion and partnership work.

Ground-level professional practitioners, such as community engagement workers, youth workers, patch-based police officers and housing engagement/support workers play a vital role in many of the research areas and their presence should be retained as a priority, despite the admittedly very challenging budgetary situation faced by Kirklees and other public sector bodies.

5.3 Attitudes to Anti-Minority Protests

Although there is some public sympathy for a number of the themes around which groups like the EDL have mobilised, there is very little active support for the kinds of anti-Muslim street protests that have been carried out in Kirklees and other areas of West Yorkshire by groups like the EDL. Indeed, there is some evidence that the protest tactics of the EDL and

the ensuing police response carry particularly high reputational damage for the EDL. The spectacle of aggressive and heavily policed street protests that disrupt normal community life are viewed as both threatening and unwelcome trouble, irrespective of whether violence does in fact erupt.

However, the themes and concerns articulated by groups like the EDL have considerable resonance in marginalised mainly white communities, and anti-extremism policy and practice needs to engage with these feelings and concerns as part of wider strategies

5.4 Contact and Integration

Attitudes towards 'Contact'

A significant proportion of participants expressed broadly positive attitudes towards ethnic integration and cross-community contact. This was illustrated by the majority of Dewsbury respondents who wanted more contact between different ethnic and religious groups in their Town. However, a significant minority were more cautious, anxious and in some cases even hostile. These more negative attitudes centred on a series of core themes:

- a. Deeply entrenched narratives about “incompatible cultures”.
- b. Beliefs that public authorities are unresponsive to the concerns and interests of “people like us”, which were exacerbated by perceptions of resource allocation biases towards BME and in particular Asian heritage communities.
- c. Perceptions of a failure by the authorities to take seriously instances of “anti-white racism”, including young women’s experiences of sexual harassment and verbal abuse by youths and adults men of different ethnic backgrounds in cars and in public spaces and places.

This raises a number of questions and challenges for policy makers and practitioners. For example, it would seem to be important to avoid established discourses about the lack of facilities or resources in local housing areas becoming aligned with possible racial and ethnic discourses of unfairness. Here, a continued focus on ‘myth-busting’ is vital to counter local and national media and political narratives of unfairness’ and incompatible cultures. Local public bodies need to continue to focus on how allegations of and narratives about anti-white racism can be responded to and dealt with in ways that do not unnecessarily inflame community tensions?

Schools

Similarly, schools need to continue to demonstrate transparent ‘fairness’ in the way they handle conflicts between pupils. Demographic balances are shifting significantly within individual schools at the same time as the school ‘market’ is becoming both more varied and less subject to local democratic oversight. Open and transparent dialogue and communication with all stakeholders and communities is needed to avoid further racialization of perception around school place allocation and experiences of schooling.

5.5 Attitudes to 'Cohesion' activities

It seems there is both an acknowledgement of the need and an appetite for greater across-community contact. There is however suspicion of anything that smacks of top-down or forced integration. "Cohesion" activities, whatever form they might take, are likely therefore to require long-term and consistent, if perhaps relatively low-level, investment, and to require a number of core components including:

- a) Having difficult conversations in **ALL** communities, British white, Asian heritage and Eastern European, about how people in their own communities create barriers to greater across-community contact through their behaviour and attitudes.
- b) Working through and with strong senses of local territoriality (particularly notable among some young people) that reinforce segregation and the construction of community boundaries.
- c) A focus on how "cohesion" and "integration" can become an integral aspect of, rather than an adjunct to, everyday life. Here, the policy focus on building and supporting the capacity of local civil society organisations should be supported by the views of respondents.
- d) Encouraging cross-community dialogue and contact is a long, slow process within many communities and a policy/practice focus on this does need to be maintained consistently.
- e) Although there are people in predominantly white communities who are resistant to greater cross-community contact, there is also a substantial proportion of these communities that recognise that greater contact can create a better environment for all. Indeed, there have been a number of 'grassroots' efforts to promote such contact. Efforts are required to build on these initiatives and this appetite for contact.
- f) Regular, fun opportunities for such cross-community contact need to be available to people within communities.

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