

**MEMORANDUM OF EVIDENCE FROM
OLDHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
EDUCATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

**TO THE OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL COHESION
JULY 2003**

SOCIAL COHESION

1. INTRODUCTION

This memorandum of evidence provides a summary, and supporting documentation, of the range of activity that the Education and Cultural Services Department of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council in partnership with Oldham schools, have put in place to support the development of social cohesion in Oldham. There is reference to the work of the Department in carrying out corporate responsibilities as well as to its core role of providing challenge and support to schools and providing lifelong learning, leisure and culture opportunities to all members of the borough.

In the pursuit of excellence and best practice, the Department is committed to establishing strong partnerships and drawing on expertise at local, regional and national level. Partnership working is established with a number of organisations including the following:

- Sport Participation and Cultural Equality (SPACE) in relation to cultural and race awareness training.
- M6 Theatre in Education Company for drama projects particularly with schools in the School Linking Project.
- The Pacific Institute in relation to Investment in Excellence Training.
- The Society for Advanced Philosophical Enquiry in Education (SAPERE) in relation to Philosophical Enquiry Training.
- Mediation Northern Ireland in relation to connecting communities and conflict resolution.
- The Warrington Peace Centre in relation to working on conflict resolution with young children.

2. CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES AND MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

2.1 Cultural and Race Awareness Training

The Education Department has had lead responsibility for developing a programme of Cultural and Race Awareness Training responsive to the Oldham context. The Department's Ethnic Minorities Support Service devised a one day training programme in partnership with Sports Participation and Cultural Equality (SPACE) a leading race equality training consultancy based in Kirklees. This was delivered to over 193 staff and 13 schools in the academic year 2001/2002. The course was then expanded to a two day programme for September 2002. The programme was subject to extensive consultation and developed in conjunction with key colleagues in the Council and in the ethnic minority communities.

The training is very interactive, thought provoking **and** fun and feedback from participants has been very positive. The training programme is unique in that it echoes the national agenda set within the Race Relations Amendment Act but also gives participants an understanding of the development of Oldham as a culturally diverse borough, the tensions that have occurred due to social, residential and educational segregation and the challenges facing us all in creating community cohesion.

An important resource “The History of Migration and Settlement in Oldham” has been produced to support the training and is included in Appendix One. A “pupil version” is being produced and will be circulated to all schools in September.

In January 2003 the Department ran a five day “Training the Trainers” course attended by colleagues from within the Department, from other Council departments and by trainers from Oldham’s ethnic minority communities. This strategy is based on the principle of “growing your own” in order to increase capacity in the medium and long term and to ensure relevance to the local context.

14 trainers are now delivering the programme across the Council departments. To ensure an appropriate external scrutiny the School of Education at the University of Manchester are carrying out an extensive external evaluation of the whole Cultural and Race Awareness Training strategy. The Report will be available from January 2004. The attached Report (Appendix 2) to the Council’s Chief Officers Management Team gives further details of the training strategy and the evaluation.

The Education Department is also supporting Oldham Development Agency for Community Action (ODACA), in the development of a four day “Common Ground” training programme for voluntary sector organisations and the wider general public. The programme will draw on core elements of the existing two day programme to ensure a consistency of approach and the conveying of common messages.

It is also significant to note that plans are in place to deliver the training programme to all elected members and area committees in the autumn 2003 and spring 2004. A real indication of the importance given to the training by Oldham Council!

2.2 Respect for All: Policy and Guidance for OMBC Members and Employees on appropriate language with regard to cultural diversity

Both the Oldham Independent Review (the “Ritchie Report”) and the Audit Commission Corporate Governance Inspection recommended that the Council should provide guidance to elected members and staff in order to establish a “common language” to enable colleagues to discuss with confidence issues to do with race, ethnicity and diversity. A lengthy and wide ranging consultation process has taken place to maximise ownership of the policy and to ensure it is really relevant to the Oldham context. The Policy and Guidance (see Appendix 3) is currently subject to consideration by elected members before circulation in the autumn.

2.3 Monitoring, Reporting and Addressing Race Incidents in School

New procedures for the above have been put in place following joint working between the Department, Oldham schools, Greater Manchester Police and the Council's Chief Executive's Department. The procedures have been widely welcomed by schools, the Police and other agencies. The Police Force Race Commissioner has praised the system and identified it as an example of good practice. The scheme has been shared with a number of other LEAs and is providing the basis for a common reporting system across the Council. The reporting procedures and a Briefing Paper are attached at Appendix 4.

2.4 OMBC Equalities and Diversity Report

Oldham Council is preparing its first annual Equalities and Diversity Report in the early autumn. All services in the Education Department have submitted progress reports on activity to promote community cohesion. The Report from the Youth Service is included as an example in Appendix 5.

2.5 Education and Cultural Services Community Cohesion work with Children and Young People

In order to ensure elected members were fully aware of the Department's work in promoting community cohesion a detailed Report by the Executive Director was presented to the Diversity and Community Cohesion Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21/7/03. The body of the report outlines the strategic development of the Department's work in relation to community cohesion. Annex 2 "Activities to Promote Diversity and Community Cohesion" provides a good overview of the contribution of different sections of the Department to work in this area.

3. PLANNING FRAMEWORKS WITHIN THE EDUCATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The key planning documents within the Department are the individual Service Plans and the Education Development Plan. Service Plans are completed annually by all Services and all activity is referenced to one (or more) of the six objectives within the Corporate Plan. Crucially in the Oldham context, one of the objectives is to promote community cohesion. The Council Planning Framework is attached as Appendix 6.

The Education Development Plan is submitted annually to the Department for Education and Science with a wider overall three year planning cycle. The current three year cycle extends from 2002/3 to 2005/6.

The initial framework for the plan was devised in summer 2002. In addition to five national priorities it include as Priority Six the local priority "To promote cultural diversity and racial harmony". Following a review with schools activities for 2003/2004 have been re-focused to maximise impact. Priority Six for 2003/4 is attached as Appendix 7.

The planning frameworks described above ensure that community/social cohesion features prominently in all aspects of the work of the Department.

4. MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE RACE RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT

A range of activity has been put in place to provide support to schools in developing and implementing race equality policy statements and action plans:

- In May 2002 a regional conference was held with key note presentations from the Chair of the CRE and HMI with responsibility for Educational Inclusion.
- In June 2002 the Departments Race Equality Policy Statement and Guidance (See Appendix 8) was published along with specific guidance from the CRE on developing policy.
- A Race Equality Review has been carried out by the School Development Service link advisers in all Oldham schools (see Appendix 9). The review establishes progress to date, identifies good practice and areas for further development. A report will be published early in the autumn term outlining the outcomes of the review and training and consultancy opportunities for schools.

5. EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY COHESION INITIATIVES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Audit Commission Corporate Governance Inspection of Oldham Council recommended that an evaluation of the community cohesion activity in primary schools should be conducted. The Education Department commissioned Maureen Haddock, an extremely successful and respected Oldham primary headteacher, to conduct the evaluation during a period of leave of absence from her headship. The full report is included in Appendix 10. The findings and recommendations from the Report have been widely disseminated.

Plans are well advanced for the production of a CD Rom to publicise the findings and recommendations to a wider regional and national audience. The CD Rom will feature as part of the official launch of the Report to be held in September 10th. In the autumn term a similar evaluation of activity in secondary schools will be conducted by Maureen Haddock.

One of the key recommendations of the Report was that the highly successful School Linking Project should be further developed, extended into secondary schools and be co-ordinated by the project leader on a full time basis. A Strategy Document for the Project is included at Appendix 11. The Linking Project currently involves 1200 children from 40 primary schools serving ethnically and socially diverse communities. Children are involved in a range of activities designed to build trust and strengthen cross-cultural bonds. Drama has been used extensively as is evidenced in the video "All Our Secrets are the Same". (See Appendix 12).

The Linking Project has been the subject of some media attention including a Radio 4 broadcast "Domestic Ties", produced by Liz Carney. (See Appendix 13). The broadcast provided the stimulus and focus for the "Thought for Today" on Radio 4 the following morning.

The School of Education at the University of Manchester have been commissioned to devise and implement a formal evaluation methodology in relation to the School Linking Project. This will allow for an evaluation of the impact of the project and potentially provide the methodology to evaluate the impact of other projects and initiatives. Other recommendations which are currently being implemented are referred to in the next paragraphs.

6. DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY AND INFORMATION FOR SCHOOLS

The CGI Audit Commission Report, and in particular the Evaluation of Community Cohesion initiatives in primary schools, highlighted the range of innovative, impactful, quality projects and initiatives that are in place. It also noted that it was essential that a coherent structure and framework be developed and “embraced by the whole of Oldham’s educational community in order to face the enormous challenge of building a brighter future for the young people of the town.” A comprehensive, overarching Community Cohesion Strategy Document is currently being developed to draw together all activity and provide that coherent structure. The document articulates the vision of a cohesive Oldham and the roles and responsibilities of the Education Department and schools in realising the vision. It will also detail, in summary form, the activity in place to promote community cohesion in all the key sections of the Department. The present draft document draws particularly on initiatives developed by the Ethnic Minorities Support Service, the School Development Service, Sports Development and the Qualifications and Framework Service.

Some further work is taking place to ensure the documents is fully reflective of the work of all of the Department including, in particular, the following sections:

- Early Years
- The Youth Service
- Lifelong Learning
- Excellence in Cities
- Galleries and Museums
- Libraries, Information and Archives

The draft document is attached as Appendix 14.

To complement the strategy document a Community Cohesion Initiatives Brochure is to be circulated to schools for the beginning of the Autumn Term (see Appendix 15). The purpose of the brochure is to ensure that **all** schools are aware of the range of opportunities that they are able to access and to ensure they are able to play their part in developing the citizens of a culturally diverse and cohesive Oldham.

7. SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

7.1 Publications Promoting Cultural Diversity and Racial Harmony

A wide range of publications have been developed by the Department's Ethnic Minorities Support Service. These include policy statements and guidance to schools; assessment procedures for EAL pupils; and curriculum related teaching packs. A publications brochure (see Appendix 16) has been widely circulated both locally and nationally and the publications have been purchased by schools in Oldham and schools and LEAs across the country. The publications are now also being sold through Madeline Lindley's, a major national educational books retailer located on the outskirts of Oldham.

Contact has been made by the Media and Communications Officer of the Department, with the DfES with a view to the publications being included on the DfES and other good practice websites. Discussions are also taking place with the Times Educational Supplement with a view to the inclusion of a feature article on the publications in the "Respect: Teaching about cultural diversity" section. The edition of "Respect" on July 4th 2003, included an article (pages 2 and 3) "Knitting a new social fabric" featuring the work of the Oldham School Linking Project and Philosophical Inquiry (See Appendix 17)

The two most recent Ethnic Minorities Support Service publications are "The Bangladesh Photo Activity Pack: Studying Communities in Sylhet and Oldham at Key Stage 2" and "Citizenship: Culture and Diversity – An Oldham Focus". Both of these are rooted in the Oldham context but are also relevant to the challenge of schools nationally to provide for community cohesion and active citizenship. They are included at Appendix 18.

The publications brochure is to be re-designed and amplified to include the most recent publications. The brochure will then be placed on local and national websites and widely distributed in hard copy to LEAs, schools and educational journals.

Shine: Young People Achieving through Oldham Youth Service

A wide range of exciting themed projects have been developed by the Oldham Youth Service to bring together young people from different cultural backgrounds with a view to raise their self esteem and promote community cohesion. An excellent video, "Shine", has been produced to disseminate the success of these projects. In the video young people of Oldham articulate eloquently how they feel they have benefited from the projects in which they have participated. The video is included at Appendix 19.

Oldham Museum Galleries and Arts Service: Arts as Empowerment

Gallery Oldham is contributing significantly to promoting the rich cultural diversity of the borough through the arts as a vehicle to developing community cohesion. Its Annual Review 2002/2003 celebrates and publicises the key achievements and events in 2002/03 and included at Appendix 20.

7.2 Working with the Media

The submission by Oldham Council to the select committee has already referenced the importance of working with the local media. The Department's Media and Communications officer, in conjunction with the Council Press officer, is working proactively with the local print and tv media to ensure "good news" stories celebrating achievements in relation to social and community cohesion feature regularly.

Recent articles in the Oldham Chronicle are included at Appendix 21.

7.3 Primary Deputy Headteachers Conference

An annual Oldham deputy headteachers 2 day residential conference is held in the summer term. This year's conference to be held in mid October with the exclusive theme of "Developing Community Cohesion through promoting Cultural Diversity and Racial Harmony in Oldham Schools."

The Conference aims to ensure that deputy headteachers have a good understanding of the national and local imperatives and the range of initiatives currently available locally. This will enable them to fulfil their strategic management and lead practitioner roles in taking forward the social and community cohesion agenda in their schools. More information about the Conference is provided at Appendix 22.

8. CREATING NEW LINKS

Mediation Northern Ireland

Mediation Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education have been working over a number of years to bring about reconciliation in Northern Ireland society. Their work focuses on conflict intervention and mediation and support for the development of integrated schools. They have experience and expertise which we can draw on in the Oldham context. A delegation of two headteachers and the Department's Head of Access undertook a 2 day visit to Northern Ireland with a particular focus on integrated education. As a result of the visit a briefing for the Departmental Management Team and the Oldham Association of Secondary and Special Headteachers was prepared (Appendix 23).

The recommendations include reciprocal visits of key personnel in the autumn term.

Warrington Peace Centre and "Tiny Steps for Peace"

The Oldham Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership have established a joint project with the Warrington Peace Centre entitled "Tiny Steps for Peace." The project will be delivered over a 2 year period in early years settings in both Oldham and Warrington.

The project draws on best practice established by the Peace Centre in innovative work on conflict resolution and Citizenship with young children.

A full evaluation of the project will be carried out to inform next steps. More information about the project is provided at Appendix 24.