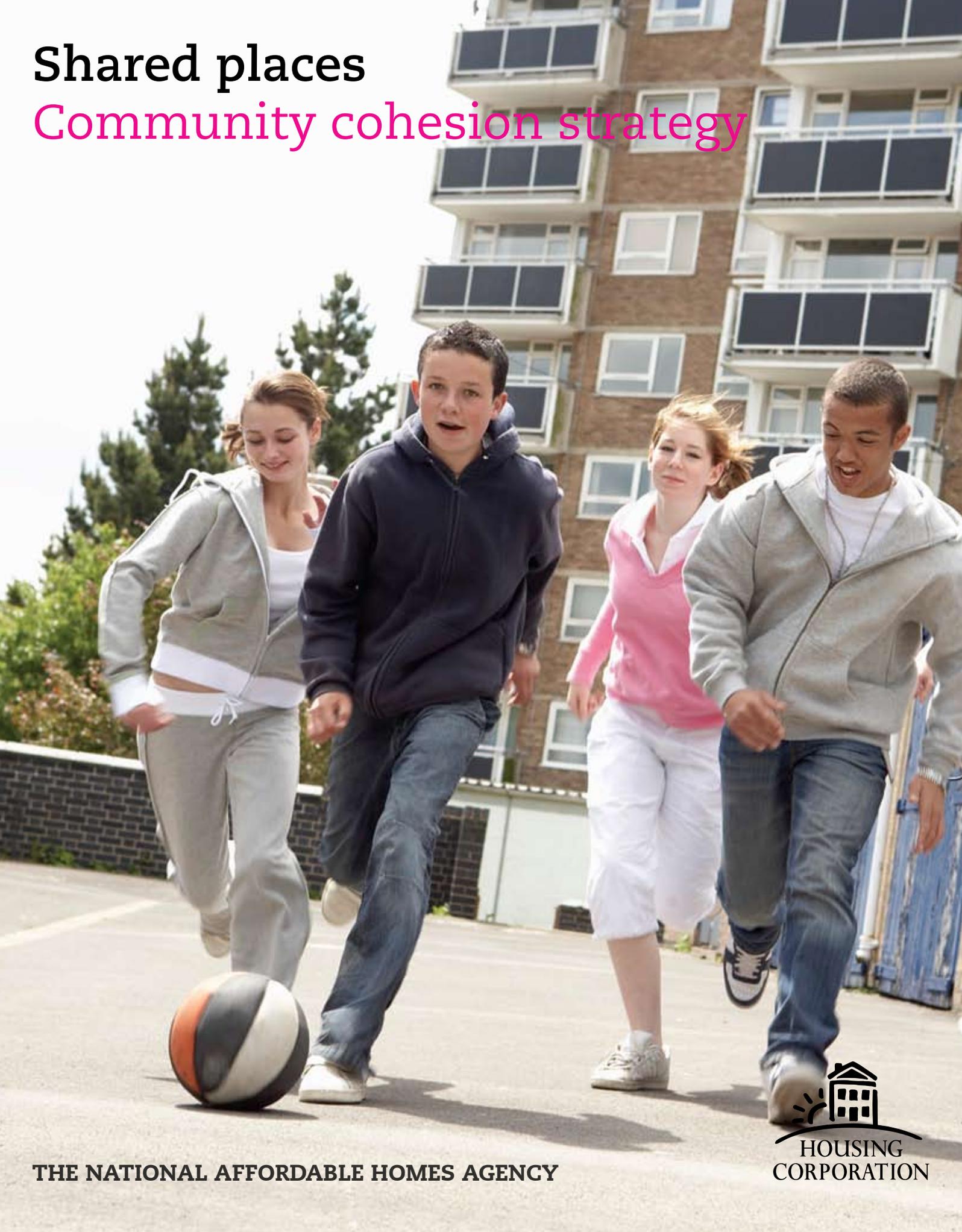


Shared places

Community cohesion strategy



October 2007

Contents

Forewords	2
Introduction	4
Working in partnership	6
Investing in cohesion	8
Shaping neighbourhoods	11
Empowering local people	13
Enabling integration	16
Myth busting	18
Actions for affordable housing providers	21

Forewords

The Housing Corporation believes that access to good quality affordable housing can provide a foundation for people to create a sense of belonging to, and affinity with, their wider environment and community.

We believe that the principles of integration and cohesion – founded on justice, respect and tolerance – encourage people to play an active role in their neighbourhoods, positively shaping their environment and creating shared values among residents.

In August 2006, Ruth Kelly, then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, launched the Commission on Integration and Cohesion. As Deputy Chief Executive of the Housing Corporation, I welcomed her invitation to become a commissioner. Our role was to examine the issues that created community tensions and led to segregation and conflict. In our report, *Our Shared Future*, we made a series of recommendations to government on how communities could be empowered to address tensions, and support cohesion and integration.

This strategy is the Housing Corporation's response to the recommendations in *Our Shared Future*. It shows how we intend to ensure that the impact of cohesion and integration becomes a central consideration for affordable housing providers.

At the heart of this strategy is recognition of the critical role that local government, regional housing boards and affordable housing providers play in supporting our neighbourhoods and communities.

Achieving cohesion and integration is complex, and can be challenging. I am clear, however, that we need be bold in our efforts to support cohesion because good quality affordable housing and effective neighbourhood management can play a key role in this – creating a real sense of belonging and helping to foster common values.



Steven Douglas
Chief Executive

As the former Chair of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, I welcome this strategy as a positive response to the Commission's recommendations outlined in Our Shared Future.

This strategy statement signals the Housing Corporation's intent for affordable housing providers to consider the impact of housing on community cohesion. We already know that integrated and cohesive neighbourhoods are those that are defined by a sense of belonging and place attachment – where people have trust in their local institutions – and enjoy equal life chances.

The Commission and the Housing Corporation recognise that partnerships forged between local people and institutions provide the most effective means of achieving cohesion locally. Housing providers are key stakeholders in such partnerships, working with local authorities and others to ensure that local people determine the priorities that affect them.

Today's modern housing providers are much more than mere landlords.

Building upon their community presence they work with local people to address issues that matter to them. In playing a pivotal role in our neighbourhoods and communities through their work they are able to tackle social exclusion, support vulnerable people and work with the young and elderly.

Their grass roots role has led to best practice examples where housing providers have worked tirelessly to bring people together, challenge myths and stereotypes whilst breaking down barriers.



Darra Singh

Former Chair,
Commission on
Integration and
Cohesion

Introduction

The Housing Corporation is committed to providing good quality affordable housing and ensuring that neighbourhoods provide a positive sense of belonging and identity for residents. We recognise that housing provides a key foundation for neighbourhoods and communities, while access to employment, education, health services and trust in public institutions also impact on people's sense of belonging to their surroundings.

This strategy sets out the Housing Corporation's vision for achieving community cohesion. We have also sponsored a new edition of the Chartered Institute of Housing publication *Community Cohesion and Housing: A Good Practice Guide* to complement this strategy.

This strategy should be seen in the context of the wider national and local response to cohesion and integration. It sets out how the Corporation will:

- ensure its investment decisions take account of their impact on cohesion and integration;
- engage with affordable housing providers to ensure that their arrangements for access to, and allocation of, housing take due regard of their impact on cohesion and integration;
- encourage affordable housing providers to develop effective strategic partnerships locally in order to support integration and cohesion;
- encourage affordable housing providers to work with residents and the wider community to identify and remove barriers to cohesion and promote positive interaction between diverse communities; and

- set the cohesion and integration agenda for the sector and recognise and promote best practice.

The strategy has been developed alongside the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's report *Our Shared Future*, published in June 2007. It reflects its recommendations that are relevant to the role of the Housing Corporation and the proposed new Homes and Communities Agency.

This strategy builds upon earlier work and guidance including:

- *Community Cohesion - An Action Guide* (2004), published by the Local Government Association;
- *Crossing Borders: Responding to the Challenges of Migrant Workers*, by the Audit Commission (2007); and
- *Community Cohesion and Housing: A Good Practice Guide*, by the Chartered Institute of Housing (2007).

This strategy is also consistent with the following key Government publications:

- *Sustainable Communities Plan* (2003);
- *Community Cohesion: Seven Steps* (2005);
- *Respect Action Plan* (2006);
- *Together We Can* (2005);
- *Third Sector Strategy for Communities and Local Government* (2007); and
- *The Local Government White Paper* (2006).

Our proposals set out the role affordable housing providers can play in six key areas:

- **working in partnership** – affordable housing providers, local government, the voluntary sector and other stakeholders working together to support integrated and cohesive communities;
- **investing in cohesion** – the Housing Corporation and affordable housing providers can help to ensure the funding of affordable housing assists the achievement of cohesion and integration;
- **shaping neighbourhoods** – affordable housing providers and the Housing Corporation can support the delivery of integrated and mixed communities;
- **empowering local people** – affordable housing providers can support both local residents and wider community engagement in decision making;
- **enabling integration** – affordable housing providers can identify and work towards the removal of barriers to integration; and
- **myth busting** – the Housing Corporation and affordable housing providers can play a role in challenging negative stereotypes and tensions.

We believe that cohesion and integration initiatives are best achieved through strategic partnerships between grass roots communities, local institutions and the third sector. The engagement and empowerment of local people through effective partnerships underpins our own strategic approach, and represents a cross-cutting theme throughout this strategy statement.

Working in partnership

The Housing Corporation believes that an effective approach to cohesion and integration is based on a widely shared vision, and accepted values and expectations between different parts of local communities.

Local authorities, with their strategic role, are best placed to support the creation of the local vision for cohesion and integration. Affordable housing providers should work closely with them to ensure that they can contribute to local authorities' approaches to promoting community cohesion.

Many affordable housing providers have agreements with local authorities on allocations and lettings. It is essential that lettings or nomination arrangements take account of the need to support mixed communities and avoid concentration of deprivation. They should also be accessible, transparent and fair. There is evidence that this is an area where local tensions can arise, especially through misconceptions about how homes are allocated.

Most local authorities have established Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and many affordable housing providers are members of these key local partnerships.

LSPs may be particularly helpful in profiling local communities and identifying tensions that may arise from crime rates, inequality or demographic variations to prioritise action. The Local Government White Paper emphasises the need to develop responses to these pressures, including

the formation of neighbourhood councils and capacity-building programmes such as Together We Can.

Close working relationships with local authorities and other key local players are particularly important for housing providers operating on estates with many different landlords. The absence of such working can limit a consistent and effective approach to cohesion and integration. The Housing Corporation believes that stock rationalisation, where appropriate, can play an important role in improving providers' engagement and services to communities.

Affordable housing providers will also wish to build effective relationships with other local institutions, employers, the voluntary sector and local people, with the aim of developing shared approaches to promoting integration and cohesion.

The Housing Corporation continues to work closely with the Local Government Association (LGA) to promote community integration and cohesion. The Corporation's national protocol with the LGA includes reference to community cohesion and this provides the template for many local variants. The protocols include commitments to:

- seek the views of local authorities on the performance of affordable housing providers operating in their areas; and
- create a closer relationship in investment and regulation.



We will consider how we can use these tools to monitor the performance of affordable housing providers in building effective alliances at a local level.

We believe that affordable housing providers should:

- engage with local authorities, either individually or collectively, and agree with them how they will contribute to the delivery of integrated and cohesive communities;
- ensure that any nomination or lettings agreements with local authorities take due regard of the need to create and support mixed communities, avoid creating areas of deprivation and ensure that allocation and lettings decisions are clear, fair and transparent;
- develop or maintain partnerships to produce and maintain a shared profile of local neighbourhoods and communities;
- ensure that relationships are developed at the community level with local people and community bodies to further integration and cohesion. These relationships may include, but are not limited to, the voluntary sector, local charities and support agencies for refugees, new migrants and faith groups; and
- ensure through their neighbourhood management work that they assist in the identification of issues that can create local tensions, such as anti-social behaviour, low-level crime and harassment.

Case study

Ashram Housing Association works with young people who are unemployed, and those not in education or training, to access work placements in partnership with Education Business Link and other local partners.

This work has resulted in hundreds of successful placements for local secondary school pupils and the production of two DVDs promoting careers in housing and social care.

It also has a Social Enterprise Schools Challenge, where pupils are able to develop business skills with a wider understanding of social responsibility. Following the success of this approach in inner city neighbourhoods with high black and minority ethnic populations, it is being expanded to include schools with predominantly white pupils to bring together young people from different cultural backgrounds.

Investing in cohesion

Access to affordable housing can create and sustain people's affinity and sense of belonging to their neighbourhood. However, if one group of people appears to be unreasonably favoured, investment in new homes and regeneration can be a source of tensions, and be damaging to cohesion and integration.

All investment decisions have a potential impact on cohesion – particularly when not all community needs can be addressed because of resource limitations. But there is limited evidence that affordable housing providers, and some of their partners, routinely consider the impact of investment decisions on integration and cohesion.

We expect that the impact of investment on cohesion should become increasingly evidenced when making investment decisions. The impact of investment decisions on cohesion should also be considered, where appropriate, with local authorities and other stakeholders. This will lead to a more developed understanding of how investment into neighbourhoods and communities can affect integration and cohesion. This is particularly relevant in areas where resources are limited and investment decisions may present risks where decisions are not transparent or are perceived to be unfair by local people.

We believe that all stakeholders, including affordable housing providers, should work with planners to support cohesion and integration through the provision of varied types of housing and innovative design. Local people should not

be merely consulted on proposals, but actively involved in helping to determine investment priorities. This can be achieved both through community organisations and informal events and links.

Our investment decisions will in future take account of their impact on cohesion. For example, in our prospectus for the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) 2008-11, we require investment partners to produce method statements that demonstrate how they have considered the delivery of cohesive and mixed communities.

Method statements are required where a scheme:

- is located in a local authority area where 10% or more of the population is from BME communities;
- is in an area identified as having significant housing needs for minority communities, or challenges for community cohesion; and
- has a local or regional strategic fit based on meeting the needs of a BME community.

Method statements will, over time, provide evidence of how investment partners work with community partners, local or regional agencies and other housing providers to ensure that their schemes are appropriate to local housing need.

We will expect affordable housing providers working with investment partners to illustrate how the management of housing, and its allocation, supports mixed, cohesive and integrated communities. If a different provider will ultimately manage the homes, it would need to be involved in this process.

We will also produce an assessment methodology for determining the impact of our investment decisions on community cohesion. We want to ensure that the impact of our investment decisions is proportional and appropriate.

In line with the Commission's recommendations, we also intend to consider future investment to benefit a particular community group only in those circumstances where a clear business and equality case is made. This may include schemes that provide exclusive services to disabled people, BME or faith communities, vulnerable people and older people. We believe that an equality and business case would include factors including but not limited to:

- demonstration of the specific needs of the group;
- evidence to show how the scheme would meet the specific need;
- show that current need was not, or could not, be met through alternative means;
- and that the decision would be reviewed periodically; and

- demonstration of how their policies and practices will promote cohesion and integration.

Our approaches will be aligned to the priorities of regional housing boards, regional development agencies and other relevant agencies.

We believe that affordable housing providers should:

- where appropriate, work in partnership at local and regional levels to identify areas where there is a clear need to consider cohesion and integration in regeneration and development. This is particularly relevant in areas of deprivation or those that are subject to high rates of population change, such as those with recently arrived migrants;
- in such areas, they should assess the impact of regeneration and development programmes on integration, cohesion and wider community relations;
- where appropriate, work with other local stakeholders to develop a communication plan early enough to ensure that local people are kept informed, to reduce tensions or concerns that may arise about fairness;
- where appropriate, work with other local stakeholders to ensure engagement of local people to explain the purposes of regeneration or development programmes. This may be particularly important on multi-landlord or multi-tenure estates; and



Case study

Crewe and Nantwich has seen an influx of migrant workers over the last few years – of between 3,000 and 3,500 people. The local housing association, Wulvern Housing, received an Invest to Save grant to increase access to services for migrants, improve communication with existing communities and enhance skill levels.

The project aims to develop and disseminate good practice, improve data collection on migrant communities and their needs, establish a multi-agency team to address them and also develop a contingency plan to cope with unforeseen change, such as a change in local jobs market.

Other elements include:

- drop-in translation and advice sessions:
- English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes; and
- building a relationship with employment agencies so that problems can be resolved.

- where appropriate, ensure that agreements are made between local authorities, developers and those that will manage the homes to require that allocations are fair, transparent and support mixed communities.

Shaping neighbourhoods

Mixed communities contribute to choice and equality, and by avoiding concentrations of deprivation they help to reduce social exclusion and improve cohesion.

Some neighbourhoods achieve a relative degree of cohesion but remain isolated from other surrounding areas and other neighbourhoods. The pursuit of mixed neighbourhoods aims to 'level up' communities while also achieving cohesion and integration.

Housing is one of many contributing factors to the success of mixed communities. Other essential components include employment, schools, transport, health, leisure and proximity to religious and cultural facilities. Different communities have different needs, and each area will need solutions based on its social and economic situation.

In our Neighbourhoods and Communities Strategy, published in October 2006, the Housing Corporation committed itself to "promote the active engagement of housing associations in the development and delivery of strategies; further the sustainability of the communities in which they work; develop greater community and resident involvement in the work of affordable housing providers, so that people can participate in decisions that affect them if they wish to do so".

To achieve mixed communities, affordable housing providers, working with local authorities, need to provide a variety of housing types, both in

differing sizes and for social rent, private sale and low-cost home ownership.

We aim to work with national agencies, local authorities and affordable housing providers to respond to the challenges of mixed communities, including:

- their creation in growth areas and new growth points, such as the Thames Gateway and Milton Keynes;
- engaging in large-scale regeneration and renewal;
- tackling areas of single-tenure housing, particularly where there are also concentrations of worklessness;
- tackling deprivation in areas where one racial or faith group is predominant; and
- ensuring that the challenges faced by rural communities, and by gypsies and travellers, are taken into account.

As noted, access to housing, or any public service, can lead to local tensions, especially where supply is limited. It is essential that any lettings plans and decisions are not only fair, but are seen to be fair.

Choice-based lettings schemes have supported the creation of mixed neighbourhoods and communities. Research for the Government has shown that BME groups in particular have taken advantage of increased choice to move into areas that were not traditional BME settlement areas.



Case study

Attwood Green is a 12-year regeneration programme with a vision to create a mixed-use, mixed-tenure, socially inclusive, vibrant and sustainable community. Prior to its transformation Attwood Green was characterised by a high turnover of tenants, empty and derelict homes, failing schools and ‘no-go’ areas where there was a fear of crime.

It is being successfully transformed into a highly desirable place to live, with family houses, flats and student accommodation, together with business zones. Between 1999 and 2005, 1,150 properties were refurbished and 1,414 unsatisfactory homes demolished.

Work on the estate has led to a dramatic increase in property values and acted as a catalyst for further local regeneration increasing the choices and opportunities for local residents.

Affordable housing providers should work closely with local authorities to avoid creating concentrations of deprivation or social disadvantage for any particular groups.

We will ensure that our approaches to investment support the delivery of mixed communities, in new developments, in regeneration schemes and in mono-tenure areas.

We will support the Government’s mixed communities initiatives, which aim to transform deprived areas of single-tenure housing.

We will explore the suitability of upfront investment to unlock the large-scale regeneration of problem estates.

We believe that affordable housing providers should:

- work with local authorities to monitor lettings to ensure fairness and conformity with criteria that have been communicated to residents;
- ensure that an increased range of housing options is offered including, where appropriate, those for BME/faith groups and vulnerable and disabled people;
- ensure that information on lettings plans with choice-based letting schemes is easily available to assist people in exercising choice; and
- monitor neighbourhoods so that action can be taken, where necessary, to maintain mixed communities.

Empowering local people

The involvement of local people in determining the priorities for their area is essential to cohesion and integration.

Involving residents improves the effectiveness with which housing and neighbourhood services are delivered, and can also give residents new skills and confidence. Involvement can help to make neighbourhoods desirable places in which to live and is a key component of building social capital.

Affordable housing providers are expected to abide by the principles in our policy *People First: Delivering Change Through Involvement*. This requires the publication of involvement statements, which are agreed with residents, and the carrying out of annual impact assessments of performance.

In addition, affordable housing providers will have to engage with the wider community to develop shared values in neighbourhoods, particularly where there is a mix of social and privately owned housing.

In this, providers should view their role as that of helping support local people to address the issues that matter most to them. This may include concerns about crime, limited recreational facilities, anti-social behaviour and initiatives to bring people together.

Good working relationships between local people and housing providers and local authorities are an effective way to identify tensions early. For example, resident and community networks will often be aware of low-level tensions that have the potential to escalate into incidents that divide communities and lead to tension. They can also rebut misinformation about the allocation of public resources, help ensure that decisions are seen to be fair and transparent, and provide opportunities for different groups of people to engage in a safe environment.

Increasingly, affordable housing providers are also supporting programmes that are not part of their traditional housing management functions. For example, some have community funding programmes to support recreation such as sports and arts, or programmes that offer young people activities that have proven to be effective in diverting them from involvement in anti-social behaviour.

Affordable housing providers can take on this social enterprise role in addition to their core housing work.

Through their purchasing power and their procurement spend they can stimulate local economies and provide employment and training opportunities for local people.

There are numerous opportunities for this sort of engagement. Some providers have, for example, partnered local schools. In this they could look to



Case study

Tees Valley Housing Group addresses serious anti-social behaviour through its Middlesbrough Family project. It encouraged families to change their behaviour to standards considered acceptable by the local community.

This is achieved through a combination of outreach work, housing for families evicted as a result of their misbehaviour, and dispersal units to support re-integration of families back into their local community.

The project has resulted in a reduction of incidents of anti-social behaviour and crime, together with improvements in school attendance and independent living skills.

The project has recently received Family Intervention Project status from the Home Office.

support schools to fulfil their community cohesion duty by working with the Schools Linking Network.

We will support the development of best practice on involving local people in integration and cohesion through our Innovation and Good Practice (IGP) programme.

We also recognise best practice and excellence through our Gold Awards. The awards recognise and reward excellent and innovative housing providers each year and the 2008 award will include a category for building cohesive communities.

Winners of the Gold Award are supported by a substantial knowledge-sharing fund, and commit to a nine-month dissemination programme supported by the Corporation and its partners.

We believe that affordable housing providers should:

- work with local authorities in their implementation of sustainable communities strategies, including supporting neighbourhood governance and involvement irrespective of tenure;
- support the widest possible neighbourhood engagement, not just through tenant and resident associations – this may include faith organisations, schools, local charities, community groups and the police;

- develop the strategic approaches in the Corporation's Neighbourhoods and Communities Strategy;
- ensure residents and wider communities can determine objectives for local cohesion and integration initiatives;
- ensure that any system for measuring cohesion and integration has been agreed between residents and local delivery agents;
- engage with hard-to-involve groups such as young people, working families, vulnerable people and under-represented groups;
- explore joint funding agreements for local activities focused on cohesion and integration, such as sport, the arts or cultural opportunities;
- where appropriate, work with ex-perpetrators of anti-social behaviour to design initiatives that identify and remedy the cause of such activity;
- engage with local schools, colleges and employers to support community-based programmes aimed at developing the skills and capacity of local people; and
- develop intergenerational projects in local neighbourhoods.

Enabling integration

Affordable housing providers with their local presence and housing management skills are often well placed to encourage integration between local people.

A poll commissioned from Ipsos MORI by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion found that the inability to communicate in English was the most significant barrier to integration. Translated information and interpretation services are particularly important for some new migrant communities, which may not have had the opportunities or time to acquire relevant skills.

There should also be suitable materials available for people with visual or hearing impairments, learning difficulties or literacy barriers.

Overcoming communication barriers undoubtedly makes developing shared values more effective – as people are more readily able to communicate with each other. The Commission suggested that translations should be used to build integration and should, over time, encourage and support people to develop English language skills.

We believe that affordable housing providers should consider the following factors to determine an approach to translations:

- Is it essential that material is translated?
- Does the material need to be translated in full?
- Are the language requirements of the community identified and monitored?

- What are the cost benefits of translated materials? Translated publications can be expensive, and it is advisable to balance the need to overcome communication barriers with support for people to acquire proficiency in English.
- Can they engage with local agencies and networks to address communication barriers more efficiently?

Integration is more than an issue of language proficiency. Many affordable housing providers play an active role in supporting new groups into established neighbourhoods, for example by bringing different communities together in a safe environment in order to address local concerns and dispel negative stereotypes or fears.

This is also an effective means of understanding social norms, responsibilities and expectations between local people. This may be particularly beneficial for new arrivals to an area who may be unaware of information regarding residents' groups, local amenities, refuse disposal and parking.

We will aim to:

- explore capital funding opportunities that may support affordable housing providers to develop integration programmes;
- collect and communicate examples of best practice;



- encourage affordable housing providers to produce welcome packs for new residents or include this information in tenant handbooks;
- publish information about the needs of disabled and vulnerable people; and
- produce guidelines for the use of translated documents.

We believe that affordable housing providers should:

- determine the communication needs of residents, including spoken and written English, literacy levels and any particular needs of disabled people;
- pool resources with local authorities and other relevant bodies to overcome communication barriers;
- identify community groups, organisations and local charities who may be able to assist in communicating with diverse communities;
- inform residents about programmes that develop language and literacy skills at local colleges and schools and about any bespoke initiatives; and
- consider producing welcome packs that provide basic information and describe support available from local authorities and the police.

Case study

Metropolitan Housing Partnership working with London and Quadrant designed the Reaching Out initiative to engage the Turkish-speaking community in its Edmonton regeneration scheme. It has funded a Turkish-speaking outreach worker to consult the community about the services it receives and wider issues that affect the quality of life of its members. The achievements of the project include:

- monthly drop in-centres where residents can obtain the help of a local interpreter;
- establishing ESOL languages classes;
- monthly information meetings to discuss health, education and public safety;
- community development programmes, such as drama, horticultural training for women and knife-crime awareness;
- homework initiatives for Kurdish and Turkish young people; and
- working with other communities to support participation in the decision-making process.

Reaching Out has grown into a successful and sustainable community engagement scheme. Its financial future has been secured and it will benefit other communities across London.

Myth busting

Affordable housing providers operate in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods and provide housing and services to some of the most disadvantaged communities. These areas also often have significant population changes as new communities arrive and others move elsewhere. These changes can present challenges to integration and cohesion, and sometimes the arrival of a new group in a community may raise fear, suspicion, or in extreme cases, hostility.

These challenges are increasingly evident in some rural communities, which may be unaccustomed to the influx of new groups. Indeed, integration and cohesion difficulties may be particularly acute in these areas, due in part to a lack of historic diversity within the local population, few facilities that support integration, and a perception that this is an issue only for urban settlements.

These changes can present challenges for housing providers and for local people. Affordable housing providers can play an active role in promoting and recognising the contribution that diverse communities bring, while challenging negative stereotypes that may fuel tensions. This is particularly relevant where there is high demand and a limited affordable housing supply.

Many affordable housing providers are already engaged in activities that seek to do this, and such myth-busting initiatives will be more effective when run collaboratively with the police, local authorities, employers, community networks and schools.

Many affordable housing providers have experience of myth-busting initiatives. These include:

- intergenerational programmes that bring older and young people together;
- distributing information that challenges stereotypes and negative perceptions;
- inter-faith and cultural projects;
- work with local schools;
- work with existing residents to welcome and support new communities;
- publicising successful anti-social behaviour work;
- promoting successes with constructive and recreational activities designed to divert young people from committing anti-social behaviour;
- using leisure facilities and community centres to encourage multicultural engagement;
- challenging misinformation about allocation practices and access to housing for BME communities; and
- challenging negative stereotypes about gypsy and traveller communities.

In 2008, we will develop a series of statements that address misconceptions about access to social housing, to support housing providers in their myth-busting roles. We will also publish guidance on how to foster cohesion and understanding between settled communities and gypsies and travellers.



We believe that affordable housing providers should:

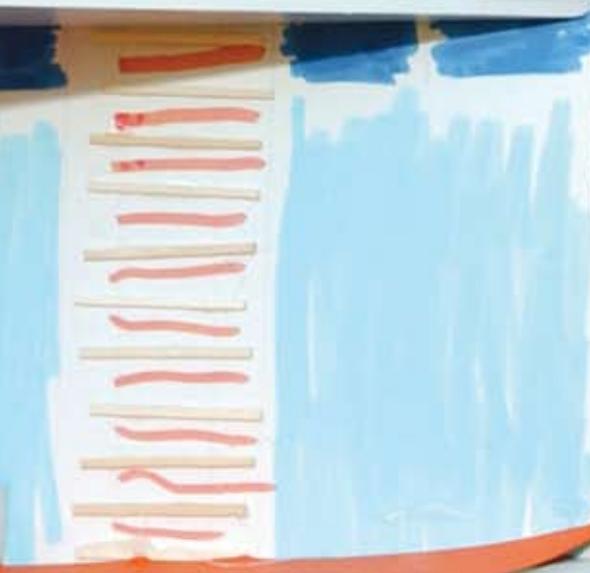
- work with residents to identify tensions that have the potential to be exploited through myth, rumour and misinformation;
- ensure that housing allocation and investment practices are open and transparent – particularly in areas where housing demand outweighs supply;
- be able to react quickly to tensions and misinformation;
- ensure that they and their partners have up-to-date information on the situation with ‘hotspots’ where cohesion has been problematic;
- establish relationships with local media to support responsible reporting about different groups;
- work to develop positive images of neighbourhoods to allay fears of new groups and respond to possible tensions; and
- work with other social housing providers and private landlords to identify and communicate shared values that apply to all.

Case study

Working in Burnley, Elevate has funded the Good Relations Programme which aims to promote good community relationships between local people and support cohesion.

Now in its third year, the programme has seen local people, professionals, leaders (both political and non-political) working with specialist societal mediators. There have been many benefits and outcomes from this work – not least a cohort of trained specialist mediators who are now being deployed to work with various agencies and on a wide range of issues.

Elevate chairs the Good Relations Management Group which is a partnership involving the police, local councils, voluntary sector, neighbourhood management etc. This forum supports a strategic approach to identifying and addressing local tensions, myths or negative stereotypes. Through the forum the group exchanges information and intelligence and develops the programme through practice and review.



Bunny &
Hibs: 1

400-9

Actions for affordable housing providers

Our proposals set out the role affordable housing providers can play in six key areas.

Working in partnership

Affordable housing providers, local government, the voluntary sector and other stakeholders working together to support integrated and cohesive communities.

We believe that affordable housing providers should:

- engage with local authorities, either individually or collectively, and agree with them how they will contribute to the delivery of integrated and cohesive communities;
- ensure that any nomination or lettings agreements with local authorities take due regard of the need to create and support mixed communities, avoid creating areas of deprivation and ensure that allocation and lettings decisions are clear, fair and transparent;
- develop or maintain partnerships to produce and maintain a shared profile of local neighbourhoods and communities;
- ensure that relationships are developed at the community level with local people and community bodies to further integration and cohesion. These relationships may include, but are not limited to, the voluntary sector, local charities and support agencies for refugees, new migrants and faith groups; and

- ensure through their neighbourhood management work that they assist in the identification of issues that can create local tensions, such as anti-social behaviour, low-level crime and harassment.

Investing in cohesion

The Housing Corporation and affordable housing providers can help ensure the funding of affordable housing assists the achievement of cohesion and integration.

We believe that affordable housing providers should:

- where appropriate, work in partnership at local and regional levels to identify areas where there is a clear need to consider cohesion and integration in regeneration and development. This is particularly relevant in areas of deprivation or those that are subject to high rates of population change, such as those with recently arrived migrants;
- in such areas, they should assess the impact of regeneration and development programmes on integration, cohesion and wider community relations;
- where appropriate, work with other local stakeholders to develop a communication plan early enough to ensure that local people are kept informed, to reduce tensions or concerns that may arise about fairness;

- where appropriate, work with other local stakeholders to ensure engagement of local people to explain the purposes of regeneration or development programmes. This may be particularly important on multi-landlord or multi-tenure estates; and
- where appropriate, ensure that agreements are made between local authorities, developers and those that will manage the homes to require that allocations are fair, transparent and support mixed communities.

Shaping neighbourhoods

Affordable housing providers and the Housing Corporation can support the delivery of integrated and mixed communities.

We believe that affordable housing providers should:

- work with local authorities to monitor lettings to ensure fairness and conformity with criteria that have been communicated to residents;
- ensure that an increased range of housing options is offered including, where appropriate, those for BME/faith groups and vulnerable and disabled people;
- ensure that information on lettings plans with choice-based letting schemes is easily available to assist people in exercising choice; and
- monitor neighbourhoods so that action can be taken, where necessary, to maintain mixed communities.

Empowering local people

Affordable housing providers can support both local residents and wider community engagement in decision making.

We believe that affordable housing providers should:

- work with local authorities in their implementation of sustainable communities strategies, including supporting neighbourhood governance and involvement irrespective of tenure;
- support the widest possible neighbourhood engagement, not just through tenant and resident associations – this may include faith organisations, schools, local charities, community groups and the police;
- develop the strategic approaches in the Corporation's Neighbourhoods and Communities Strategy;
- ensure residents and wider communities can determine objectives for local cohesion and integration initiatives;
- ensure that any system for measuring cohesion and integration has been agreed between residents and local delivery agents;
- engage with hard-to-include groups such as young people, working families, vulnerable people and under-represented groups;
- explore joint funding agreements for local activities focused on cohesion and integration, such as sport, the arts or cultural opportunities;

- where appropriate, work with ex-perpetrators of anti-social behaviour to design initiatives that identify and remedy the cause of such activity;
 - engage with local schools, colleges and employers to support community-based programmes aimed at developing the skills and capacity of local people; and
 - develop intergenerational projects in local neighbourhoods.
- consider producing welcome packs that provide basic information and describe support available from local authorities and the police.

Myth busting

The Housing Corporation and affordable housing providers can play a role in challenging negative stereotypes and tensions.

We believe that affordable housing providers should:

Enabling integration

Affordable housing providers can identify and work towards the removal of barriers to integration.

We believe that affordable housing providers should:

- determine the communication needs of residents, including spoken and written English, literacy levels and any particular needs of disabled people;
 - pool resources with local authorities and other relevant bodies to overcome communication barriers;
 - identify community groups, organisations and local charities who may be able to assist in communicating with diverse communities;
 - inform residents about programmes that develop language and literacy skills at local colleges and schools and about any bespoke initiatives; and
- work with residents to identify tensions that have the potential to be exploited through myth, rumour and misinformation;
 - ensure that housing allocation and investment practices are open and transparent – particularly in areas where housing demand outweighs supply;
 - be able to react quickly to tensions and misinformation;
 - ensure that they and their partners have up-to-date information on the situation with ‘hotspots’ where cohesion has been problematic;
 - establish relationships with local media to support responsible reporting about different groups;
 - work to develop positive images of neighbourhoods to allay fears of new groups and respond to possible tensions; and
 - work with other social housing providers and private landlords to identify and communicate shared values that apply to all.

Our offices

Maple House
149 Tottenham Court Road
London W1T 7BN

For enquiries, contact us at:

Tel: 0845 230 7000

Fax: 0113 233 7101

Email: enquiries@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk

Internet: www.housingcorp.gov.uk

CENTRAL

Attenborough House
109/119 Charles Street
Leicester LE1 1FQ

31 Waterloo Road
Wolverhampton WV1 4DJ

Westbrook Centre
Block 1 Suite 1
Milton Road
Cambridge CB4 1YG

LONDON

Maple House
149 Tottenham Court Road
London W1T 7BN

NORTH

4th Floor
One Piccadilly Gardens
Manchester M1 1RG

1 Park Lane
Leeds LS3 1EP

St. George's House
Team Valley
Kingsway Trading Estate
Gateshead NE11 0NA

SOUTH EAST

Leon House
High Street
Croydon CR9 1UH

SOUTH WEST

Beaufort House
51 New North Road
Exeter EX4 4EP

This publication is made of paper that is 100% recycled from consumer waste and approved by the Forest Stewardship Council. It has been printed using biodegradable inks by printers who hold the internationally recognised environmental standard ISO 14001 (2004).

For further information about this publication please call 0845 230 7000 or email enquiries@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk

We can provide copies in large print, Braille and audio cassette, on request. Other language versions may also be available.

Shared places Community cohesion strategy

This strategy sets out the Housing Corporation's vision for achieving community cohesion and integration. It explains how the Corporation is working to improve community cohesion and details the role that affordable housing providers can play.