

# Recession and cohesion in Bradford

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**This study looks at how poverty influences community relationships in Bradford, a deprived part of the UK.**

The report seeks to improve understanding of the impact that both recession and the prospects of spending cuts have been having on community relationships. It makes recommendations for how residents can be brought together to support healthy community relationships. Drawing on discussions with local people, including disadvantaged residents and service providers, the report explores:

- what people thought about life in Bradford, including community and opportunities, prior to the latest recession;
- how people felt that the recession was affecting different aspects of their everyday lives;
- how service providers and community workers were trying to support community relationships during an economic and financial crisis, outlining policies and initiatives;
- the suggestions that Bradford residents, service providers and community workers had for improving community relationships.



# Contents

Executive summary	5
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2 Pre-recession Bradford, community and cohesion</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3 Recession and community relationships</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>4 Sustaining healthy community relationships during recession and a financial crisis: recent policies and initiatives</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>5 Responsibility for community relationships and suggestions for improving community resilience</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>6 Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>45</b>
References	49
Acknowledgements and About the authors	51



## Introduction

Recent neighbourhood studies have provided evidence on how deprivation and the way in which people connect is important to social cohesion. They suggest that material inequalities can have a negative impact on community relationships. Through discussions with local people, this study explored the links between poverty and community relationships in Bradford. It considered the implications of the recession and spending cuts for those community relationships.

The study used qualitative research methods from February to June 2010 to explore resident and community and voluntary service views on the impact of recession on community life and relationships in Bradford. The research team undertook ten discussion groups to explore residents' views, placing emphasis on the involvement of 'hidden voices'. Participants included, for example, Eastern European migrants, Gypsies and Travellers, the unemployed, older Asian men and women and young white working-class and Asian people. A deliberative workshop was used to foster service provider discussion of residents' views. In addition, interviews were undertaken with a range of key informant service providers and voluntary and community service organisations.

## Pre-recession Bradford, community and cohesion

Both stakeholders and residents highlighted the problems Bradford faced in 2010. Longstanding issues around deprivation, unemployment and the disaffection of young people were felt to supersede any current concerns over the impact of the latest recession conditions.

Residents expressed a sense of togetherness and collective agency in various ways when describing the significance of the term 'community'. They spoke of local neighbourhoods working together and sharing something together, tolerance, caring and looking out for others and friendship networks. Underlying these accounts was the importance of having freedom of expression and the ability to go about daily life unhindered. Various Bradford communities resented how the area and its residents had become stigmatised by the 2001 riots. This demonstrated a desire to claim back their community identity and cast off stereotypes.

Stakeholders often attributed positive characteristics to the term 'cohesion' in itself, and felt it could in many instances be used interchangeably with the term 'community'. They talked of fairness and equality, shared values and interests, interdependence and neighbourliness, involvement and integration, and working together but accepting difference. However there was an underlying tension over what the term cohesion had come to mean and represent in a policy context. Such a situation illustrates how a policy which has been intended to address a particular problem or concern – the disaffection or exclusion of communities – has in fact had unintended consequences and provoked negative responses amongst those working on the ground.

## The recession and community relationships

The recession accentuated pre-existing problems in Bradford. As businesses closed down, many locals went to neighbourhood cities to shop and consume. Fewer new businesses were drawn to Bradford and overall the city was increasingly more run down. All this was felt to have contributed to more affluent people leaving the area and it was feared that greater segregation between communities would be a consequence. Pakistani residents had become the dominant community which seemed to be contributing to tensions with other minority communities such as Hindu and White British.

Much everyday community conflict was routine, for example related to noise and nuisance. However, established Bradford residents' accounts of the impact of recession suggested that unemployment and the lack of work opportunities were fuelling resentment towards new arrivals to the area. There were tensions among young people, whose greatest concern seemed to be the lack of jobs. The new arrivals, notably Eastern Europeans, were seen as taking jobs that might otherwise go to established residents. However, migrant workers were also losing jobs and struggling to survive. Unemployed youth were also linked with crime and anti-social behaviour and tensions in relationships between older and younger people. Residents also felt that the labelling of Muslims as extremists, and related hostility, had worsened during the recession.

While the lack of jobs did not help community well-being, the impact of the recession had not been all negative. Some communities had very close family ties and described how they felt very resilient in times of difficulty. Some residents spoke about finding social and financial support through hard times from within their own ethnic community as well as community organisations, emphasising the value of these structures of support to individual and community well-being.

## Sustaining healthy community relationships during recession and a financial crisis: recent policies and initiatives

The attainment of strong and cohesive communities was seen as a key element of Bradford Council's plan for delivering on sustainable community relationships in Bradford. One aspiration was to promote community cohesion as an outcome for Bradford, facilitated by measures to tackle deprivation, discrimination and dependency. Community funding appeared geared towards commissioning services from the community and voluntary sector to help tackle social and economic inequality, foster third sector capacity building and community development activity.

Despite this, there was widespread anxiety among statutory and voluntary sector key informants, as well as some residents, about the climate of spending cuts. In the context of uncertainty about the scale of the cuts, there was also pessimism about the impact on deprivation and community funding. Community funding had been fixed (and so in effect losing value) for several years. People from the voluntary sector described efforts to support it as piecemeal and lacking connectivity, expressing concern about communication with the council. This sense of poor transparency fuelled uncertainty and anxiety about the implications of anticipated spending cuts, including for those sections of the community worst affected by recession.

More positively, mediation services were helping to manage everyday social conflict reflecting a range of disputes involving neighbours. In addition, a variety of initiatives were in place to tackle economic hardship, several developed in response to recession; supporting new and established communities.

## Responsibility for community relationships and suggestions for improving community resilience

A recurring theme in this research was that everyone has some responsibility for community relationships. The research participants had a range of suggestions for improving those relationships. Suggestions included increasing the number of social spaces that everyone in the community could use and the need to tackle problematic segregation and stereotypes of ethnic communities. Participants wanted greater efforts to address anti-social behaviour and more positive alternative activities for young people, including greater emphasis on promoting their life chances. Both ordinary residents and the Community and Voluntary Service participants made a plea for improved service provider communication with residents to address issues around fairness and transparency. It was felt that despite the difficult funding climate, it is important to support the public duty to promote equalities; and monitor discriminatory incidents. Bradford has developed several creative approaches to engage with the community funding squeeze, fostering a sustainable community infrastructure. Participants wanted to build on these efforts. Service providers discussed the need to prepare communities for change heralded by the erosion of public funding. This was felt to be particularly important in a context where there are issues around a lack of community trust in service providers and a sense of lack of community involvement in decision-making.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Joined-up working to support youth employment, recently fostered under the Future Jobs Fund, needs to be built on. A youth unemployment pilot project should be developed to engage local young people and provide urgently needed employment. Several creative approaches have been used during the community funding squeeze to try and develop a sustainable community infrastructure, and alternative ways of working may help maintain and strengthen local resilience by building on community partnerships. Such increased co-operation might integrate the voices of hidden and disadvantaged communities. Community mediation agencies need to explore the scope for volunteers to have a greater role in preventing community disputes and tensions from escalating in the difficult financial and economic climate.

The research team came across examples of creative thinking in cohesion-related initiatives. Ongoing evaluation of the costs and benefits of such initiatives, supporting the sharing of good practice, will help achieve recognition of their value as a lever for bringing communities together.

Service providers could do more to communicate policies and initiatives to Bradford residents to make them aware of myths, as well as harsh realities, around the distribution of resources, recognising the role of the press and media and the need for good news stories and positive messages. Greater co-ordination of this activity across service providers would be helpful, and the development of a communications tool-kit might support this process. Given voluntary-sector concerns about communicating with statutory providers, there needs to be ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of new structures for engaging with the voluntary sector and the representation of and engagement with more groups whose voice might not usually be heard.

Continued efforts to tackle disadvantage, discrimination and poverty traps are needed. Bradford Council has introduced a range of measures to tackle economic hardship. These interventions need to be prioritised despite the climate of spending cuts, and efforts at developing joined up working need to be intensified. Youth unemployment, alienation and segregation needs to be addressed.

# 1 Introduction

Recent neighbourhood studies have provided evidence on how deprivation and the way people connect is important to social cohesion (Hudson *et al.*, 2007; Hickman *et al.*, 2008). They suggest that material inequalities can have a negative impact on community relationships. Racialised resentment fuelled by a lack of resources can lead to ‘victims’ blaming ‘victims’ across disadvantaged groups (Hudson *et al.*, 2007). With the global recession leading to a sharp rise in unemployment nationwide there is valid concern about the impact on the growth of the British National Party (BNP) and its capacity to exploit racialised discourse on unfairness in multi-ethnic areas (Kaur-Stubbs, 2008; Garner, 2009).

While the relationship between new and established communities is a strand of concern, the language of ‘social’ cohesion is used in the chapters that follow to reflect the range of social divisions in everyday lives. Age, class and gender as well as ethnicity, migration and faith are all pertinent to community relationships and life chances.

The research on which this report draws began against the backdrop of economic recession and concerns about the impact that this would have on already disadvantaged areas of the country. One such area is Bradford, where around one third of its 30 wards is within the 10 per cent of the most disadvantaged areas in the country. Areas like Bradford have been trying to address long-term issues of regenerating an industrial structure ravaged by the loss of textile and engineering industries. These job losses have disproportionately affected minority ethnic, particularly Pakistani, communities, living in inner-city areas (Alam and Husband, 2006). The onset of recession in 2008 has brought further pain, with a Bradford unemployment count higher than the national average, and even more so in the more deprived neighbourhoods ([www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)).

While these developments raise questions about the sustainability of community relationships, it should also be remembered that social conflict does not automatically need to be feared (Sennett, 1998, cited in Weatherell, 2007). Gilchrist argues that ‘cohesion is not about the absence of conflict, but rather a collective ability to manage the shifting array of tensions and disagreements between diverse communities’ (Gilchrist, 2004, p. 6). This observation implies that recession calls for a greater focus on community relationships as well as management of the economic crisis. The ‘creative connections’ across communities that can be fostered by community workers and other agencies (Hudson *et al.*, 2007) perhaps become even more important.

In synthesising key themes to date from a ten-year programme of research that has taken place in Bradford since 2004, Farnell notes that there is:

*... a large degree of commonality in the lives and experiences of those with different ethnicities, religions and cultures. Purposeful activity, decent earnings, finding appropriate housing, feeling safe in the neighbourhood and entertaining hope for family and the future are important for everyone. (Farnell, 2009, p. 2)*

Farnell (2009) argues that a firmer foundation on which cohesion may be built is by finding connections between disadvantaged groups. While he appeals for ‘a narrative in common’ to be given the space to come to the fore, local people and institutions are grappling with these issues in a complex policy context. The Government response to the July 7 bombings in London and the War on Terror is a defining feature of this (HM Government, 2007), with signs that Muslim communities and groups are feeling stigmatised

(Farnell, 2009; House of Commons Select Committee, 2010). The report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CLG, 2007a) emphasised that cohesion is something that should be built locally, and partnership working by faith communities is being encouraged (CLG, 2008). This desire for partnership working is also evident in the Compact codes of good practice on relationships between statutory agencies and the Black and minority ethnic (BME) and non-BME third sector (Bradford Building Communities Partnership, 2004; *Compact*, 2009). The duty on statutory agencies to involve communities in local decision-making aims to create a culture of engagement and empowerment in local areas (CLG, 2008b).

There is more change to come. In May 2010, a new coalition government was elected. Alongside plans for substantial public spending cuts, there is an emphasis on reducing the centralisation of government and dispersing power in promoting 'the radical devolution of power and greater financial autonomy to local government and community groups' (HM Government, 2010, p. 11). Using the language of the 'Big Society', the Government is stressing the importance of social action and the need to support the 'creation and expansion of mutual cooperatives, charities and social enterprises, and enable these groups to have much greater involvement in the running of public services' (HM Government, 2010, p. 29).

## Research aims

In this evolving context, the research sought to improve understanding of the current and longer-term implications of recession in Bradford for community relationships, fostering dialogue and action. The main research questions that it sought to answer were:

- In what ways is the recession (a) bringing communities together to find collective solutions; or (b) exacerbating tensions across ethnic, religious, generational or other boundaries?
- What are the views of local people and agencies on the likely longer-term social implications of recession on community relationships in Bradford?
- What initiatives and policies are in place to support community relationships through recession (aims, outcomes, strengths, weaknesses)? Are these consistent in approach?
- What is the third sector's role and is it being adequately supported?
- What suggestions do local people and agencies have for improving community relationships and cohesion? What practical actions and policies could be developed to tackle the longer-term implications of recession in relation to community relationships? What is the basis for those suggestions? In what ways do they build social connections and solidarity?

## Research design and methods

The research was underpinned by a definition of social cohesion that recognised that it is both about the quality of community relationships and the material equality underpinning them.

In undertaking the research the Policy Studies Institute worked in partnership with Voice4Change England (V4CE). V4CE is a national policy body dedicated to strengthening the BME third sector as a force for change, for a large network of BME third sector groups. It provides co-ordinated policy advocacy for BME groups at local, regional and national levels to all types of policy-makers. V4CE's aim is to influence the climate where BME third sector organisations secure funding, strengthen their performance and demonstrate their contribution to civil society.

The research had an iterative methodology with four stages that were undertaken from February to October 2010.

## Stage 1: Key informant interviews

Eighteen key informant interviews were undertaken with key actors and stakeholders, from the voluntary and community service (CVS), Bradford City Council (including community development workers) and Bradford Community Mediation. Using a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews lasting approximately one hour, the main aim was to explore the local context, including:

- perceptions of the impact of recession on community relationships and cohesion;
- initiatives and policies in place to support community relationships through recession, including partnership working;
- reflections on earlier recessions, issues raised and lessons learned;
- feelings about the impact of the recession in the longer term.

## Stage 2: Focus groups

The next step in the research involved running a one-day community event conducting focus groups, with an emphasis on the participation of ordinary residents as well as community groups. The aim was to provide space for the airing of hidden voices normally outside of established channels of communication. V4CE had fostered links with a number of minority ethnic organisations in Bradford, allowing them to enlist the help of key stakeholders active in the community. The research team also drew on *The Bradford Community Guide* (JRF, 2009) and information provided by key informants, deploying snowballing techniques.

Topic guides were drafted drawing on findings from Stage 1. Facilitators aimed to strike a balance between probing on specific topics and encouraging the group to talk among themselves. In so doing they explored personal and collective experiences and views of recession and community relationships and the basis for these views.

To engage with hidden voices, focus group participants from inner-city Bradford and Keighley were recruited from a diverse range of backgrounds. Some of the Bradford residents participated in a one-day community event in Bradford city centre and the remainder at community organisations used by participants. People from the following backgrounds participated:

- older women;
- older Asian men;
- young white working-class men and women;
- young Asian women (teenagers);
- members of a Hindu family;
- unemployed people;
- Polish Eastern European migrants;
- Slovakian Eastern European migrants;
- Irish Gypsies and Travellers;
- community groups including BME organisations.

Focus group facilitators probed participants on a range of issues, including:

- their likes and dislikes about living in their neighbourhoods;
- in what ways they felt that the recession was and was not having an impact on their everyday lives;
- perceptions of who has/should have a role to play in nurturing community relationships, and how;
- priorities for action, with respect to the local, regional and national levels, including the voluntary and community sector, community workers, local and national government.

### Stage 3: The deliberative workshop

The main findings from the earlier stages of the research fed into a half-day deliberative workshop. Deliberative workshops are discussion forums designed to bring together different social groups, reflecting the wider community. They aim to facilitate a dialogue in order to share experiences and identify areas of commonality and agreement. The workshop aspired to draw on the concept of 'linking capital' (Gilchrist, 2004; Furbey *et al.*, 2006, p. 7) derived from the links between people or organisations beyond peer boundaries, cutting across status and similarity and enabling people to exert influence and reach resources outside their normal circles.

In practice, focus group participants either declined to attend the workshop or were unable to attend. Thus the links between people or organisations beyond peer boundaries that the workshop aimed to achieve was achieved by the research team conveying views collected at Stage 2 via a presentation of emerging findings at the start of the workshop. The workshop participants were composed of a range of stakeholders from service providers, including Bradford City Council, and the community and voluntary sector.

Participants discussed key themes arising from the focus groups within a workshop design tightly linked to the research questions and emerging findings. The workshop deliberated on practical actions and policies that might have a tangible impact on community relationships.

### Stage 4: Senior stakeholder event

Finally, a half-day seminar was organised by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) involving senior stakeholders and the four research teams that were part of the Foundation's strand of work exploring issues related to recession in Bradford. This provided senior stakeholders with an opportunity to engage with the research findings and draft recommendations prior to finalising the research reports.

## Structure of this report

Chapter 2 summarises participants' perceptions of Bradford prior to recession. It looks at the key areas of Bradford's location and standing in relation to neighbouring cities such as Leeds, the local economy, jobs and unemployment, the challenges faced by young people as well as Bradford's changing demographic composition as it has become host and home to successive new communities. The chapter also considers the meaning of community from the perspective of residents as well as the significance of cohesion for stakeholders.

Chapter 3 explores research participant perceptions of the impact of recession on everyday lives, exploring positive and negative accounts from the range of voices that engaged in the research.

Chapter 4 explores what various Bradford stakeholders were doing to sustain community relationships during the recession, which also involved engaging with pre-recession issues. As well as reviewing recent policies and initiatives, it considers the impact of the financial crisis and actual and planned reductions in public spending.

Chapter 5 considers the research participants' views on who has responsibility for community relationships before going on to consider suggestions for improving community resilience.

Chapter 6 outlines the main conclusions from the report and recommendations.

## 2 Pre-recession Bradford, community and cohesion

### Introduction

This chapter first summarises respondents' perceptions of Bradford prior to the recent recession. The key areas highlighted are Bradford's location and standing in relation to neighbouring cities such as Leeds, the local economy, jobs and unemployment, the challenges faced by young people as well as Bradford's role as host and home to successive new communities. The latter sections go on to look at the meaning of community from the perspective of residents as well as the significance of cohesion for stakeholders.

### Pre-recession Bradford

#### Bradford as a host to new communities

Bradford has experienced considerable demographic change as a city that has historically hosted the arrival of successive new communities of immigrants from all over the world. By 2001, one quarter of Bradford's population consisted of BME communities, of which 20 per cent was Asian or Asian British, 1.6 per cent was Black or Black British, 1.9 per cent described themselves as mixed race, and 1.1 per cent was Chinese or 'Other' (Census 2001). In turn, the terrain of the city has transformed. As described by one Hindu family, the "church is now a mosque" as neighbourhoods have become predominantly Pakistani and the affluent middle classes have moved out.

As Bradford has become increasingly culturally diverse, "pecking orders" have been observed forming between communities. Tensions have arisen with the arrival of the new European Union (EU) communities and the established Asian community in Bradford: "There's something about communities establishing themselves and whatever that host community is seems to forget what it experienced in its time" (Bradford City Council key informant). As a consequence, the newer Eastern European communities have suffered discrimination and prejudice as they are perceived as "disreputable" and "lowering the tone" in the eyes of the older communities who "have been here a long time, have got themselves quite well established" with increasingly skilled jobs and therefore a better standing in the community (community and voluntary sector focus group).

#### Location

Bradford is perceived to suffer as a city due to its close proximity to Leeds. Money is spent outside of Bradford as people go to nearby Leeds to shop, eat out and go for nights out. Participants talked about the large numbers of people commuting from Bradford to Leeds for work, with the numbers commuting into Bradford being tiny in comparison. Those who do work in Bradford live in the surrounding towns and cities such as Harrogate or Sheffield, ultimately curtailing Bradford's opportunity to develop as a city: "They work in Bradford but they live somewhere else" (young people focus group). Such a situation was described by

a key informant as leading to the city suffering by comparison, and lagging behind others in terms of work opportunities, amenities and economically, even prior to the recession.

## Local economy

As Bradford's textile industry has declined, local people have sought employment in other cities. A group of older Asian men reflected: "What we used to do, those jobs don't exist anymore" (older Asian men focus group). Markets started disappearing long before the current recession; however, Bradford has seen the rise of large numbers of small to medium-sized businesses, the majority of which are owned by the BME community. Alongside the perception that the money young people earn in Bradford is spent in Leeds is the view that big companies have chosen to invest elsewhere. Some of the local older Asian men speculated that firms avoided locating to Bradford because of its past reputation for riots and community tensions.

So the city is perceived to lack the large companies such as Corus which employ a significant proportion of the local population: "We're not like Rotherham which is a relatively small city that's lost a huge employer on its doorstep – we have lost larger employers but not of that magnitude" (Bradford City Council key informant). However, Bradford is home to well-known brands such as Morrisons and Hallmark Cards. Bradford did not go "down the same path" as Leeds, refurbishing old warehouses when the buy-to-let market was robust instead of building large volumes of new flats, many of which would remain empty as the economy weakened (Bradford City Council key informant).

The above factors have led to an overall feeling of a lack of investment in Bradford. Participants talked of projects starting then stalling, for example a new shopping centre which remains a "rubble site" after eight years because the investors ran out of money (young people focus group). There was a perception that the city centre had been affected in the last ten years, leading to a situation where "Half the town centre is shut" (community and voluntary sector focus group). Another observed change is the closure of local pubs, particularly in Muslim areas, and a linking of this with previous social unrest:

*When the riots were happening in the nineties often pubs were attacked, some were burned down and I think it really marked a shift in the culture of Bradford. (unemployed focus group)*

The city centre lacks a coherent hub and the lack of investment has led to a loss of pride that is reflected in the way the area is treated. Participants described seeing mattresses and discarded furniture lying around. Inner-city Bradford is perceived as particularly vulnerable to such deterioration as the middle classes have left for the suburbs.

## Jobs

Historically, unemployment has been a 'big issue' in Bradford. In 2008, 7.3 per cent of the population was registered unemployed, compared with the national rate of 5.7 per cent (ONS National Population Survey 2008). Research participants perceived the problem to have worsened as larger firms based in cities such as Leeds and Manchester attract and employ Bradfordians (community and voluntary sector focus group). Bradford has developed a modern customer service low wage economy. At the time of the fieldwork, companies such as O<sub>2</sub>, HSBC, Ventura, Direct Line, Green Flag and Winton Insurance employed staff to work in their call centres. The unskilled but at least permanent or long-term jobs offered by the textile mills have been superseded by short-term contracts based on working flexible hours.

Now, the "undesirable" jobs are taken by Eastern Europeans "just like the South Asians did when they first came". Nevertheless, tensions arise when immigrants are perceived to be "taking our jobs", yet they are often taking the work that no one else wants to do (community worker), a theme that will be returned to in the next chapter. Those who have trained and re-trained appear to be no better off due to the shortage of skilled labour, as demonstrated by a young man who had worked in the car industry:

*I got a modern apprenticeship ... they replaced us all with robots.... So then I turned to butchery, did five years on the job training, got qualified and that and now that's all gone down the pan. (young people focus group)*

## Young people

Young people in particular seem to be disproportionately affected by the problems of an ailing local economy and related joblessness, which was highlighted as an issue by many participants. They were perceived as not benefiting from Bradford's schools and colleges as they often failed to reach their potential and get good qualifications. Even highly educated young people were seen to be stigmatised when applying for jobs outside of Bradford because of the city's history of tensions and riots:

*... when a young person from our area applies for a job in London and employers see Bradford 5 [postcode] written on his application, they decide against his application. (community and voluntary sector focus group)*

Such conclusions are corroborated by recent research showing evidence of postcode bias (Nunn, *et al.*, 2010). Participants discussed how young people were increasingly seeking work outside of the city because of the lack of jobs, and when they felt stuck and frustrated, for example, being involved in gang culture and selling drugs to get 'easy money'.

The young people participating in the focus groups often expressed feelings of being stigmatised and alienated from mainstream society. At the same time, older people tended to distrust younger people, viewing those closer in age to them to be friendlier. When asked about the future of their community, an unemployed respondent expressed their concern over younger generations:

*... I see young people in their twenties living in really quite segregated communities and I also [...] hear about a lot of violence and they are the next generation, they'll be looking after me when I'm old you know, so I feel a little bit frightened about being looked after by people who are very intolerant of difference. (unemployed focus group)*

## Similar challenges pre- and post-recession

Pre-recession Bradford, albeit in the context of a buoyant UK economy in recent years, has faced particular challenges due to rapid demographic and economic change, a depressed job market and generational and racial tensions. Levels of deprivation are among the worst in the country, particularly in central Bradford ([www.statistics.gov.uk/articles/RegionalTrends/RT41-Article 3.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/articles/RegionalTrends/RT41-Article%203.pdf)). For some communities such as Gypsies and Travellers, a sense of exclusion and alienation is a recurrent theme regardless of any changes felt as a result of the deepening recession. Alongside these factors, participants also talked about intensifying demand on health services and were concerned that emergency care was becoming less accessible. Health inequalities issues were also raised, with Asian communities in Bradford dying on average 20 years earlier than their white counterparts as depression, stress, hereditary disease such as coronary heart disease and diabetes take their toll. Indeed, recent data on health inequalities reveals that the North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber have lower life expectancy and higher mortality rates from cancer, respiratory and circulatory diseases and 'all causes' compared to the England average (ONS, *Regional Trends 42*, 2010). To sum up the sentiments of many of the views expressed:

*Bradford has never started off from a very good starting point in the first place regarding the economy, economic well-being, prospects [and] opportunities.... (community and voluntary service key informant)*

## Meaning of community: ordinary residents' perspectives

When asked what the term 'community' meant to them, focus group participants drew on their own experiences, revealing how a sense of collectiveness could be understood in various ways. A group of older Asian women appeared to view community in a very broad sense, suggesting it encompassed all who they came into contact with irrespective of culture, religion or age: "I belong to Bradford now! I put my foot down and that's it!" (older Asian women focus group). In similar terms, an unemployed respondent talked of a community as a local neighbourhood, "working together, sharing something together [...] and all cultures being involved" (unemployed focus group). Others tended to view communities as a collection of different groups, such as friends and family. A sense of belonging was very important, and appeared to be applicable in multiple contexts. One young man talked about going to see his football team:

*Old Valley Parade on match day [...] because you can shout at referee and not get locked up for it, know what I mean? (young people focus group)*

Community for others involved caring and looking out for others, and knowing that this would be reciprocated:

*[You] care about the neighbours, you know, so if you live in the street, so the neighbours care about you, because if they see someone which they've never seen before they phone straight away the police. (Eastern European migrants focus group)*

A sense of interconnectedness could define a community, whereby those who are grouped together are inevitably affected by the same events:

*It may be religion, it may be colour, it may be language, language has a lot to do with it, but a community may be geographical [...] if somebody's house is on fire, real fire, if you are not careful yours can be on fire as well. So you help that person. (community and voluntary sector focus group)*

For a group of older Asian men, a sense of ownership over their area and people defined their sense of community, comprising the people they knew and could talk to. For them, Bradford is "very much our village", allowing them to lead their lives freely:

*Wherever we go in Bradford, we are not afraid. Because we know that all of us are Pakistanis around here.[...]*

*Yes – we can walk around here as we walk around in Pakistan. We can easily wear salwar kameez.[...]*

*[...] where we live now in BD5, no Asian used to come here to live.[...] But now we have mosques, our own community centres, even our own schools – we have Islamic schools where Muslim girls study. (older Asian men focus group)*

Others offered a more multi-layered definition of community. An unemployed respondent described how their personal sense of community was based on friendship, yet a community could function as long as people worked together despite their differences:

*... whether or not they like each other.[...] You might not like them but you still work together because you share the same resources, you share the same problems in the same area because I think the*

*community that I experience is a friendship community which is a bit different. (unemployed focus group)*

Communities may have shared interests, beliefs or cultural norms, yet rather than being static they exist as dynamic and shifting entities:

*... everybody has their own perceptions, own way of living and that is why communities can never be homogenous, it changes every day. (community and voluntary sector focus group)*

Membership of a community can be at the exclusion of wider society, as evidenced by the views of participants from the Gypsy and Traveller community. They conveyed the need to feel that they are in a safe environment, and safe with their community, with no mixing:

*... when a settled community doesn't trust the Travellers it works both ways, the Travellers don't trust the settled community as well [...] because they've been badly treated over the years... (Gypsies and Travellers focus group)*

Belonging to a particular community could provide a sense of support and security with less of a sense of exclusion, for example, a context in which people can go to their place of worship with any problems:

*I think the community that we live in now is close enough that we can go and offload to the community members and action ... yes feel safe. (Asian teenagers/young women focus group)*

However, living in a community described as a 'tightly knit' family can have its disadvantages:

*... if you have a problem with somebody because you live so close like half of Keighley know you, you know, your little feud between each other. (Asian teenagers/young women focus group)*

Participants demonstrated how a sense of community could be felt and understood in a myriad of ways. Underlying the connectedness, caring, ownership, friendship, shared interests, beliefs and cultural norms described in people's accounts was the need for freedom of expression and ability to conduct daily lives without fear or threat. Community relationships could be expressed both in terms of race relationships but also in terms of multiple identities expressed through different cultural heritages and lived experience. A sense of community and therefore common experience does not translate into a static state but rather a constantly shifting, dynamic entity, changing over time. The following section goes on to look at the meaning of cohesion for stakeholders.

## **Meaning of cohesion: stakeholder perspectives**

In a recent report looking at Muslims and community cohesion in Bradford, there was found to be little consensus on the meaning and application of community cohesion (Samad, 2010). When asked what the term 'cohesion' meant, the key informants interviewed for this project talked of fairness and equality, shared values and interests, interdependency and neighbourliness, involvement and integration, and working together but accepting difference. Such multiple meanings and facets of cohesion are explored below.

## Cohesion equals fairness and equality

Fairness and equality as tenets underpinning cohesion were emphasised by two key informants. In the broadest societal terms, cohesion equates with fairness and equality of opportunity:

*... everybody in this country or in this case this district has opportunities to develop, to have an education, to receive services, equal opportunities really [...] regardless of where they live, what their race is, what their sexual orientation is and so on.... (Community and voluntary service key informant)*

Echoing this, but also emphasising a society free from racism, a representative from the Bradford District Faith Forum described cohesion as:

*... equality, social equality, fairness, justice, no sort of prejudice, people get on well with each other [...] people are not racist, everybody gets an equal change, it's a sort of meritocracy.... (key informant)*

However, equalities have to be won before cohesion can be achieved, otherwise communities will blame other communities “for their position in society” in a climate of scarce resources and material inequality and inequality of opportunity (Bradford City Council key informant). This interviewee went on to define community cohesion in more spatial terms as:

*... safe spaces for people to meet and public spaces where everyone feels included and they're able to interact and move about, transport allows us to get from one part to another part feeling safe, then the end result is cohesion and cohesive communities. (Bradford City Council key informant)*

## Cohesion equals shared values and interests

A further dimension of a cohesive community is one that has developed “shared values and shared interests and [has] a proprietary interest in the neighbourhood and the area in which they live” (Bradford City Council key informant). Another participant emphasised the importance of communication, allowing total clarity over “what each other’s role and responsibilities and expectations of each other are”, and from the point of view of the design of essential services, cohesion work involves a dialogue as “... we shouldn’t just assume that this is the service that people would like provided” (Bradford City Council key informant).

## Cohesion as interdependency and neighbourliness

This interpretation of cohesion encompasses not only the traditional experience of going over to your neighbours for a cup of sugar and general reciprocal borrowing but also feeling comfortable enough to be assertive to others who may be showing signs of anti-social behaviour: “I can tell a young person on our street to ‘get off that car’ you know, or ‘stop kicking the gates because you’ll break them’”. This allows for an enjoyment of the environment both outside and within the home: “I want to go to my home and close the door and feel peaceful in the home without interference”, yet equally that residents “can have a very fair and open discussion on our street with young people and older people, an open discussion about how they feel” (service provider key informant).

Perhaps taking this perspective one stage further, another key informant viewed a cohesive community as one which “... has the capacity to manage conflict without an excessive recourse to either violence or the state really”. Prior to the establishment of bodies able to offer services in conflict resolution:

*I wonder a lot about how communities dealt with their issues before these agencies existed to help them deal with it [...] I think it's a shame that people are looking to the state so much and when I've seen the incredible ability that people have to resolve issues. (Bradford City Council key informant)*

## **Cohesion equals involvement and integration**

Cohesive areas were also described as those where people can conduct all aspects of their lives happily, “the kinds of communities people imagine and dream about through active involvement”. Following on from this vision, a real test of cohesion is not that residents originally from the Asian Subcontinent living on the same Bradford street get on among themselves, but that they feel “happy and comfortable and safe to move in and out of those communities”. That BME communities can move to predominantly white areas is an indicator of success for the education system, and there is social mobility and a meritocracy as well as a “sign of ease, of fitting in, of having arrived, the confidence of having achieved” (community and voluntary service key informant).

## **Cohesion as working together, but also acceptance of difference**

For another interviewee, a cohesive community allows individuals their autonomy as well as people working together to achieve a goal. It is also a realisation that living in a community with people of different ethnicities, cultures, backgrounds and ages is an educational and enriching experience:

*I'd like my grandchildren to just feel as I did when I was younger, that this is where I live and I like it, feel safe and not be afraid of somebody just because they're dressed differently, talk differently, look differently, I think it's to remove fear and to learn because it's an amazing experience to learn about other cultures and I think we're missing out on so much, and I'm not just talking about cultures and races, I'm talking about the difference between someone that's young and someone that's older, listen to their life experiences as well. (Community and voluntary service key informant)*

## **Cohesion as a concept means little to communities**

One of the key informants offering a definition of cohesion suggested that such a term means little to the communities it is often used to describe in policy debates. Instead, communities are primarily concerned with having good services, for example having a clean environment, getting a decent education from a local school, having decent housing and safe public spaces where people can meet. Within this critique, discussion of cohesion was seen as having become too all encompassing, requiring a more precise meaning. When people feel positive, want to participate, feel they have influence, that they will be treated fairly and can trust public organisations, then inclusion will be the product:

*Cohesion isn't an activity in itself, it is a sum response or the sum total of lots of different activities and lots of different people doing different things, which adds up to cohesion.... (Bradford City Council key informant)*

## **Cohesion has negative connotations in policy terms**

Following on from the more critical perspective offered above, another key informant reflected on cohesion as a policy agenda:

*... we were in a meeting with the council last week about community cohesion, one of the things that was said was that often it's initiatives that bring people together for short periods of time with no lasting impact. (community and voluntary service key informant)*

Instead people need to feel that they have a stake in the community and are therefore engaged and feel valued as members. The pursuit of cohesion is ultimately a long-term enterprise, which inevitably is at odds with the shorter-term cycles and turnovers in political life:

*I mean we are only just getting to the point now where the Roma community feels safe enough to allow other communities in to look at it, you know [...] it's taken two years for [them] to actually feel safe and to say 'yes we feel like we belong, we feel stable enough, now we can start making relationships with other people'. (community worker)*

An unintentional but nevertheless very real concern expressed was that the cohesion agenda is in fact one of assimilation and conformity that may have had the net result of dividing communities rather than uniting them. Within the Bradford context, this means that cohesion has been pushed as an issue for the white and South Asian community. Yet this neglects the perspectives and needs of the many other BME groups living in the city:

*... we go to schools and work with say a Persian child who is [...] facing racist attacks from other school mates and the school is being inefficient to be able to support that because they don't understand how an Asian child can be racist towards a Persian child because as far as they're concerned they're all the same. (community and voluntary service key informant)*

From this perspective, the language of cohesion is used in government circles as a 'top-down' policy requiring communities to assimilate with the mainstream, and in the process losing their cultural norms. Talking of cohesion to interested audiences is really "preaching to the converted" as it involves "bringing people that are willing to come together. It serves no purpose because they weren't the potential threat to start with, they were the people that were willing to sit at the table with someone from a different [background]". Rather, cohesive practices should form at a grass-roots level and be "embedded in the whole chain, the psyche of the city [...] it should be something that's the culture of the way an organisation does its practice", including housing, health services and in schools (community and voluntary service key informant).

A policy framework in the form of the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 gave local authorities clear responsibilities to ensure greater equality via community development workers, capacity building workers, outreach workers and youth workers as means of engaging communities. However, the cohesion agenda has:

*... taken away that entire layer of working with communities that actually reaches the hardest to reach [...] and you've imposed community cohesion from on top rather than what we had before which was working with communities. (community and voluntary service key informant)*

## **Challenges to a cohesive society**

An unintended consequence of highly cohesive communities may be alienation from wider society. Segregation may occur when very tight-knit communities live in specific localities. As a key informant explained, and which will be explored further in Chapter 4, this is an issue that has been addressed with the introduction of choice-based lettings by allowing people to expand their horizons about where they want to live. In such a climate, assumptions may be more likely to be made about different sections of the

community, for example, that black people living in an area are automatically viewed as asylum-seekers or refugees when many are the second or third generation of their families who have lived there.

Large employers in Bradford may have well presented policies in place that are supposed to promote cohesion and equality, yet it may be more about image management and ticking boxes:

*... if you look at representative workforce, where are they? [...] they finish at Grade 5 and no higher [...] after first line management you won't see anybody [...] within the inner city which has roots in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. (community and voluntary sector key informant (just West Yorkshire))*

## Threats and barriers to cohesion

To understand what helps communities to be and feel more cohesive, it may help to understand the processes that may diminish cohesion:

*... when communities feel under threat, unheard, not acknowledged, the underdogs, they tend to become introverted and they tend to be self-reliant and in that process they lose the opportunities or the exposure to be able to truly have sort of balanced view on most things... (community and voluntary service key informant)*

For those communities feeling defensive and struggling to thrive, the sense of togetherness they feel among themselves may be a coping strategy, but at the expense of wider integration and a broader sense of affiliation and linkage with society as a whole. This leads on to the question, is it possible for a community to feel cohesive among themselves as they feel marginalised from wider society? This then, in turn, lessens their chances of making links with others different to themselves and at the same time may mean that those communities occupying the same social spaces also feel excluded in their own ways. And so the cycle perpetuates.

Bradford as it is now known is in fact made up of many different small villages, with each village having its own identity being shaped by its specific terrain and the communities that live within it. The result is that it may be hard for people to see themselves as part of one 'Bradford District', but rather part of an area with its own unique identity. One interviewee warned against having unattainable, aspirational goals with little basis in reality, which will ultimately have a demotivating effect. Rather it is best to adopt a vision that is viewed as achievable by all (Bradford City Council key informant).

Perhaps cohesion can then be viewed as a balance of keeping and celebrating cultural and ethnic identities yet being able to 'fit in' and integrate successfully. Inevitably cultural identities shift and evolve as people assimilate their ancestry with their day-to-day lived experience, which is often formed in a different place and often a different country:

*I'm sat here in an office, I'm dressed in a shalwar kameez, there's no mistaking that I'm a Pakistani lady and I will have no problems going up into Braithwaite or Bracken Bank and knowing that people will yes, they'll look at me but then I know as soon as I open mouth they'll sort of say 'oh that's different' but that's about having the confidence to go in there and do it [...] it's about breaking down some of those myths and sort of saying 'hang about, you know, I know as much about Keighley life and Keighley people as the next person really'. (Bradford City Council key informant)*

When describing the significance of the term 'cohesion', stakeholders often drew on positive concepts, such as fairness, equality of opportunity, shared values, interdependency, neighbourliness, involvement and integration. Similar to the meanings attributed to 'community' for Bradford residents, a sense of freedom and capacity for open expression appeared to unpin accounts of cohesion. However, 'cohesion' as a term appeared to have become associated with negative connotations, at least in policy terms. The

government 'cohesion agenda' post the Bradford riots appeared to have created ill feeling for stakeholders working in the community, stigmatising particular social groups and pushing an agenda of assimilation and conformity. Interestingly, stakeholders suggested that the term 'cohesion' would mean little to local communities.

## Summary

- Both stakeholders and residents highlighted the problems Bradford experienced pre-recession. Longstanding issues around deprivation, unemployment and the disaffection of young people were felt to supersede any current concerns over the impact of the current recession.
- Residents expressed a sense of togetherness and collective agency in various ways when describing the significance of the term 'community'. Underlying these accounts was the importance of having freedom of expression and the ability to go about daily life unhindered.
- Stakeholders often attributed positive characteristics to the term 'cohesion' in itself, and felt it could, in many instances, be used interchangeably with the term 'community'. However, there was an underlying tension over what the term had come to mean and represent in a policy context.
- Such a situation illustrates how a policy which has been intended to address a particular problem or concern – the disaffection or exclusion of communities – has in fact had unintended consequences and provoked negative responses among those working on the ground.

# 3 Recession and community relationships

As seen in Chapter 2, focus group participants painted a picture of inner-city Bradford as a deprived area grappling with a number of challenges: its proximity to less deprived cities, a lack of inward investment and persistent unemployment. The majority of focus group participants also felt that recessionary conditions had accentuated Bradford's pre-recession problems, making a bad situation worse. Despite this, some communities had shown resilience against a backdrop of economic hardship. This chapter explores research participants' perceptions of the impact of recession on everyday lives, exploring positive and negative accounts, drawing on the range of hidden voices that engaged in the research. As will be seen below, the multiple meanings of community described in Chapter 2 were reflected in focus group discussions of how the recession was influencing community relationships.

This chapter first explores the recent impacts of recession, at both the area and individual levels, before outlining focus group perspectives on the longer-term impacts.

## Recent impact of the recession

### Lack of investment: inner-city Bradford is run down

A number of participants from all focus groups and key informants commented on the lack of investment taking place in inner-city Bradford. There was already a history of lack of investment in the area but with the recession, the situation had deteriorated. A key informant (Bradford City Council) also said that property development or refurbishment (particularly in Little Germany) had stopped. Further evidence of this was that work had ground to a halt on the construction of a new shopping centre in Bradford city centre:

*... the shopping centre they were supposed to be building ... eight years later it's still a rubbish site.  
(young people focus group)*

A range of participants commented on the poor development of the city centre; for example, one noted:

*... there has been a huge drop in new build and refurbishment ... there is not much of a city centre.  
(Bradford City Council key informant)*

In all the focus groups, participants identified visible signs of the recession in that the city had become run down. The area's deterioration had also been affected by demographic changes. Participants in a focus group involving a Hindu family felt that the decline of inner-city Bradford was linked to the exodus of affluent people to neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city. The Hindu family spoke about a decline of the physical environment and gave examples of interfaith centres with broken roofs and dilapidated buildings. Some focus group participants complained that the city centre looked dirty. Older Asian men participating in one group blamed Eastern European migrants for bringing unhygienic practices to the area. Other participants complained that people had dumped mattresses on the street.

The lack of investment in the area was also evident in a lack of recreational spaces. Participants from both of the young people's focus groups and the voluntary sector group reported that there were no recreational spaces for young people.

## Business closures

Various participants from the focus groups said that many restaurants as well as shops were closing down in Bradford city centre and surrounding areas.

All focus group participants commented on having to go to neighbouring cities like Leeds or Manchester to be able to shop. According to the Hindu family, people shopping in Leeds contributed to money leaving the area and Bradford becoming more run down:

*I think part of the reason why Bradford's become run down is that people now go to Leeds, whether it's for a night out or to go shopping and that is almost you go outside Bradford, the money goes outside Bradford with it, so I think that's another big reason why Bradford became run down. (Hindu family focus group)*

*... empty shops you go around town now and it's like you go in about five decent shops, all the rest have closed down and boarded up then there's some what have fallen down. (young people focus group)*

However, a key informant reported that the recession had not had much impact on small businesses. Other participants observed that, despite the recession, many Polish, Lithuanian and Romanian shops had opened:

*... we do have a lot of small to medium-sized businesses in Bradford, most of them are owned by the BME community and the reason why there hasn't been an impact on our businesses has been because they don't work with interest, a lot of them deal in cash. So in terms of cash flows, in terms of just normal business, it's not had an impact on them whatsoever and they've just carried on so the recession hasn't hit that sector in Bradford. (Bradford City Council key informant)*

## Public sector funding

A JRF Round-up report showed that by mid-2009 almost every local authority nationwide had experienced increased demands for services that they attributed to the recession (Tunstall and Fenton, 2009). At the time of our fieldwork (during 2010), the recession had a direct impact on public funding, with local authorities experiencing the squeeze. A community project described how their funding had been cut and how they were planning to develop coping strategies such as renting out their premises.

Ordinary residents had also felt the lack of public funding. For example, the older Asian men focus group spoke about there being fewer grants for low-income groups:

*It used to be the practice that the council used to give out grants to people living under poor housing – individual grants. But now there are no such grants, maybe it is due to the recession that such grants have stopped.*

Funding cuts had a direct impact on newer communities. In the last couple of years the Government had made cuts to support integration of Eastern European communities:

*... cuts were made two years ago specifically to support them in English integration. (key informant)*

These themes will be returned to in the next chapter.

## Unemployment and underemployment

A number of focus group participants described how they, or people they knew, had recently lost jobs. For example, Hindu participants explained how when a large plant closed down, this had put many local people out of work. A key informant observed that Bradford had lost larger employers but not on the scale of other cities.

Unemployed research participants discussed their struggle to find work. A participant who took voluntary redundancy in 2007 was still looking for work.

The problem of underemployment had also grown. Another participant described how a relative graduating with a degree from the University of Bradford had got a job as a retail assistant. Other participants knew people with Master's degrees working as cab drivers.

*... no work in Bradford, it's like not good at all ... no one invests money in Bradford. (young people focus group)*

## Migrants and Gypsies and Travellers and labour market disadvantage

Lack of jobs had a direct impact on new migrants and Gypsies and Travellers. There were reports of a significant number of places where migrants worked having cut back on staff, leading to migrants losing low wage jobs and being forced into even lower waged activities. Participants felt that there had also been an increase in abuses of migrants in the workplace. They perceived that it had become harder to get work, especially for those with English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) needs.

Gypsies and Travellers tended to rely on doorstep selling or doing odd jobs (such as gardening or cleaning). As households were cutting back, there had been less demand for these types of services. One participant explained:

*It's been very bad... Because we're Travellers, reliant on the household people to live, you know what I mean, it's either the women selling at the doors or the men gathering scrap or doing tree jobs but people in the houses haven't got the money, do you know what I mean, to do these jobs so the householders are suffering and the gypsies are suffering as well because they haven't got jobs. (Gypsies and Travellers focus group)*

Gypsies and Travellers said that they were no longer allowed to knock on people's doors to offer work. Instead they had to drive around and hope to see someone outside their front to offer gardening work. Both Gypsies and Travellers and migrant workers were finding themselves in the black economy.

## Young people and the recession

The recession has had an impact on young people in several ways. Participants from the young people and the Asian young women focus groups described a lack of work opportunities – a graduate from the young Asian group had been struggling to find work. Another white working-class young man who had served an apprenticeship was struggling to find work:

*... I turned to butchery, did five years on the job training, got qualified and that and now that's all gone down the pan. (young people focus group)*

These young participants felt alienated and that they were underachieving. They resented not having the money to socialise with their friends. Several wanted to move out of Bradford, a move perceived to hold the promise of more opportunities; and some parents described how this was happening:

*There is high levels of unemployment of young people in our community. Even if they are educated. Many firms have been closed down. Our young people are now leaving Bradford for Leeds or London to find employment. (older Asian men focus group)*

## Crime

Many focus group participants suggested a link between level of affluence and crime. Participants from the unemployed group and the Hindu family spoke about how lack of work could increase the chances of someone committing crime. Similar comments were made by the young Asian girls and voluntary sector participants who also felt that anti-social behaviour and the incidence of burglaries had worsened. A participant in one of the migrants focus groups commented on how migrants had been burgled when they are away visiting their home country. However, not everyone agreed with this view – one participant in the unemployed group felt that crime was a result of laziness.

There were also fears of crime. The older Asian men spoke about how Eastern European migrants who were out of work and not in receipt of welfare benefits could tend to set up gangs or get into trouble with the police. They also reported hearing Eastern Europeans shouting in the streets at night. They were concerned about the potential for fights between young Pakistani and Eastern Europeans.

Young people and crime was a particular source of concern. Young participants admitted to having been involved in criminal activities. However, one young man spoke about how he had wanted to turn his life around. He was no longer committing crime and was instead involved with voluntary work. He was frustrated that he was struggling to find more opportunities. On the other hand, there were signs of a number of concerns within the Asian community, including a macho culture among Asian boys who were drawn into gangs in the absence of other opportunities, as well as concerns about anti-social behaviour:

*In Bradford, there is not such sector to accommodate jobs for our young people who are well educated. Due to these challenges, our young people have been drawn into selling drugs to get easy money. Gang culture is rising. All this frustration is driving them to crime. (older Asian men focus group)*

These examples are indicative signs of the recession accentuating the link between hardship and crime.

## Struggle to cope financially

The context of economic downturn and lack of jobs has had an impact on people's ability to make ends meet. For example, participants in the older Asian men and migrants focus groups spoke about their difficulties in affording basic needs due to rising prices, for example, food, gas, electricity and prescriptions.

Many people with limited disposable income were struggling to afford their rent. A voluntary sector participant spoke about how many people faced eviction from their landlord or mortgage lender. A participant in one of the migrants focus groups spoke of a struggle to access affordable lending:

*They say everything is going up with the prices but the loans are still the same. (Slovakian migrants focus group)*

Eastern European migrants, who either lost or could not find work, had no other sources of income. This left them in very vulnerable positions of hardship. Participants from these groups reported how they had to rely on buying discounted food. A voluntary sector participant described how a mother from Eastern Europe

had to feed her baby water with sugar because she had no income. Despite the struggle, participants in the Eastern European migrants focus group felt that it was better to be in the UK because there was more work than in their country of origin.

In this climate, the need for financial advice was recognised. For example, one voluntary sector organisation was running workshops with the Citizens' Advice Bureau for people on low incomes to provide them with money management strategies. Financial advice and other initiatives are further explored in the next chapter.

## **Demand on services**

Economic hardship placed a higher demand on public services. For example, there were reports that many people facing eviction were struggling to get support from the Citizens' Advice Bureau. They were said to be queuing at 8am, even though doors opened at 9am, with signs of frustration.

Older focus group participants, as well as migrants, reported that they were struggling to get GP appointments:

*Our basic problems are high demands on health services. I think this has escalated due to the recession because it is very recent. (older Asian men focus group)*

## **Community relationships**

Focus group participants also explicitly discussed the impact of recession on community relationships. As explored further below, this included impacts on family life, relationships between ethnic communities and relationships between younger and older people.

### **Family tensions and low morale**

In some cases, lack of employment created tensions at home between parents and young people. A participant from the older Asian men focus group described how his son being made redundant had had a big impact on the rest of the family. His son's company had offered him a job again but with a reduction in the hourly rate due to the recession. In other cases, economic problems at home caused tensions between parents which could lead to separations.

Lack of employment also led to low morale. One voluntary sector group discussed evidence of migrants experiencing substance misuse and alcohol-related deaths. A lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) umbrella body conducted a health needs assessment and found that LGB communities had higher rates of drug and particularly alcohol misuse. However, it was hard to say how much this was related to economic circumstances.

The young Asian girls noticed more people taking and dealing drugs. Apparently, people were dealing more openly, almost as if they did not mind being found out:

*They really don't mind going to jail. (Asian teenagers/young women focus group)*

*The recession is making people go into drugs a lot. (Asian teenagers/young women focus group)*

They felt that low morale due to lack of employment opportunities led to a negative spiral as people were more prone to misuse alcohol and drugs, which in turn could lead to even lower morale and less aspirations towards finding work.

### **Togetherness: resilient communities**

The lack of jobs did not help community well-being. Despite this, the impact of the recession had not been negative across all ethnic communities. Some communities had very close family ties and described how they felt very resilient in times of difficulty. For example, young Asians explained how they were more protected from the recession by the fact that they did not have to move out of the family home until they were married. Similarly, Gypsies and Travellers felt that they looked out for and supported each other before the recession, and these community practices continued after the recession hit. The following quotations are illustrative:

*I think why the recession doesn't affect Asian people is because we're all such close-knit families, our mum and dad ... touch wood can provide for their young, like Asian kids don't have to pay board or anything like that when some white kids do. They stay at home until they're married and then they move out. (Asian teenagers/young women focus group)*

*I think among ourselves Gypsies and Travellers has always been a very close-knit community and they will help one another out the best they can, you know, if one family is really struggling they'd help them out and that's how it's always been and I think that's why they've always liked to be among your own community. (Gypsies and Travellers focus group)*

Despite the picture of city centre decline, several organisations had held festivals and events that had successfully brought a range of people together. For example, Equity Partnership organised a gay pride event in Bradford city centre. With around 6,000 attendees, it brought people together from a range of backgrounds. Demonstrating the value of a central space for people to come together, many attendees ended up in the festival unintentionally because they were simply passing through.

### **Demographic change and a sense of marginalisation**

As described in Chapter 2, over time considerable demographic change had taken place in Bradford. Inner-city Bradford had come to be mainly populated with Pakistani people and the affluent had moved out. A Hindu participant described the area as becoming more 'ghettoised':

*I think [the recession] has hit Bradford particularly badly, I think that Bradford ... was already in decline, I think it's made the situation worse, the whole trend of affluent people moving out of Bradford has increased really. (Hindu family focus group)*

A range of participants expressed concerns about how majority communities such as Pakistani Muslims were dominating, for example, in the political system, and did not allow space for other minority communities like Hindu or white British. It was reported that Muslims were very well organised and knew how to look after their own interests. Participants from the unemployed and young people focus groups spoke about how a Muslim dominance could be inferred from a high number of mosques in the city and a lack of alternative places for other communities. These themes will be returned to when discussing community involvement in decision-making in the next chapter.

### **Competition for jobs: resentment towards newcomers**

The lack of work available accentuated tensions between some ethnic communities. According to participants in the community and voluntary sector group, the lack of jobs due to the recession reinforced resentment towards migrants who had come to work in Bradford. They were concerned that organisations like the BNP were using the climate of recession to attack migrants.

Other Bradford residents also expressed concerns. A participant from the unemployed group discussed how, despite loving being part of the vibrant multi-culture, she also perceived that Eastern Europeans were getting the jobs she wanted. Another unemployed participant added that people already living in the UK should be prioritised over Eastern European migrants, particularly during a recession. The following participant from the older Asian men focus group perceived that Eastern Europeans were taking most jobs because they were prepared to work for lower rates:

*There have been changes for us due to more people coming from Eastern Europe. Jobs have been affected. Recession is adding problems for us. Eastern Europeans are taking most jobs now as people hire them on low rates. Permanent residents are having effects of these newly arriving Eastern Europeans. Their lifestyle is also very different from our lifestyle. We have been living in the UK for quite some time. (older Asian men focus group)*

Also apparent was young people's resentment towards new migrants:

*But in KFC, it's like all the Polish people working for 'em and they don't have a clue what they're doing. (young people focus group)*

## Racism

Problems of racism between different communities seemed to have been accentuated by the recession, extending beyond relationships between established communities and migrants. However, race could be one of several complex factors affecting community relationships. Participants from the Asian young women focus group spoke about how white British residents were blaming Asian immigrants for taking their jobs. Racism was also identified as an issue between certain communities. It was felt that Asian Muslim girls experience racist abuse linked to 'extremism' labelling.

*Honestly, not in the Asian community but there's racist people living across from the house and they don't mingle with you. We only live across the road. (Asian teenagers/young women focus group)*

A key informant from the council (Access to Housing) explained that the lack of affordable housing meant that people had no choice but to accept a house in an area where they did not want to live, or as newcomers did not have local knowledge and might be in a minority. This led to neighbourhood tensions as different communities struggled to live side by side. However, according to other key informants it was hard to determine the main cause of harassment when there was a neighbourhood dispute – race could be one of the many factors affecting community relationships.

## Tensions between young and older people

There were tensions between younger and older generations from different communities but also from within some communities. Participants discussed how younger generations had lost respect for older people. The Hindu family explained how they built a fence at the back of their house to protect themselves from young people who in the past had set their shed on fire. These acts of vandalism could be related to young people feeling frustrated and lacking purpose.

*... there were a lot of youngsters congregating at the back of people's properties and they ... set our shed on fire.... It wasn't just our property, they were vandalising other properties as well, they were taking drugs, obviously congregating and scaring people as well. (Hindu family focus group)*

*It is more out of control. They don't seem to have respect. (Hindu family focus group)*

In addition, within some Eastern European communities there were signs of tensions between older and younger generations of migrants.

## Concerns about the future impact of the recession

Focus group participants held a range of pessimistic views about what the future held for life in Bradford, not always with reference to the impact of recession. They expressed anxiety about future generations, speaking, for example, about young people's poor attitudes towards volunteering and a lack of discipline in schools. Young people in their twenties were said to have little sense of social responsibility:

*I see young people in their twenties living in really quite segregated communities and I also hear, I don't see it but I hear about a lot of violence and they are the next generation. (unemployed focus group)*

Concerns were expressed about the potential impact of the recession on social conflict, including the scope for the BNP to exploit tensions and resentment over jobs if unemployment worsened.

There were also voices of concern about the combined impact of the recession and spending cuts on poverty:

*I think that the recession will lead to reduced public spending, they're already talking about like 25 cuts in some areas that will mean loss of jobs, it will also mean a loss of the infrastructure, the idea of the welfare state being without a safety net that catches people it's going to be lost, we're going to see a lot more people living in very, very, very poor conditions. (unemployed focus group)*

Some participants from established communities harboured the fear that they would grow to feel further marginalised in the future as the Muslim population grew in number and authority, and felt that in the future the Muslim population could fully dominate Bradford. There was a strong fear of further area decline being accompanied by more people moving out of the area. If these demographic changes continued, the city was at risk of becoming further segregated.

Eastern European migrants and Gypsies and Travellers were worried that life could become more difficult because of the recession and as resentment towards newer communities increased.

Thoughts about the future were not only negative. Despite hardship and their sense of marginalisation from wider society, Gypsies and Travellers applauded their resilience and the role of strong family ties in their coping strategy:

*I think we'll survive whichever because I think Gypsies and Travellers will always have to survive... Whether we've got anything or not we survive and we've been brought up to survive, you know what I mean. (Gypsies and Travellers focus group)*

Moreover, despite the challenges presented by the recession, some participants felt that Bradford had good potential. This was reflected in anger at the stigma that had become attached to Bradford due to the 2001 riots. Participants cited good initiatives taking place, including the festivals and events noted earlier, as well as positive work community organisations were carrying out that was helping to tackle their sense of social isolation. Gypsies and Travellers and migrant participants particularly valued this, a theme to which we will return in the next chapter.

## Summary

- The recession accentuated pre-existing problems in Bradford.
- As businesses closed down, many locals went to neighbourhood cities to shop and consume. This meant that fewer new businesses were drawn to Bradford and overall the city was increasingly more run down. All this was felt to have contributed to more affluent people leaving the area and it was feared that greater segregation between communities would be a consequence. In turn, Pakistani residents had become the dominant community, which seemed to be contributing to tensions with other minority communities such as Hindu and white British.
- Many research participants from different backgrounds spoke about their struggle to find work as recession hit. In particular, migrants and Gypsies and Travellers had been badly affected by the deterioration of the labour market. All this led to serious economic hardship in these communities. Young people from established communities had been affected in several ways. A lack of work opportunities and recreational spaces left many feeling alienated.
- Unemployment adversely affected relationships between ethnic communities. In particular, it reinforced resentment towards new migrants. In some cases problems of racism were accentuated.
- Some accounts suggested that unemployment was linked to relationship tensions and breakdowns in some families. It also led to low morale as well as alcohol and drug misuse.
- A link was identified between hardship and crime. In particular, many spoke of young people and Eastern Europeans committing crime. This had caused some local community tensions, for example, between young and older people within and across communities.
- Despite the climate of economic hardship many felt that Bradford had potential. Some communities, for example Gypsies and Travellers and Asians, had demonstrated resilience and unity. Participants discussed how many community and voluntary organisations worked hard to hold events and festivals that successfully brought communities together.

## 4 Sustaining healthy community relationships during recession and a financial crisis: recent policies and initiatives

The previous chapters explored research participant perspectives on community, social cohesion and the impact of recession on life in Bradford. It has been argued that recession has intensified some of the pre-recession challenges that Bradford has long faced. This chapter examines a range of initiatives around which there has been activity to address these challenges. It begins by outlining the range of initiatives in place for supporting socially sustainable communities, exploring community infrastructures as well as initiatives linked to tackling discrimination and the economic hardship that can contribute to 'victims' blaming 'victims', eroding a sense of common experience and similarities in needs. Chapter 5 goes on to outline research participants' suggestions for improving the dynamics of community resilience.

### The drive for strong and cohesive communities in Bradford

The attainment of strong and cohesive communities was seen as a key element of Bradford City Council's plan for delivering on sustainability in the Bradford District ('Bradford Together'). The community and development strategy for Bradford is called the 'Big Plan', and it was an evolving framework at the time of the fieldwork. Research participants from the statutory sector felt that cohesion needed to be seen as an outcome for Bradford, with deprivation, discrimination and dependency ('the three Ds') needing to be addressed in order to tackle it:

*So the 3 Ds, ... that is what we need to focus on, it's about fairness, rights and responsibilities, cohesion for us means these three things and this is the action in terms of what we need to do and the outcomes that we'll get. (Bradford City Council key informant)*

There was a range of structures in place for supporting the community infrastructure. Community organisations, umbrella organisations, mediation services, faith networks and community development workers all felt that they had a role to play in fostering resilience in community relationships.

Participants in the deliberative workshop felt that Bradford had been in a recession for a very long time, so the current recession was not having as big an impact as in other cities in the UK. Nevertheless, they recognised a number of challenges. For example, as financial cuts began to bite, they anticipated that a longer-term impact of recession would be that competition for funding between different communities would intensify over time.

## Supporting and developing the community infrastructure

### Community funding

There were longstanding budget constraints on community funding. Bradford City Council had a fixed budget for community funding and this had been static for a number of years, in effect reducing the value of the funding each year. The council had been trying to augment resources by drawing on central government funds, for example, the Migration Impacts Fund, Working Neighbourhoods Fund, Future Jobs Fund and Preventing Violent Extremism initiative (PREVENT).

The council had also emphasised joined-up working and the various government funding streams had been harnessed in support of this. For example, primary care trust (PCT) funding and Working Neighbourhoods funding had been pooled to resource the commissioning of advice services.

Bradford City Council had longstanding structures in place for commissioning services from the voluntary and community sector. Most of the funding was geared towards reducing inequality. It contributed to support for third sector organisations as well as communities who wanted to develop new projects or form new groups to meet particular priorities. The council administered the commissioning of services through 13 commissioning bodies broadly aligned to council services. Some commissions were for twelve months and some for three years or more, depending on the approach that the commissioning body took in relation to their service sector. Examples for third sector activity included adult and community-based learning organisations delivering basic skills courses, training for volunteers and third sector management committees. Thus the funding could support third sector capacity building. The funding body that supports community development work around the Bradford District provided a further example. The allocation of community development workers was driven by need, related to area deprivation, and the workers provided support to community groups.

A council participant felt that there had been persistent difficulties in managing organisations' expectations of funding levels:

*You've got to try to balance the difference between what's available, what can be purchased compared with what might be needed, which is often different, and the expectations of third sector organisations making submissions for funding.*

These were clearly difficult issues that needed to be grappled with.

### Community infrastructure, the financial crisis and spending cuts

The need to grapple with these issues was intensified by the knock-on effects of the national financial crisis and recession. Across a range of statutory and voluntary sector participants there was anxiety about spending cuts as the national government passed on measures to address the national debt to local government. Third sector participants discussed how they were working in partnership with other organisations to maximise resources. For example, different faith organisations had come together to form strong partnerships. It was hoped that this would offer an effective platform to help enhance community relationships. Nevertheless, third sector organisations were concerned about a reduced availability of funding for the sector and the prospects for this being scaled back further. A typical sentiment was: "... everybody's dreading March 2011, which is when our funding runs out...". There was general uncertainty about the likely scale of funding reductions, but rumours were spreading that third sector funding would be slashed by two thirds.

A third sector participant discussed a recent central government proposal to outsource non-essential council activities. While he saw this as a potential opportunity for the third sector to develop its activity, he also felt that a very big question mark hung over the resources that might be available to deliver

these services. Among the numerous recommendations in V4CE's submission to the 2010 Spending Review was that Government should ensure that the pressures of spending cuts did not lead to a false choice between generic or specialist service. Instead both types of service should be supported (V4CE, 2010). The submission also argued that public sector contracts should 'include criteria for social return on investment as well as value for money and allow for flexibility in how contracts are delivered so that community needs can best be met' (V4CE, 2010, p. 8).

Chapter 3 noted how migrants and Gypsies and Traveller participants, with some of the most hidden voices, valued the support being provided by community-based organisations. A further concern was the likely impact of cuts on some of the most disadvantaged residents. Participants spoke about communities for whom commitment and resources were required to engage with and provide support. A part-time community worker supporting the Gypsy and Traveller community was unsure about continuity of funding for her post, and explained:

*... I'm only funded for three days and it's just getting them involved in everything but Gypsies and Travellers don't tend to read and write so they need everything ... they need form filling, everything for passports, for driving licences, for the benefits. (community worker)*

Community organisations were undertaking a range of work around fostering community interactions to facilitate understanding and integration. The research team came across several examples of this. A community centre had facilitated a project fostering the interaction of young Asian Muslim teenagers with white British teenagers. It was perceived to have led to positive short-term interaction and erosion of segregation, again in the short term. While they saw the benefits, it was a source of frustration that more could be gained from follow-up. A community worker for older Asian men was also working on fostering their contact with white British older men, which he felt was in the spirit of cohesive relationships.

Community workers expressed anxiety about the likelihood of community-based organisations receiving sufficient resources to support these types of activity and those sections of the community worst affected by recession, as the following quotation from a community worker for migrant workers explained:

*My biggest concern ... around this recession is where are we going to get funding to actually continue to support the communities, they're actually going through the worst of the recession. ... I think the danger is we're called the voluntary and community sector so people think we do it for nothing. (community worker)*

A BME third sector focus group participant also discussed a community-based food project that involved volunteers collecting food from mainly Muslim shops and distributing it to those in need. One beneficiary had been a service user at the mental health organisation that he worked in. His concern was that statutory services were taking insufficient action in relation to this kind of basic need.

V4CE's submission to the 2010 Spending Review resonates with these grass-roots examples. It stated that few BME voluntary and community organisations were able to secure long-term funding and the low level of funding made it hard to build reserves. Their dependence on government funding was likely to lead to public cuts having a significant impact on activity (V4CE, 2010, p. 5).

## **Relationships between the third sector and Bradford City Council**

Third sector focus group participants and key informants appeared more negative about their relationship with Bradford City Council than the council was about their relationship with the third sector. Participants discussed the emergence of mission statements, but described practical developments to support the third sector as piecemeal, lacking interconnectivity. There was also criticism of the quality of dialogue between the statutory and third sectors, particularly the BME third sector. The council had looked at its

relationship with the third sector in a third sector review and one of its recommendations was to establish a new structure to facilitate engagement. In the last twelve months the council had established a pot of money to support a structure called VCS Forums and Assembly to discuss issues and take them forward in partnership. At the time of the fieldwork the first assembly had just taken place. A key informant respondent felt that it was important that for the third sector to engage in this forum it should have a say in decision-making on priorities.

## **A BME sector trying to make the most of central government funding programmes**

The BME third sector was described as very diverse, including established communities, refugees and asylum-seekers and economic migrants. One participant concern was that infrastructure organisations were being asked to meet this diverse range of needs under what was described as the “blanket term black and minority ethnic” but were being set up for failure because the needs of the communities were so different and a more diverse framework was needed to meet them. The BME third sector has had longstanding concerns about the availability of funding. Both the recession and spending cuts were seen as likely to make this situation worse during a period of community hardship and need.

There has been considerable controversy around PREVENT (House of Commons Select Committee, 2010). A council key informant described how the council had in effect used PREVENT funding to support capacity building, and a range of third sector organisations had tapped into this funding stream and worked to develop activities that were in keeping both with the objectives of PREVENT funding and the promotion of cohesion. This had resulted in 21 projects being funded across Bradford, ranging from schools, mosques, community and voluntary organisations and a rugby club. There were mixed views about PREVENT funding among third sector key informants. These ranged from those who felt that it undermined the BME third sector in distorting its goals to those who felt that it was simply being used to fill a funding gap for ongoing activities and not to meet PREVENT objectives:

*The issue around PREVENT is a lot of organisations are accepting PREVENT monies ... you ask them 'how may extremists have you tackled?' ... 'how may terrorists have come through your door?' they'll tell you not one. Even if they did they wouldn't know. What they are using that money for is to do exactly what they did in the past. (community and voluntary service key informant)*

Such criticisms of the powerlessness of the BME third sector had contributed to the setting up of a Racial Justice Network, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, to build greater solidarity and activism for the BME third sector.

## **Mediation services managing social conflict**

Bradford has two main mediation services that can be drawn on when residents experience neighbourhood disputes. One is organised within a third sector organisation while the second is delivered by the main housing provider for the area. Both mediate neighbourhood disputes.

The link between recession and relations between ethnic communities is not an easy one to map. Key informants from these services reported that for the most part these disputes were quite routine, for example, related to noise and nuisance, consequences of different lifestyles. Although some of these disputes might involve race-related hostility, or become racialised, it was difficult to untangle this from other factors at play. Nevertheless, their activity was pertinent to the management of everyday conflict. They raised the issue of whether self-help could fulfil this role if services were cut, and some use had begun to be made of migrant volunteers to support delivery of the mediation service, and there was positive feedback about this.

## Community involvement in decision-making

Neighbourhood services was a further part of the community infrastructure that had undergone considerable change in recent years. Statutory sector participants in the research (mostly from the council) tended to speak very positively about progress in developing Bradford's community infrastructure during the 2000s. A structure of area and ward level co-ordinators had been set up to support Bradford residents to have greater voice at the neighbourhood level, potentially providing a mechanism for residents to express concerns related to recession, hardship and community life. However, there seemed to be a gap between service provider and focus group participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of these structures. To reiterate, these participants were skewed towards sections of Bradford communities with hidden voices. The dominant message from these hidden voices was that while they felt that community involvement in decision-making was important, this was not happening at present, reinforcing themes in other recent research on participation and community on Bradford's traditionally white estates (Pearce and Milne, 2010). Cynicism about the potential for this picture to improve in the future was also evident across a range of participants, indicative of a lack of trust. There was some feeling that the majority Muslim community had too great a voice, to the marginalisation of other Bradford communities. This was expressed by the Hindu family and white working-class young people.

## Tackling discrimination and promoting equality

There were a number of initiatives for tackling discrimination, and this section looks at several examples of this, including the Equity Project and Bradford Hate Crime Alliance.

### Equity Project

An LGB umbrella body had been making considerable efforts to get LGB rights higher up on the agenda of Bradford service providers. An LGB youth group had been set up in the youth service and an Asian and black LGB adult group that mostly involved men. The scope for an LGB BME women's group was being explored. A gay pride festival, held in Bradford city centre, had been successful in bringing different LGB and non-LGB people together. The extent to which service providers addressed the disadvantage of LGB groups compared to other disadvantaged groups was questioned, for example, homophobic bullying in schools. The group also formed an alliance with equalities organisations across the eight equalities strands to develop an equalities engagement framework. Via the framework and the main partnership working forum for the district, equalities groups had a mechanism through which to engage with service providers on equalities issues. Called Bradford District Partnership, it involved a series of forums for children and young people, environment, health and well being, safer communities and regeneration.

### Bradford Hate Crime Alliance

Some research participants saw tackling hate crime as an important element of community development activity. (Chapter 3 has already described young Asian women's experience of everyday racism.) Third sector research participants also shared their examples of racist incidents in areas where BME communities were described as feeling isolated as no one seemed to want to address their experiences. Bradford Hate Crime Alliance had attempted to act as an agency to collate statistical information on hate crimes with various reporting centres around the district, but had lost funding and become dormant. The main housing provider had been training its staff to take reports of hate crime and encouraging residents to report experiences.

Community activists had recently been instrumental in putting hate crime higher on the agenda for local action. There were concerns around insufficient knowledge of patterns of hate crime reporting as the economic climate has deteriorated. Thirty-seven hate crime reporting centres have been set up around the district and launched as Bradford Hate Crime Alliance. It has a board and strategic management group consisting of the local authority, the police, a voluntary sector organisation and a practitioners' group. At the time of the fieldwork the Alliance was pursuing funding for a worker to manage the centres, via the Future Jobs Fund, and the council had provided funding to raise awareness of the new reporting structures.

*... generally there are [police] doing a fantastic job in society, but how many of them are qualified with those soft skills to understand the intricacies of communities to do a good job? (Bradford City Council key informant)*

## Tackling economic hardship

As seen in the last chapter, on the whole participants felt that the recession had a negative impact on community relationships and were concerned about the longer-term implications. They perceived the potential for economic hardship to fuel the negative face of community. Hardship was seen as having an adverse impact on community relationships through fuelling resentment between ethnic communities, established communities perceiving that newer arrivals were tapping into scarce resources.

This section considers Bradford's work around a more co-ordinated approach to job creation, creating sustainable tenancies, preventing debt traps and repossessions and supporting migrant workers.

### A more co-ordinated approach to job creation

As discussed in Chapter 2, research participants often referred to being unhappy that Bradford city centre was underdeveloped; in particular a shopping centre development had been halted due to lack of funds. Despite this, compared with the last recession, the regeneration department within Bradford City Council described itself as taking a more co-ordinated approach to engaging with the economic downturn. For example, one private developer did not have sufficient resources to continue a site development. The council stepped in to provide a commercial loan to the developer, thus helping to secure several hundred construction jobs.

A key informant described how Bradford had been seeking to address a high rate of unemployment for many years, contributing to the development of skills and infrastructure for supporting the jobless, including people recently made redundant. However, with the onset of the latest recession, the Future Jobs Fund had been drawn on to create jobs for unemployed young people.

Procurement was also used as a lever to ensure that local people would benefit from public sector investment. 'Bradford Together' described how, in contracting out for services, for example, a city park, the council would promote and encourage clauses within those tenders that had local benefits. This might include local employment and training:

*... in the city park projects there were clauses in the tender specification that meant that we could get commitment from the approved contractor to deliver x-number of jobs for local people and training people up where those skills don't exist locally. (Bradford City Council key informant)*

The regeneration department was also increasing support for business start-ups and entrepreneurship. The Local Strategic Partnership signed a pledge to pay local companies from which services had been procured more quickly.

## Housing and community relationships in recession conditions

However, by creating mixed and balanced communities the main social housing provider saw itself as having a role in developing healthy and stable community relationships in the neighbourhoods in which it operated. It was trying to address an under-representation of minority ethnic groups in social housing through a range of measures including setting up a bilingual team to deliver a marketing strategy targeting these groups. A physical segregation of ethnic communities was felt to have been eroded in neighbourhoods within which the housing provider operated:

*... It did break down a lot of the segregation in Bradford 'cause what you do tend to find is particular groups, particularly South Asian people, tend to live together in very tight-knit communities in specific areas and what we tried to do was to try and break that down ... get people to think a bit wider about where they wanted to live. (service provider key informant)*

A choice-based letting system initially bedded down in the context of empty properties. Recessionary conditions had seen social and private housing developments slow in Bradford and demand for social housing rise. As the housing climate became a difficult one, where waiting lists were very long and turnover low, the choice-based letting system has been given a strong needs focus. The changed environment has meant that accommodation that could be offered to people was quite limited, particularly family housing. In this context it was not unusual for the housing provider to receive 200 to 300 bids for a family property, accompanied by myths about which residents who had not lived in the area before were getting to the top of the housing list. Housing resources have been a source of community conflict in other parts of the country (see, for example, Hudson *et al.*, 2007), and Bradford shared these experiences. Publicity about asylum-seekers, refugees and EU nationals moving into the area was felt to be fuelling perceptions that people from a range of ethnicities, established and newer communities, were jumping the housing queue:

*Bradford, like a lot of areas I think, struggles too with some of those thorny issues around new arrival communities and the pecking orders that tend to appear within those communities and certainly there have been issues between EU communities and the older Asian community in the district, particularly when you are jostling for space in similar inner-city environments. (Bradford City Council key informant)*

*So there are perceptions that certain groups are jumping the housing queue and if they see that there are South Asian people moving into areas where previously there hasn't been any, then that kind of supports this myth about certain groups have better access to housing than others and I think people tend to mix everyone together from abroad. (service provider key informant)*

In response, more transparent housing allocation policies and letting processes had been developed, providing feedback on how decisions had been made to allocate empty properties. Jointly, with the council, a new choice-based letting system was developed, providing clearer information on how people were prioritised for housing. Greater consultation with tenants was also part of this process, reaching out to communities to talk to them about how allocations policies were working. Elected members of the council, who were receiving complaints about the fairness of housing allocations from residents, were also engaged with to explain how the new system worked, its strengths and fairness.

In trying to open up the private sector housing market to vulnerable groups and forestall a steep rise in the supply of social housing, the council had procured a new housing services contract with a rent guarantee service. Landlords struggling to find tenants as the bottom fell out of the buy-to-let market have been attracted to the scheme. Also, in keeping with support for the vulnerable, the council has been working with private landlords to increase their understanding of Decency Standards and the legal framework underpinning tenancies.

## Creating sustainable tenancies: linking housing, homelessness and worklessness

Research participants were concerned that white working-class communities should not be neglected in measures to address economic hardship. The council had put measures in place to direct Working Neighbourhoods Fund resources to deprived areas of the district. This included white working-class ex-council estates. A partnership had been pulled together to seek funding for targeted interventions linking homelessness and worklessness. These involved the regeneration department (economic development), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the main social housing provider for the Bradford District. Worklessness officers were appointed to support individuals to access training, education and employment. When people presented the housing provider with housing problems they did preventative work that engaged them in conversation about their broad life contexts: basic skills, training, employment including self-confidence and motivation and CV development and money skills. In addition, a work placement programme had been targeted at the long-term unemployed or people with long-term health conditions in temporary accommodation. There were also resources to look at the support needs of people with mental health problems and supported housing.

## Preventing debt traps and repossessions

Preventative measures were also reflected in Bradford initiatives to head off repossessions and tackle debt. The council was concerned that local residents experiencing hardship would not become the victims of money lenders and loan sharks. An ongoing financial inclusion initiative by the regeneration department has led to investment of money to provide advice and information to people on how to use financial institutions, for example credit unions. Resources have been targeted at the poorest areas. Part of this measure includes raising public awareness of the dangers of drawing on the services of loan sharks. The housing provider set up a tenants' loan service.

The housing provider has worked with the council to keep people in their homes. A publicity campaign was undertaken to encourage people to contact the provider early on, before getting into difficulties. Funding previously used to address homelessness was redirected to support this preventative agenda. Seeking to address the information needs generated by redundancy, there has also been collaboration between the housing provider and the DWP on an initiative to provide both benefits and housing advice at workplaces experiencing large-scale redundancies.

## Supporting migrant workers

With an implicit human rights framework, the development of a Bradford Migrant Impact Fund recognised the hardship being experienced by migrant workers during the recession, particularly A8 (Accession 8, new countries entering the EU) migrants losing their jobs. Those without recourse to public funds were becoming destitute, or at risk of greater poverty, and there were signs that the incidence of homelessness had worsened. Community workers were concerned that migrants entitled to benefits because they had registered with the Workers Registration Scheme and worked for a full year were experiencing delays in their claims while checks were undertaken to verify that children were resident in the UK. There were also reports of a lack of interpreting support in advice agencies and support from Eastern European migrant organisations in Bradford. While there were 14 migrant organisations, they were dominated by the older migrant communities and not particularly welcoming of the more recent arrivals:

*... the older generation of east European communities and the younger, those who are coming, there is a massive friction, they don't want to see eye-to-eye, as simple as that. (community worker)*

Migration Impacts Fund support included housing and welfare advice, breakfast clubs that ensured that children had their morning meal, ESOL classes and training. A community worker was appointed to work with A8 women to support their access to women's health and maternity services. Mindful of the risk of migrants struggling to survive turning to petty crime, there were also plans to work with the police to circumvent someone being caught up in the criminal justice system for stealing a loaf of bread. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) had just introduced a scheme to help migrants return to their country of origin if they wished to, but there was scepticism about the degree of take-up that there would be of this:

*I think what you're seeing now in Bradford like any newer community is that you're seeing those communities settled if they've retained employment and begin to be part of the community instead of being seen as other. So I'm not really convinced that there's going to be an awful lot of people holding their hands and saying 'oh yes I want to go back' but we'll have to see... (service provider key informant)*

The next chapter explores some of the suggestions for improving community relationships and resilience that research participants made.

## Relevance of initiatives tackling the short and long-term impact of recession

The initiatives reviewed above all seemed pertinent to effecting changes that might ameliorate the negative impact of recession on community relationships in the short (and potentially longer) term. They implicitly or explicitly sought to address, in various ways, the social and economic basis of healthy community relationships, including the scope to minimise and manage social conflict. This is not to say that the initiatives were without their weaknesses as well as strengths (although there was no scope in this piece of research to examine these in depth). Participant suggestions for measures to improve the resilience of community relationships are explored in the next chapter.

## Summary

- The attainment of strong and cohesive communities was seen as a key element of Bradford City Council's plan for delivering on sustainable community relationships in Bradford.
- One aspiration was to promote community cohesion as an outcome for Bradford, facilitated by measures to tackle deprivation, discrimination and dependency.
- Community funding appeared geared towards commissioning services from the community and voluntary sector to help tackle social and economic inequality, foster third sector capacity building and community development activity.
- Across a range of statutory and voluntary sector respondents there was anxiety about spending cuts. The national financial crisis seemed to be intensifying the challenges involved in managing community funding expectations.
- Voices from the third sector described efforts to support it as piecemeal and lacking connectivity, expressing concern about the quality of its dialogue with the council. This context fuelled uncertainty and anxiety about the implications of anticipated spending cuts, including for BME communities.
- Mediation services were helping to manage everyday social conflict reflecting a range of disputes involving neighbours.
- A range of initiatives were in place to tackle economic hardship, several developed in response to recession, supporting new and established communities.

# 5 Responsibility for community relationships and suggestions for improving community resilience

This chapter starts with a discussion of the views of research participants as to who had responsibility for community relationships. It then goes on to outline the range of suggestions for improving community relationships that participants expressed. Reflected in participant accounts were varying perceptions of the quality of community relationships. As explored in Chapter 2, participants thought about community in different ways and in thinking about what would make things better they often referred to aspects of community that mattered to them the most.

## Who has responsibility for community relationships?

A recurring theme in this research was a feeling that everyone has some responsibility for community relationships. There were references to the roles of parents, councillors, the government, faith and other community organisations. Hidden voices among the research participants were particularly vocal about the need for all to take ownership of community relationships. This was expressed in the following kinds of statements:

*Everyone has to be friendly to everyone. (Slovakian migrants focus group)*

*Its barriers that need breaking down. (Gypsies and Travellers focus group)*

These communities were particularly reliant on community organisations and activists to advocate on their behalf, but were keen to break down the barriers to their greater community involvement, while they also saw the community centres as an important part of their community.

Government was also described as needing to set the scene for community relationships, including the economy, public transport and services. And people needed to feel cared for if they were to care about others:

*... I can think of lots of estates in Bradford where people don't feel cared for, they don't feel cared for and they therefore don't care about other people. (unemployed focus group)*

## Community interactions, social spaces and (problematic) social isolation

In thinking about suggestions for improving community relationships research a range of research participants referred to the need to improve community interactions. This was not solely about the interactions between ethnic communities. Participants in the older women focus group emphasised the

value of day centre provision for reducing people's sense of social isolation. Describing older people they knew who stayed at home all day feeling lonely and depressed, they were aware of people on waiting lists and felt that they were missing out on the opportunity to meet other people, learn new things and go on trips through centre activities.

There were numerous references to the importance of social spaces that everyone in the community could use. For example, a focus group participant had heard about the setting up of allotments on brownfield sites within the centre of Leeds that people worked on in their lunch hours. They thought that this was a good way to bring people together. An unemployed focus group participant spoke of the role of "well funded beautiful community centres", "little theatres in every community".

## Community interaction and (problematic) segregation

Chapter 2 discussed challenges to a cohesive society and how segregation and feeling unheard can be one of those challenges. Chapter 3 noted fears that more affluent people leaving Bradford would contribute to increased segregation. Recent research on Muslims and cohesion in Bradford found evidence of a high degree of interaction across ethnic and religious boundaries in wide-ranging public spaces in their everyday lives, particularly for established Muslim communities (Samad, 2010). Another recent study on Bradford's traditionally white estates has found that in the absence of face-to-face contact, people can tend to see each other as groups rather than as individuals (Pearce and Milne, 2010).

There were mixed views on the physical segregation of ethnic communities from the research participants. Unemployed white working-class young people were particularly negative about everyday life in Bradford, one describing how they did not feel that they had 'a sense of home'. He suggested a need for greater segregation in the context of feeling marginalised by the majority Muslim community in inner-city Bradford:

*Muslims here they took the lot, you can count on one hand how many estates there are in Bradford that are for white people. ... I'm not saying each community doesn't talk to the other race, obviously they do ... but you've got to have your own area. (young people focus group)*

Other research participants spoke about the need to encourage greater interaction and proximity between ethnic communities. An older white British unemployed participant spoke passionately about her unease that young people in their twenties were living in "really quite segregated communities" and "intolerant of difference". Some participants reflected on how there had been a history of communities settling in particular areas and more intermixing taking place over time, but they were concerned that this shift was not taking place in Bradford. A key informant was concerned about high levels of underachievement by unemployed, alienated Asian young people, particularly young men, living separate lives within the Asian community. Appalled at the wasted lives and opportunities that he felt this represented, he argued that the Muslim community, particularly parents and faith leaders, but also service providers, needed to engage with these issues. The focus group of young Asian girls reiterated concerns about Asian boys wanting to somehow remain apart.

Gypsy and Traveller participants described the stereotyping that they experienced, making them feel unwelcome in a range of social spaces, reinforcing segregation:

*People only see the Gypsies on the side of the road ... that's what people imagine the Gypsy, the person on the side of the road leaving all the rubbish, that's all they see. They don't realise that Gypsies and Travellers have been in settled houses, been settled on sites ... business people. (Gypsies and Travellers focus group)*

## Respect, youth activities and anti-social behaviour

Concerns about recession and crime have already been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. There was lots of positive discussion about welcoming neighbourhoods and neighbours, but this was not a universal experience across research participants. Youth anti-social behaviour and crime was an issue raised in several focus groups. Eastern European migrants spoke of going on holiday and being burgled. Hindu participants felt that schools, parents and community leaders (church and mosque leaders) all had a role to play in young people being taught to respect other communities, faiths and more generally the area that they lived in. Young people and others emphasised that they needed more to do:

*There's not enough here for us to do, no wonder crime rate's high. I mean kids are bored.... (young people focus group)*

## Communication, fairness and transparency

Chapter 2 described how key informants often drew on concepts such as fairness, equality of opportunity and involvement and integration in talking about the significance of cohesion. A range of focus group participants felt that the meeting of their needs should be higher up on the priority list of service providers and some of these accounts questioned fairness in the distribution of resources. For example, older Asian men spoke of how they were in favour of employment for everyone, "including Eastern Europeans", but that Asian young people should be helped first. Hindu participants described feeling that it was unfair that since the riots resources had been targeted at Muslim communities in areas such as Manningham.

Several key informants reported that more could be done to improve communication with local residents. For example, in housing there was a perception that there was scope to better publicise the new choice-based lettings system, work on balanced communities and allocations policy, discussed in Chapter 4. This communication could help to convey the type of service that was to be provided, and its limitations. There was a related perception that more could be done through communication strategies to engage with tensions between ethnic communities. Connecting Communities funding was being used to support service providers in breaking down some of the myths around the allocation of resources in the Bracken Bank areas of Keighley.

## Trust, dialogue and economic and social justice

The fairness theme arose again in the voluntary sector focus group unanimity in their view that a transparent and fair dialogue needed to take place with Bradford City Council. They stressed that this was particularly important in a climate of funding cuts in which the funding opportunities were to get worse. For example, a participant spoke of how Bradford was living in the past, harking back to a period when it was the economic hub of the Yorkshire region, but that there was a need for community dialogue on how Bradford had changed. While it was acknowledged that there had been attempts to foster dialogue, there was criticism of the lack of involvement of residents across Bradford communities. Such dialogue was described as needing to give Bradford residents ownership over how they defined themselves, their thoughts on Bradford life and issues. This participant emphasised:

*I think we need to have an open discussion about sharing those resources more openly and fairly between different communities. So ... we need to be approaching these issues from an equality perspective.... (community and voluntary sector focus group)*

Interaction was also appealed for between ordinary residents and the police. While several focus group participants emphasised that the 2001 Bradford riots were a result of police abuse of their power, they also felt that riots were more likely to take place during periods of economic hardship. One key informant was concerned that the police had not done enough to build relationships with local people since the riots, breaking down barriers between the police and young people. He suggested that this might include building police understanding of the burkha, veil and Islam. Reinforcing this perspective, young Asian women expressed scepticism that the police would take hate crime seriously:

*I wouldn't call them, I'd rather call my manager and get her down.... I trust her more than the police.  
(young Asian women focus group)*

## **Finding creative solutions to the community funding squeeze: partnership working/new ways of working**

As discussed in the previous chapter, resources available for community funding had been static for some time. A community worker described how a 'sizing down' of community groups and the voluntary sector was taking place, and that a tighter resource context would force people from different sections of the community to build relationships and pull together to find different ways of working in collaboration. She discussed the importance of creative thinking in an inhospitable climate. Providing the recent example of a community centre that had been knocked down in order for a new school to be built on the Braithwaite Estate in Keighley, her account resonated with 'Big Society' calls for social action. The community centre was relocated within the new school, and required partnership working to launch it. This heralded considerable potential for the community, the school, children and parents, to access a venue with a range of community facilities while simultaneously building a relationship with the school. A mother and toddlers group, an older people's luncheon club and a youth group had all begun to use the centre. It was also seen as a model that was leading the way in terms of sustainable community-based organisations. The community worker explained:

*... it sort of builds a relationship with members of the public who live in that community that may not necessarily have come into a school because they've not needed ... it's on the verge ... of being ... the model that ... a lot of other schools and community organisations will be looking at because you have that sustainable nature to it ... when it's part of a sustainable thing like a school. (community worker)*

'Everyone' being responsible for community relationships implies an element of self-help. Several key informants discussed the importance of self-help in a climate of funding cuts. The deliberative workshop discussed the potentially multiple forms of self-help and social enterprise that needed to be explored. It also remains to be seen what government support is forthcoming for this activity, as promised in the Coalition manifesto (HM Government, 2010, pp. 29-30). The manifesto also notes plans to establish a 'Big Society Bank' to provide new finance for social enterprises, charities, neighbourhood groups and non-governmental bodies.

## **Holding on to equalities issues and monitoring disadvantage**

Reference was also made to sufficient resources to support the public duty to promote equalities (now embodied in the Equality Act 2010). A key informant discussed how some schools had around 100 pupils from migrant families who needed to access free meals. This put a strain on the resources for individual schools.

There was discussion of the need to improve monitoring of both racist and homophobic incidents and to support developments to tackle racist crime, described in the previous chapter.

## Preparing communities for change

There were signs of a growing awareness of the need to prepare communities for change, managing expectations of funding and service delivery. Some research participants were clearly feeling marginalized, and perceived a need to tackle vested interests, for example, this comment from one of the Hindu participants who again referred to Muslim communities:

*I think it's ... a lot of responsibility for the majority to make minorities feel comfortable, feel welcome, not to dominate, not to be aggressive and to allow people to speak out ... as a minority you can be overshadowed by the majority very easily. (Hindu family focus group)*

The fear being expressed here was that community divisions could grow because a loss of public funding, putting the emphasis on private funding (and from the above discussion 'self-help') could make people feel vulnerable and lead to fear and suspicion. It has been noted elsewhere that support is needed to build on perceptions of commonalities across Bradford communities and develop shared understandings (Phillips *et al.*, 2010). The Coalition Government plans note that 'The deficit reduction takes precedence over any other measures in this agreement' (HM Government, 2010, p. 35), suggesting that anxiety around the potential for community divisions to grow is well founded.

## Summary

- A recurring theme in this research was that everyone had some responsibility for community relationships.
- Suggestions for improving community relationships included:
  - the importance of social spaces that everyone in the community could use;
  - the need to tackle problematic segregation and stereotypes of ethnic communities;
  - addressing youth behaviours, activities and life chances;
  - improving service provider communication with Bradford residents to address issues around fairness and transparency;
  - Bradford has developed several creative approaches to engage with the community funding squeeze, fostering a sustainable community infrastructure;
  - Bradford needs to build on creative approaches to engage with the community funding squeeze, fostering a sustainable community infrastructure;
  - there is a need to prepare communities for change heralded by the erosion of public funding, particularly in a context where there are issues around a lack of community trust in service providers and a feeling of lack of involvement in decision-making.

# 6 Conclusions and recommendations

## Impacts of the recession in Bradford

Research participants thought about community in a number of ways including local neighbourhoods working together and sharing something together, tolerance, caring and looking out for others and friendship networks. In discussing the short-term impacts of the recession at the levels of the area, individual and household, all research participants felt that the recession had made pre-recession problems worse. Their accounts suggested that the recession was influencing various aspects of community relationships. It was seen as having intensified signs of area decline, for example, the closure of shops, the decline of dilapidated buildings and crime. It was also perceived to have increased unemployment, material hardship and family tensions. Unemployed young people were linked with crime and anti-social behaviour and tensions between older and younger people.

Some residents spoke about finding social and financial support through hard times from within their own ethnic community as well as community organisations, indicative of the value of self-help as well as tailored and structured support through formal and informal layers of the community infrastructure. Examples of this were found among Gypsies and Travellers, Eastern European migrants and Pakistani older and younger residents. Community events also promoted a sense of 'togetherness' and it was important to have appropriate social spaces to support these. Various communities in Bradford resented how the area and its people had become stigmatised by the 2001 riots, reflecting a desire to claim back their community identity and reject (and dispel) external stereotypes.

Running in parallel with these signs of community spirit and activity were patterns of social conflict, some reflecting everyday neighbourhood disputes, and they could be racialised. However, the link between recession and relations between ethnic communities is not an easy one to map. Bradford has two main mediation services that can be drawn on when residents experience neighbourhood disputes. Key informants from these services reported that for the most part these disputes were quite routine, for example, related to noise and nuisance, community conflict arising from different lifestyles. As noted in the introduction to this report, social conflict does not automatically need to be feared. Although some of these disputes might involve race-related hostility, or become racialised, it was difficult to untangle this from other factors at play. Racist incidents did take place and some research participants perceived that they had no formal institution to which they could report such experiences. However, an alliance of community activists and organisations had recently restarted a network of reporting centres.

Established Bradford residents' accounts of the impact of recession suggested that unemployment and a lack of alternative work opportunities were fuelling resentment towards new arrivals to the area. The new arrivals, notably Eastern Europeans, were seen as taking jobs that might otherwise have gone to established communities. These accounts did not show recognition of the hardship and discrimination being experienced by migrant workers struggling to survive. There were also resident perceptions that the labelling of Muslims as extremists, and related hostility, had worsened during the recession.

Housing service providers discussed how increased pressure on the housing stock was influencing community relationships in a negative way. This was reflected in residents' complaints about queue jumping

in social housing waiting lists and comments that newly arrived and established ethnic communities were receiving unfair preferential treatment.

There were criticisms of the resources available to monitor discrimination and disadvantage and anxiety about the sustainability of recent steps to tackle discrimination and associated monitoring of progress. For example, research participants linked to a community alliance for the reporting of racist incidents discussed how it had been dormant for some time, although efforts had recently been made to re-launch it.

On the whole, Bradford residents were pessimistic about the long-term impact of the recession, but more positively there was also widespread agreement that everyone had responsibility for community relationships and cohesion.

## Perceived effects of current government policy

There was widespread anxiety, across statutory and third sector key informants, as well as some residents, about the climate of spending cuts. In a climate of uncertainty about the scale of the cuts, there was also pessimism about the impact on deprivation and community funding. Community funding had been fixed (and so, in effect, declining in value) for several years.

Third sector participants strongly urged recognition that resources were vital for fostering *essential* work with hidden and disadvantaged communities. This included the socially segregated Gypsy and Traveller and migrant worker communities. Resilient communities need resilient organisations. V4CE's submission to the 2010 Spending Review, referred to in Chapter 4, reinforces these points.

BME third sector research participants were particularly critical of the relationship between the third sector and Bradford City Council. Participants argued that, despite the climate of financial crisis and funding uncertainty, insufficient dialogue was taking place between the statutory and third sectors. They urged greater transparency and fairness.

The BME third sector has had longstanding concerns about the availability of funding. Both the recession and spending cuts were seen as likely to make this situation worse in a context where there were expectations that umbrella BME organisations should be covering the diversity of BME needs. BME third sector participants were also concerned over whether bids to government funding streams were distorting BME third sector objectives and their potential impact. PREVENT was a particularly contentious area, views on the use of this funding resource ranging from those who felt that it undermined the BME third sector in distorting its goals to those who felt that it was simply being used to fill a funding gap for ongoing activities and not to meet PREVENT objectives. At the time of the fieldwork a Racial Justice Network, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, had been set up to build greater solidarity and activism for the BME third sector. The research findings reinforce the importance of this activity.

There is a gap in Bradford residents' and service providers' perceptions of community voice. Residents with the hidden voices that this research largely focused on felt that they lacked voice. There are both issues of a lack of awareness of neighbourhood structures that have been developed to enable them to have a say in local issues and a lack of trust in participation at these levels making a difference.

## Recommendations: levers to support community resilience and to bring communities together

- Central Government proposed the outsourcing of non-essential council activities prior to the 2010 General Election. While the third sector saw this as a potential opportunity for it to develop its activity, there was also some feeling that a very big question mark hung over the resources that might be available to deliver these services. **There is a need to think about alternative ways of working in**

**this context, investigating how to maintain and strengthen resilience. There are signs that existing local partnerships need to be built on, increasing co-operation and integrating the contribution of hidden and disadvantaged communities. Partnership working is potentially a lever for bringing communities together.** For example, self-help might involve more established community organisations supporting capacity building within fledgling organisations that Bradford's Community Funding Unit will increasingly be struggling to find the resources to support.

- There were examples of creative thinking in cohesion-related initiatives, for example, a community centre being built in a school presented as a new model for sustainable community organisation. There was also a project fostering contact between white British girls and Pakistani Muslim girls that was felt to have had social benefits but needed to be longer term. **There is an ongoing need for evaluation of the costs of benefits of such initiatives, sharing of good practice and recognition of their value as a lever for bringing communities together.**
- The council examined its relationship with the third sector in a recent third sector review, and one of its recommendations was to establish a new structure to facilitate engagement with the voluntary and community sector. In the last twelve months the council had established a pot of money to support a structure called VCS Forums and Assembly to discuss issues and to take them forward in partnership. At the time of the fieldwork the first assembly had just taken place. **Given the third sector concerns about the quality of dialogue with statutory providers, there needs to be ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of this new structure in engaging with the third sector, and the representation of and engagement with more hidden voices.**
- While discourse on the Big Society emphasises self-help, the social sustainability of communities is also linked to community infrastructure and the resources that underpin this. A total of £11 million of cuts to the Office for the Civil Society has already been announced, and the Commission for the Compact has had its budget slashed by one fifth. V4CE has worked extensively on the Compact to ensure that the BME and wider equality sector are represented in the agreement. **An effective tool to improve partnership working with public bodies, particularly local authorities, is essential.** The third sector has an important role in service delivery including services in support of communities and healthy community relationships. **The evidence base on this role, in an evolving local context, needs to be supported, for example, through case studies of its engagement with the Big Society Bank.**
- **The Equalities Act 2010** has introduced an integrated duty on public bodies to promote equality across the eight strands. **This legal framework, and equalities assessments that are implemented in the spirit of it, may be a lever by which to challenge the equalities impacts of public spending cuts, including their impact on community organisations and relationships. Community resistance and challenges to cuts assessed to have equalities impacts need to be both monitored and publicised on the national stage.** In this research, key informant reference was made to there being insufficient resources to support the public duty to promote equalities.
- Communication policies are also a lever for bringing communities together. **Further work must be undertaken by statutory service providers to communicate policies and initiatives to Bradford residents to engage with myths, as well as harsh realities, around the distribution of resources. This further work should recognise the role of the press and media and the need for good news stories and positive messages to come through. There might usefully be greater co-ordination of this activity across service providers. In addition, there is a**

**role for community leaders to be consistent in the delivery of messages without personal agendas getting in the way.**

- This research reinforces themes from earlier studies, that material deprivation and inequalities have a negative impact on the quality of community relationships. Bradford's Safer and Stronger Communities Department has been trying to nurture the idea that tackling disadvantage, discrimination and dependency (the 3Ds) is important in order to foster socially sustainable community relationships. Again, the Equality Act 2010 may be a lever for this activity. It has introduced a duty on public authorities to consider reducing inequalities of outcomes that result from socio-economic disadvantage and came into force in April 2011. **Continued efforts to tackle disadvantage, discrimination and poverty traps need to be seen as a lever for bringing communities together. Bradford City Council has introduced a range of measures to tackle economic hardship. These interventions must be prioritised despite the climate of spending cuts, and efforts at developing joined-up working must be intensified.**
- **Youth unemployment, alienation and segregation must be addressed.** There is positive evidence of work to tackle the social and economic problems of young Muslim Pakistani men (Communities Bradford, 2009). However, the Future Jobs Fund has now been scrapped, eroding financial support for some of Bradford's joined-up working to tackle worklessness. At the time of the fieldwork there were moves to set up a project to increase the evidence base on the needs of Asian young people to feed into a strategy for Bradford, and taking an holistic approach. Young people from other cultural backgrounds, including white working class, should also not be neglected.

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