

A Social Justice Framework for Luton 2012 – 2026

Luton**Forum**


Foreword

Luton's Social Justice Framework 2012 - 2026 is a significant piece of work that has involved a wide range of partners, community groups and individuals. I am extremely grateful to everyone who has contributed. At a time of austerity and government cuts to public services it is vitally important that we ensure all our efforts are sharply focused on the needs of Luton's citizens and that we work together as organisations and communities to build on the strengths of our diverse town.

Social justice embraces a commitment to equality, cohesion and inclusion and brings together these concepts to ensure that their interdependence is understood and acted upon. Overwhelmingly, the consultation responses received to the draft Social Justice Framework supported explicit commitment to this approach.

The Social Justice Framework takes the Sustainable Community Strategy's underlying principles of Equality, Cohesion and Inclusion and identifies the key areas and priorities on which we need to focus. These will influence a number of strategies and action plans to ensure that partners integrate social justice into the way that they develop, plan and deliver services to ensure positive changes and better outcomes.

This is a framework for the long term. Making progress will not be easy and will depend upon all partners maintaining commitment and momentum. The Stronger Communities Executive will meet with stakeholders on an annual basis to assess progress against agreed measures and identify actions required from partners to ensure continued improvement. This annual review will also be an opportunity to look at how Luton is doing when compared to other areas.

Securing social justice for Luton's citizens presents a challenge, but having a framework, signed up to by all key partners in the town, which sets the direction for our energies will ensure that we maximise the positive impact of our collective efforts.

I look forward to working with partners and communities on these important issues over the coming years.

J D Bailey

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Introduction

Luton Forum is the town's local strategic partnership, bringing together a wide range of organisations working together to improve life for people living, working or visiting the town. It includes voluntary and community organisations working through the Luton Assembly, Luton Borough Council, the NHS and the Police and other providers of public services. The Forum is the body through which Luton's Sustainable Community Strategy¹ is co-ordinated and Equality, Cohesion and Inclusion are key underlying principles of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Luton's Sustainable Community Strategy embodies the collective vision of all partners working together to improve quality of life, wellbeing and access to services for the citizens of Luton.

In June 2011, the Luton Forum agreed shorter term goals and principles:

Partnership Goal: To reduce inequalities adversely affecting Luton's communities

Partnership Principles: To make prevention and early intervention the principles that guide how resources are deployed in Luton to achieve our priority outcomes

These are supported by eight **Priority Outcomes:**

- Fewer people living in poverty
- More people, including those who are vulnerable, able to live independently
- Increased healthy life expectancy
- Improved educational attainment for children and young people
- Increased number of people with appropriate skills, helping business create the jobs that lead to employment
- A reduction in serious crime and the fear it causes
- An improved and sustainable natural and built environment
- Stronger community cohesion across the town

This framework has been developed to support the commitment of the Luton Forum and its partners to these principles. It is important to have a clear and shared understanding, not only of what we, Luton Forum and partners, mean by these

¹ The Sustainable Community Strategy can be found at:
<http://www.lutonforum.org/Forum/Documents/Versionwithoutlogos.pdf>

concepts but also of how we can ensure that this understanding informs the development of partner organisations' policies, plans and activities.

Key to success of this framework will be the ability of all Luton Forum partners to translate this commitment to meaningful outcomes for local citizens. It is expected that all Forum partners will use this framework as an overarching guide to the work of their respective organisations and develop appropriate implementation plans to facilitate delivery against their respective aims and objectives.

The Stronger Communities Executive will oversee this framework on behalf of the Luton Forum, working closely with partnerships and partner organisations to ensure that activity is focused on achieving equality, cohesion and inclusion both within the town and when compared to the rest of the country.

What we mean by Social Justice

The concept of “social justice” describes a society which promotes, develops and enables fair and equitable treatment for individuals and groups taking account of any disadvantages that may arise from differences such as economic disparity, class, gender, race, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability or health.

For the Luton Forum, social justice goes further than striving for equality of opportunity. It embraces a commitment to the achievement of greater equality of outcome through redressing evident imbalances in access and in wellbeing, as experienced by some citizens, and providing a capability framework that can enable the achievement of equality, cohesion and inclusion.

This framework recognises that individuals, organisations and services all have a role to play in achieving social justice - working independently or collaboratively.

The Equality Framework for Local Government identifies five objectives towards achieving an ‘Excellent’ outcome for the local communities:

- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- A modern diverse workforce
- Responsive service and customer care
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Knowing your community and equality mapping.

This document provides a local statement of values and commitments to improve social justice in the town. As such, it demonstrates how partners will fulfil their community leadership role, contributing to achieving the ‘Excellent’ outcome.

Luton Forum's vision for equalities, cohesion and inclusion

We have developed a vision for equalities, cohesion and inclusion in Luton to 2026. The next few years will be challenging for communities, businesses and public sector agencies as the country's economic challenges are tackled. There is a danger that the measures taken to tackle the economy will adversely affect equality, cohesion and inclusion in Luton and in other areas. By developing and publishing this vision and our framework for achieving it we are committing to doing everything possible to ensure that Luton's communities experience greater equality, cohesion and inclusion during this difficult period. Our vision is:

By 2026 Luton will be a place where:

- people's different needs, circumstances, responsibilities and goals are recognised;***
- people can flourish no matter their background and barriers that limit what people can be and do are being removed;***
- the gap between the most and least well off in terms of health, education and income will be narrowing;***
- people's understanding, care and respect of each other will be increasing;***
and
- services will be influenced and delivered according to people's needs.***

The next section explains how we aim to realise this vision.

Recognising needs, circumstances, responsibilities and goals

An equal, cohesive and inclusive society is one where the needs, circumstances, responsibilities and goals of individuals and groups are recognised and valued. For this to happen we need to understand our communities, their backgrounds, aspirations and needs and to ensure that those delivering public services incorporate these into service design and delivery. Leaders and service deliverers, no matter what sector they are from, as well as residents need to have a greater understanding of the needs of Luton's different communities, for example using the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and other strategic needs assessments.

Similarly we need to be clear about what is expected of Luton's residents - both new and existing - and support them to meet these societal expectations such as good neighbourliness and challenging discrimination.

In order to achieve this part of our ambition, we will work to develop and share a greater understanding of the communities that make up Luton. This will involve local people and will require a culture of openness, trust and confidence, developed through strong community leadership, clarity of purpose and relationship building. One element of this culture of openness, trust and confidence will be transparent decision making particularly in relation to financial decisions. Findings of Luton's recent Commission on Community Cohesion told us that perceptions of unfair allocation of resources can lead to community tensions and a lack of understanding. Therefore public bodies in particular need to be clear about, and accountable for, how they make their spending decisions, including how local people can have their say, and how they prioritise their resources. Public bodies also need to demonstrate that the decisions they make will improve equality, cohesion and inclusion.

Objectives

- To improve understanding among leaders' and service delivery bodies across all sectors of the communities that make up Luton
- To improve the visibility of leadership on equalities, cohesion and inclusion
- To embed equalities, cohesion and inclusion in the culture of all service delivery organisations
- To increase the range of opportunities, including cultural activities and festivals, for people to meet and learn about each other ,
- To improve the transparency of decision making

Enabling people to flourish

By this we mean that we need to enable people to do the things they choose to do - at no detriment to others - and do them well, enabling them to fulfil their potential by developing their skills and abilities, including their personal and collective confidence and pride. We need to remove barriers, enable and encourage change, raise aspirations and celebrate achievements; we need to work with local people to create and maintain a safe environment in which to flourish. Our approach needs to encompass people of all ages and all backgrounds. The enablers will be different for different people and groups depending on their experiences and the factors that currently contribute to their disadvantage.

By enabling people to flourish we will help to create a more equal, cohesive and inclusive Luton, where people are proud of their achievements and proud of each other, where people have greater feelings of belonging, where ambitions are fulfilled and where individuals and groups achieve their potential and prosper without enforced dependency on others. This will also help us to improve Luton's reputation, locally and beyond, making it a more attractive town to live, learn, work and play.

Objectives

Our objectives for enabling people to flourish are:

- To improve the reputation of Luton and its residents
- To raise the aspirations and improve the skills of residents and the ability for them to realise their potential in learning, employment and leisure
- To create and maintain a safe environment
- To improve feelings of belonging particularly in those areas with the lowest levels as identified in recent surveys
- To improve linkages between schools particularly active mixing between more and less ethnically diverse schools
- To promote and enable the use of the English language across Luton

Narrowing the gap on health, education and income

Like many places, Luton is a town of contrasts. There is a distinct need not only to improve the quality of life for all those who live in Luton but also to narrow the gap between those that have the best and worst experiences. Key to both improving general quality of life and to improving equality, cohesion and inclusion are health, education and income.

Tackling health inequality is fundamental to achieving an equal, cohesive and inclusive Luton. Luton Forum's *Health Inequalities Strategy 2010 – 2026* sets out the key issues and actions to be taken. It recognises that addressing health inequalities requires action on issues such as early child development, education, employment and working conditions, housing and neighbourhood conditions and standards of living. With a focus on those geographic areas with poorest health outcomes the strategy focuses on the following:

- Empowering individuals and communities
- Improving access to services
- Addressing lifestyle issues
- Addressing the wider determinants of health such as employment, education
- Improving quality of life

Narrowing the gap on education and income not only supports better health outcomes and ultimately enables people to live longer, it also improves the likelihood of people playing a full and active part in society. The right education and skills enable people to fulfil their potential and earn a decent income. It will be important to both narrow the income gap within Luton and compared to the regional and national averages as well as to narrow the gap between different groups such as men and women.

There is a strong correlation between income levels and education both in terms of adults without high level qualifications or skills being low earners and children from poor backgrounds' ability to achieve at school. Narrowing the gap on educational attainment and proportions of children and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) between the most and least disadvantaged areas and families will contribute to a more equal, cohesive and inclusive Luton. Similarly, we need to focus on enabling the working age population to increase their skills to be able to secure higher skilled and paid work or to join the workforce for the first time.

Objectives

Our objectives for narrowing the gap on health, education and income are:

- To narrow the gap in life expectancy at birth between the areas with the highest and lowest levels of deprivation.

- To narrow the gap in life expectancy between Luton and the rest of England
- To narrow the income gap between the least and most deprived areas
- To narrow the income gap between different groups e.g. men and women
- To narrow the income gap between Luton and the regional and national averages
- To narrow the educational attainment gap for children living in the least and most disadvantaged areas of Luton
- To narrow the gap in relation to children and young people not in education, employment or training
- To improve the skills of the working age population

Increasing care and respect for each other

An equal, cohesive and inclusive community is one where people demonstrate care and respect for each other. By this we mean that people are not attacked by others because they are different, do not discriminate against others because they are different and that people recognise the value that every person, no matter what their background, brings to society in Luton. Caring and respectful behaviour includes volunteering and community participation, being a good neighbour, welcoming new residents and co-workers, being polite, listening to the views of others, and helping to care for the area. There are strong links between a caring and respectful society and one which is safe.

Objectives

- To improve levels of volunteering and participation in “civil society”
- To improve intergenerational recognition and respect
- To reduce levels of anti-social behaviour
- To reduce levels of hate crime

Services that meet people's needs

Public sector bodies and those that provide services on their behalf must meet local needs in order to achieve outcomes and provide value for money. Services that are not based on a robust understanding of people's needs are likely to exclude some potential service users or provide poor quality services to others. This is particularly important in times of financial restraint and it is vital that decisions about how to meet people's needs and any prioritisation of need are clear and transparent. The *"Recognising needs, circumstances, responsibilities and goals"* section of this framework has already covered how we will improve our approach to understanding the needs of local people. This section therefore focuses on meeting their needs once they are understood.

Objectives

- To improve the transparency of decision making
- To improve the provision and take up of services by disadvantaged groups
- To improve the efficiency and value for money of services
- To provide services in a joined up, customer focused way

How this framework has been developed

This framework has been developed following an independent review of Luton Forum's strategic approach to Equalities, Cohesion and Inclusion. The review and this framework have been informed by the strategic framework for equalities, cohesion and inclusion that were in place in Luton in 2010 and the work of the Community Cohesion Commission. This includes Single Equality Schemes, Child Poverty Needs Assessment, Financial Inclusion Policy and Health Inequalities Strategy.

We have used the consultation carried out with local people on equalities, cohesion and inclusion in the past few years rather than asking people similar questions again and risking consultation fatigue. The headlines of this analysis are included in the background information. It is our intention to use this draft document to consult with stakeholders including local people; to test our vision for social justice to 2015 and to confirm commitments to take action.

We want local people to be able to hold us to account for delivery of this framework and to help us to deliver it. The approach represents a shift in public sector thinking – from a “doing it *to you* or *for you*” approach, to one that is based on working together, enabling and empowering people to take action in their own communities to tackle issues that affect social justice.

How we will measure progress

This framework is designed to ensure that we have a good understanding of the impact we are having on improving social justice in Luton. We will need to measure what we have achieved rather than simply record the actions we take, and so our focus will be on identifying the key areas where change is required and where a real difference can be made.

We expect organisations will be collaborating on addressing social justice issues as part of the way they work; although some targeted areas of work may be set up, these are likely to be rare.

We have identified a number of key areas that can be measured and which will form the basis of how we assess progress. These will not be individual targets as such, but when taken together will provide an overall picture of the situation in Luton. We will use this information to help us to shape our services in the future.

The Stronger Communities Executive will meet with stakeholders on an annual basis to consider the information produced by the indicators and to use this to assess progress in Luton. The focus will not be on the individual indicators, but on what they tell us when taken together as a whole. It will be an opportunity to assess what has been achieved locally but also to look at how Luton is doing when compared to other areas.

It is intended that, as well as identifying where we have been successful, it would also indicate where we need to focus our energies in the future. It will be an opportunity for organisations to collaborate to ensure the best outcomes for the people who live and work in Luton.

The indicators are shown in the table on page 16.

Table

IMPROVEMENT MEASURE	Recognising Needs, Circumstances, Responsibilities and Goals	Enabling People to Flourish	Narrowing the Gap on Health, Education and Income	Increasing Care and Respect for Each Other	Services That Meet People's Needs
1. Decrease in the proportion of residents who think that there is a problem with local people not treating each other with consideration and respect.				✓	
2. Increase in the proportion of residents who say that people from different backgrounds get along.				✓	
3. Increase in satisfaction with public services in relation to treating residents with respect and consideration.	✓		✓	✓	✓
4. Improvements in resident / customer /patient feedback analysis.	✓		✓	✓	✓
5. Increase in the proportion of residents who say they can influence decisions.	✓				✓
6. Increase in the diversity of the profile of participants in further / higher education.		✓	✓		
7. Changes in Luton's workforce / employment profile.		✓	✓		
8. Changes in Luton's business and enterprise profile.		✓	✓		
9. Increase in the proportion of residents in each ward / area who say they feel strongly that they have a sense of belonging to their local area.				✓	
10. Reduction in the level of crime (especially hate crime) and fear of crime.	✓			✓	

IMPROVEMENT MEASURE	Recognising Needs, Circumstances, Responsibilities and Goals	Enabling People to Flourish	Narrowing the Gap on Health, Education and Income	Increasing Care and Respect for Each Other	Services That Meet People's Needs
11. Gap in life expectancy at birth between the lowest and highest deprivation areas to have narrowed.	✓	✓	✓		✓
12. Gap in life expectancy between Luton and the rest of England to be narrowed.	✓	✓	✓		✓
13. Income gap between the least and most deprived areas to be narrowed.		✓	✓		
14. Income gap between different groups e.g. men and women to be narrowed.		✓	✓		
15. Income gap between Luton and the regional and national averages to be narrowed.	✓	✓	✓		✓
16. Gap in educational attainment between children living in the least and most disadvantaged areas of Luton to be narrowed.	✓	✓	✓		✓
17. Gap in relation to children and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).		✓	✓		
18. Changes in levels of anti-social behaviour.				✓	

✓ indicates key link between the indicator and the priority.

LUTON SOCIAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About Luton

Luton is located approximately 30 miles north of central London. The town has excellent communication links. Central London is 30 minutes away by train (from the town's three railway stations – Luton, Luton Parkway and Leagrave). There is also direct rail access to the South of London (Brighton, Gatwick) and to the North (Bedford, Leicester, Derby, Nottingham and Sheffield).

Luton is also on the M1 motorway with the M25 only 10 minutes away. This provides road access to Milton Keynes, Northampton and via the M6 Birmingham. North and South road links are also facilitated by the A6 and the nearby A5. East-west road links are provided by the A505 that provides access to the A1 and to the rest of the eastern region

Luton has its own international airport that provides a range of scheduled and charter flights. Scheduled flights are to and from most European countries and Israel, Morocco, United Arab Emirates and the United States.

Demography

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the population of Luton was 198,800 in 2010. Research undertaken by the Borough Council suggests that this is a serious underestimate of the population and a figure of 205,900 is more realistic. The LBC assessment of the composition of the Luton population draws upon administrative data-sets such as the GP register and Child Benefit records. Independent research by Mayhew Harper Associates² confirmed a minimum population of 202,700.

With an area of 4336 hectares, the official population figure translates into a population density of 45.8 persons per hectare or 47.5 persons per hectare respectively using the LBC estimate. Both of these figures are greater than many London Boroughs.

According to the ONS Mid-year population estimates, the age structure of Luton's population differs from that of the GB population as a whole. Luton has a younger population than that of Great Britain and the eastern region. The 0 - 15 age group account for 22 per cent of the Luton population compared with 19 per cent regionally and nationally. The 16-64 age group account for 66 per cent of the Luton population compared with 65 per cent in the UK and 64 per cent in the eastern region. The

² The growth and changing complexion of Luton's population, Mayhew Harper Associates, January 2011

“Over 65” age group represents 12% of the Luton population compared with 19 per cent nationally and 18 per cent regionally.

The town is ethnically diverse, with approximately a third³ of the population being of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) origin, with significant Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and African Caribbean communities. A recent pupil level school census (PLASC) showed that 51 per cent of children (aged 0-15) are of BME origin.

In recent years the diversity of the population has increased with foreign students coming to the University of Bedfordshire. There has been a significant shift in the population over recent years, primarily driven by those arriving from newly EU acceded A8 countries of Eastern Europe. Since May 2004, there have been over ten thousand new National Insurance registrations by people from A8 countries, with over 80 per cent of these coming from individuals whose country of origin is Poland. The amount of people registering from Eastern Europe fell in the last year but there has been a significant increase in those registering from India. The recent Mayhew Harper study showed concentrations of new communities of Congolese, Somalians, Ghanaians, Nigerians, Turks and Zimbabweans in Luton.

Luton is ranked as the 69th (out of 326) most deprived local authority⁴. In 2007 Luton was ranked as the 87th most deprived local authority and in 2004 as the 101st. This indicates that Luton is becoming relatively more deprived in comparison to the other local authorities of England. Luton has nine output areas in the top ten per cent most deprived areas in the country. Two of these are in Biscot, Dallow and Northwell wards and one each in Farley, High Town and South wards.

Economy

Gross Value Added (GVA) is a measurement of economic activity and GVA⁵ per head in Luton is £22,200 which Luton is 6 per cent higher than the national average.

According to the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)⁶ (2009) there are 82,900 jobs in Luton. Luton is now dominated by the service sector rather than the manufacturing sector. Major employers in Luton are Luton Borough Council, Luton NHS, Easyjet, TUI UK Ltd, Monarch Airlines and General Motors.

Luton Airport is a major employer in the region and also a strong driver of the economy of Luton. The last survey of the airport carried out by Luton Borough Council in 2009 showed that 7,200 people were employed at the airport.

³ Population by ethnicity 2009, Office for National Statistics Experimental Statistics (published 2010)

⁴ 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Communities & Local Government 2011

⁵ Gross Value Added 2008, Office for National Statistics 2010

⁶ Business Register & Employment Survey 2009, Office for National Statistics 2010

The average annual salary⁷ of people living in Luton is £24,000 per annum which is less than national average of £25,900. However, the average annual salary of those who work in Luton (but don't necessarily live in Luton) is £26,400 which is higher than the national average.

The unemployment rate⁸ in Luton of 4.5 per cent is higher than both the national and regional averages of 3.7 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. Unemployment is greater than 6 per cent in Biscot (6 per cent), Dallow (6.8 per cent), High Town (6.1 per cent), Northwell (6.2 per cent) and South (6.7 per cent) wards. Whilst unemployment is lowest in Bramingham (1.8 per cent) and Barnfield (2 per cent) wards.

⁷ Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings, 2010, Office for National Statistics 2010

⁸ Unemployment Claimant Count March 2011, Office for National Statistics via NOMIS

About Equalities, Cohesion and Inclusion in Luton

Equalities

Luton Forum's approach to equalities and diversity has evolved to one which defines an equal society as one which

“protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish; an equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be”⁹.

This approach focuses on what matters to people, recognises that people have different needs and that some people may need more or different resources to have access to the same outcomes as others, places emphasis on the barriers and constraints people operate under and recognises that people have diverse goals.

Ten equality priorities were identified through consultation with Luton's residents in 2009:

- Customer access and satisfaction
- Educational attainment
- Access to buildings and transport
- Personalisation of social care
- Women's employment,
- Representation of women, black and minority ethnic (BME) and staff with disabilities at senior levels in the Council
- Reporting homophobia, including bullying in schools
- Concluding the Cohesion Commission
- Health inequalities affecting older or vulnerable people
- An integrated equality scheme for Luton, particularly in relation to health inequalities

The Equality Act 2010 has changed some of the legislative requirements. On 5 April 2011, the new public sector Equality Duty came into force. It replaces previous duties relating to race, disability and gender, and replaces these with a single duty which includes the current duties and extends them to cover age, sexual orientation, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment. The new Equality Duty is designed to ensure that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day-to-day work in policy development, service delivery and in relation to employees.

⁹ Fairness and Freedom: the final report of the Equalities Review (February 2007).

Cohesion

Luton Borough Council's Citizens Panel (2011) found that 79% of respondents agreed that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.¹⁰

The 2008 Place Survey sought the views of local residents¹¹. The results show that most Luton residents are happy with their local area 73% of those surveyed felt that that people from different backgrounds get on well together. A community safety survey carried out in June 2009 asked the same question and at this point 82% of those surveyed answered yes. These figures and other evidence point to generally good levels of community cohesion in the town.

However, Luton has been indirectly linked to a number of extremist groups in recent years including connections to the bombings in London in 2005 and the bomb attack in Stockholm in 2010. This spotlight has been reinforced by the activities of the English Defence League (EDL), which itself was established in the town following the disturbances during the homecoming parade of the Royal Anglian regiment in March 2009.

The actions of these minority groups have impacted heavily on both community relations and the reputation of the town and have contributed towards a media narrative which paints Luton as a 'hotbed of extremism', an image which the town is working hard to change.

There has been significant investment in community cohesion related activities and interventions in Luton over the last decade, many of which have been successful in helping different groups to understand each other, starting and maintaining dialogue between different groups and diffusing tensions. These include:

Community Cohesion Contingency Plan and steering group has been established and active in Luton since 2006. This work brings together key agencies and partners to monitor and respond to perceived and or real threats to cohesion in Luton. It was a key partnership that worked to mitigate impacts of the EDL demonstration in Luton in February 2011.

Luton in Harmony campaign, established in 2010, is supported by the Luton Forum and aims to draw Luton's communities together. It recognises there are many

¹⁰ The full report of the Citizens' Panel can be found at:
<http://www.luton.gov.uk/Media%20Library/Council%20and%20democracy/PDF/Consultation%20/Reports/Final%20report.pdf>

¹¹ The full report of the results of the Place Survey can be found at
http://www.luton.gov.uk/Media%20Library/Council%20and%20democracy/PDF/Consultation%20/Reports/report_6856%20d5.pdf

settings in which diverse communities live harmoniously together, but also acknowledges the need to challenge discrimination and negativity. The 'harmony' motif is widely recognised throughout the town and has formed the basis for a number of projects, for example, in schools.

It can be argued that given its diverse population and economic profile Luton could be expected to experience more tension and division than it actually does and it is testament to the investment of the last decade that this is not the case. However, building communities where residents experience equality of opportunity, good relations with their neighbours and feel valued and included by society is a long term aspiration and one which needs to be a continuous focus.

In January 2011, the Luton **Commission on Community Cohesion** published its findings and made a series of recommendations. These recommendations are reflected in this framework. The full list of Commission recommendations can be found in link below¹² and are summarised as follows:

- An economic development strategy that creates jobs and helps local people to access them
- Building strong relationships with the media
- Improve leaders' understanding of the needs of Luton's different communities
- The Council to clearly define a community cohesion champion and the leadership role of members
- Use *Luton in Harmony* to spread best practice and forge meaningful links between the town's less ethnically diverse schools
- Use Luton's cultural infrastructure to bring different people together
- The Police to extend its focus on community cohesion
- Make the rationale for funding decisions publicly available
- Refocus the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on areas of greatest need including both communities of interest and geographical communities
- Proactive signposting of people in need of improving their English language skills to relevant services

In addition, it was proposed that the Luton Forum convene a working group to look closely at some of the more contentious but unresolved issues including the practical implications of challenging extremism. The Luton Commission on Community Cohesion recommended the establishment of a working group on extremism. The idea was to consider these difficult and fast moving issues in some depth over a six-month period. The extremism working group held the first meeting at the end of June

¹² The full report can be found at:

<http://www.luton.gov.uk/Media%20Library/Council%20and%20democracy/PDF/Community%20cohesion/Building%20Cohesion%20in%20Luton.pdf>

2011 to consider its remit and the way it would approach the task. The working group plans to meet monthly from September until the end of the year and will issue a report in early 2012.

Inclusion

An inclusive society is one where individuals, neighbourhoods and communities are enabled to access increased choices and to build and develop capacity through, for example, meaningful opportunities for active citizen engagement and participation. An inclusive society can only be fully realised when there is infrastructure support and development, such as community development and regeneration, access to skills and employment facilitate material and economic improvements which improve quality of life, social and economic wellbeing. The key elements of inclusion for Luton are:

- Maximised household income
- Equality of opportunity for all
- Accessible services
- Health equality
- Sustainable, cohesive and safe communities

A Family Poverty Strategy is currently being developed which will set out the town's approach to a range of factors that have an impact on people's ability to achieve their potential including employment, financial security and access to services. This work is underpinned by the Child Poverty Needs Assessment.¹³

¹³ The Child Poverty Needs Assessment can be found at http://www.learning.luton.gov.uk/l2g/custom/files_uploaded/uploaded_resources/11645/CPNADec10.pdf

What local people have told us

A wide range of consultation data has been used to inform this strategy derived from surveys and face-to-face consultation meetings held in the last two years. This section highlights some of the key findings but is not intended to be a full list of everything that local people have told us about equalities, cohesion and inclusion in Luton.

Highlights from the consultation carried out for the Commission on Community Cohesion (2010)

- Residents do not understand the term 'community cohesion'.
- Respondents felt that there were no disadvantages to cohesive communities
- The current levels of cohesion are high within individual communities when 'community' is defined by a shared interest/belief. As such, there are strong communities based around religion, sport, gender, ethnicity and age etc. However, cohesion is not as strong when 'community' is defined by geographical location. Additionally cohesion issues occur when one community's beliefs/actions are perceived or seen to conflict with another's.
- Respondents feel that human nature is to seek the companionship of people most like 'yourself'. Shared interests, namely religion, ethnicity, age, gender etc. all lends to people feeling more comfortable with others as they sense a commonality.
- Respondents who do not feel 'accepted' in their locales are likely to bond with other minority groups and as such greater divisions can occur between the minority groups and the majority. Indeed, it is the creation of these communities that, for some, is seen as the cause of the tensions. White British respondents in particular, can be resentful of other ethnicities creating communities around their cultures in Britain. They talk about high streets in areas not having any 'English' high street stores but being dominated by Polish and Asian grocery and clothing shops. They acknowledge individuals' needs to retain their cultures but feel that 'British' culture is being lost in the process. Some respondents suggested that cohesion can only exist when one 'group' of people is not outnumbered by any other.

Highlights from consultation on the Race Equality Schemes (2009)

Consultees told us that their priorities for improvement were:

- Educational achievement for all groups that were under-achieving
- Reducing community tensions and increasing cross cultural awareness
- Building the capacity of black and minority ethnic (BME) community organisations to enable better engagement with the council
- Reducing race and religious hate crime and increasing reporting
- Career and employment opportunities for under-represented groups in the council

- More diverse and ethnically and culturally sensitive workforce
- Greater emphasis on gathering data about demographic changes and social trends

Highlights from consultation on disability equality (2009)

Consultees told us that their priorities for improvement were:

- Accessible transport and parking
- Accessible and adapted housing
- Comprehensive monitoring information on customer profiles
- Equality monitoring and reporting of complaints / compliments
- Personal assistance
- Adequate income
- Equal opportunities for employment
- Appropriate and accessible information
- Appropriate and accessible health care provision

Highlights from consultation on age equality (2009)

Consultees told us that their priorities for improvement were

- Housing including fuel poverty
- Support for older people who are themselves carers

Highlights from consultation on religion and belief (2009)

Consultees told us that their priorities for improvement were

- Support from the Police
- Interaction between faiths
- Access to places of worship, including and parking at mosques on Fridays
- Dietary requirements at council events
- Council employees' religious awareness

Highlights from the 2008 Place Survey¹⁴

- 39% people think crime levels need to be improved
- 34% people want more activities for teenagers
- 6% people think race relations need to be improved
- Critical areas for improvement identified as crime, clean streets, affordable and decent housing and public transport
- 72% are satisfied with the local area as a place to live with residents in South Luton being the least satisfied
- 48% feel strongly that they belong to their immediate neighbourhood with the lowest level of belonging (44%) in South Luton and the highest (52%) in Central Luton. Young people, Black people and tenants (not Council tenants) are most likely to feel that they do not belong
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- 76% people say that people from different backgrounds get on well together with the lowest proportion (66%) in South Luton and the highest (78%) in North Luton. There was no significant difference in responses by ethnicity
- 38% perceive that people not treating each other with respect and consideration is a problem. This is in the worst 25% of results nationally. Central and South Luton residents are most likely to agree that this is a problem, with residents in the East and North least likely to do so.
- 28% of residents say there is a high level of anti-social behaviour in their local area (this is in the worst 25% of results nationally)
- 24% find accessing hospital services via public transport difficult and 25% find accessing places of worship via public transport difficult.

Highlights from the 2009 Community Safety Survey

- 80% of residents are satisfied with their local area with the areas making up South Luton being the least satisfied. Satisfaction is higher in North Luton with the exception of the Northwell ward. White (British / Irish) residents are slightly less satisfied (79%) than BME residents (84%)
- Overall 82% agree their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. This is a significant improvement on the level found in the 2008 Place Survey (see above). Levels of agreement vary between different areas for example, around 1/5 of residents in Biscot and High Town disagree. BME residents tend to be more positive with 88% agreeing that people from different backgrounds get on well together and 80% amongst White (British ./ Irish) residents.

¹⁴ The full report of the results of the Place Survey can be found at http://www.luton.gov.uk/Media%20Library/Council%20and%20democracy/PDF/Consultation%20Reports/report_6856%20d5.pdf

- 32% of residents feel that people not treating each other with respect and consideration is a problem in their area. More than 40% of residents in South, Leagrave and Limbury wards felt this was a problem. Overall, White (British / Irish) residents were more likely to identify respect and consideration as a problem (33%) in comparison with those of BME origin (28%).
- 57% of residents say there are parts of the borough they try to avoid with more women than men saying this. Similarly more White (British / Irish) people reported avoiding areas compared to those of BME origin. The areas most avoided were Marsh Farm and Bury Park together with some areas of the Town Centre.

For further information about the Social Justice Framework, contact the Social Justice Unit

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