

The Big Picture in West Yorkshire: Extracts from the 2009 Area Assessment for Bradford

Over 500,000 people live in Bradford. It is forecast to have the fastest growing population of any major city in the UK, with particular growth in older and younger people, and people of Asian and mixed ethnic origin. Much of this growth is expected to be in parts of the district which are relatively deprived. These people will need more jobs and housing. Seventy-seven per cent of the population live within the urban areas of Bradford, Keighley and along the Aire valley. These areas are home to most of the jobs and industry in the area, although new developments have been built recently close to the M606 and M62 motorways. As traditional industries have declined, more emphasis has been placed on businesses based on new technologies as well as the service sector.

NI 1 % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

64.6% in the worst 10%

NI 2 % of people who feel they belong to their local neighbourhood

57.8% average

NI 3 % of residents involved in civic participation in the local area

15.9% in the best 25%

NI 4 % of residents who agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area

28.2% average

NI 5 overall/general satisfaction with local area

71.2% in the worst 20%

NI 6 % of residents participating in regular volunteering

27.1% in the best 10%

NI 7 environment for a thriving third sector

19% in the best 25%

How well do priorities for Bradford express community needs and aspirations?

Bradford District Partnership has a good understanding of the issues and challenges affecting people in Bradford. A wide range of people and groups were involved in establishing the vision and priority themes in the three year Big Plan. Some of the things that people have identified as important have seen recent improvements, such as reducing crime and cleaner streets.

The most recent Place Survey showed that overall satisfaction with Bradford as a place to live has increased by 5 per cent to 71.2 per cent in 2009, compared to 2007, although this is still lower than most other areas in the region. Detailed survey results are not available at a local level in Bradford. This means that partners do not know enough about how satisfaction levels vary between areas like Ilkley, Manningham and Holmewood. Other research, such as the Council's Speak Out survey show that these do differ quite significantly. A wider place survey will be carried out in 2010.

People in Bradford are more involved in their local communities than in many big cities. More people in Bradford participate in civic activities and volunteering. Public sector organisations in Bradford consult widely with local people and also collect a lot of information. They realise that they could do this more effectively and have set up the Bradford Observatory to make better use of this information. This is at an early stage in its development, but offers good potential for the future.

Partnership working in Bradford is well established. In the past two years, partners have changed and strengthened the way that they work. This means that some action and delivery plans, although now in place, are still at an early stage. Partners are working to set clear and challenging targets for the future so that they are able to monitor their performance in delivering the aims that they have set themselves. This will help in making the difference that local people want and need. Partners are working well together in some areas to provide good value for money.

The Council works well with health organisations and the voluntary and community sector to plan and buy the services that younger and older people need. There are some examples of sharing buildings and staff but this is an area that could be developed more.

Partners are planning well for the likelihood of future cuts in public spending. They are taking part in a national Government pilot scheme 'Total Place' that is looking at ways of being more efficient and improving value for money.

Bradford is a partner in the Leeds City Region. This involves 11 local authorities from North, South and West Yorkshire working together on big shared issues like regeneration, skills, transport and housing. The City Region has been given special status by the government to make changes to the way that councils work with partners to minimise the impact of the downturn and speed up recovery. The challenge for the City Region will be to make sure that these changes have an impact on people's lives.

Strong and Cohesive Communities: Working with citizens to help them become actively involved and self confident, to make their communities stronger and invest resources locally in neighbourhood improvement.

Partners work well together to develop and maintain strong and cohesive communities. Just over six out of ten people think that people of different backgrounds get on well together. In contrast to many areas, this is about the same as in 2007. Partners consult through discussion groups with people with different backgrounds and needs so that they can understand what they want and respond effectively. They include people of different ethnic backgrounds, faiths and sexual orientations and people with disabilities.

The Place Survey shows that 69 per cent of people in Bradford feel they have been treated with respect and consideration by their local public services all or most of the time. This result compares well with similar areas. More people are volunteering. New arrivals to Bradford are supported well. Partners have developed a New Arrivals Strategy as well as a welcome pack which gives information on living in Bradford and provides sources of help in English, Polish and Slovak.

The police and community safety partners monitor the levels of tension in the community and this has not changed in the last three years. People with disabilities can use the annual Easier Access Event to have their say on issues that affect their lives and make practical improvements. The event has helped to secure £3 million worth of improvements to Council buildings, a review of neighbourhood forums to increase accessibility, improvements to customer service access points and staff training and an impact assessment of emergency planning arrangements. The event is jointly funded by the Council and NHS Airedale and Bradford. Help with interpreting is provided through 500 interpreting sessions a month, working with GPs and Health Professionals throughout Bradford and Airedale. Primary Care Interpreting Services have a bank of 60 interpreters, speaking 31 different languages and dialects.

The Fire and Rescue service has recently worked with the Polish community in Bradford to look at their needs in terms of safety awareness and now uses a range of publicity materials in Polish targeted at the areas where Polish people meet.

More people do voluntary work in Bradford than in similar areas. Local public organisations are improving the way they work with the voluntary and community sectors (VCS). A VCS assembly will be set up to improve the way the sector is represented and is able to influence key decisions and plans in the district. The sector has enjoyed strong financial support from the Council and other partners in the past but there is some unease that the sector may find it harder to secure funding in the future. Improvements in working arrangements are therefore important and are due to be in place by December 2009.

The Big Picture in West Yorkshire: Extracts from the 2009 Area Assessment for Calderdale

Calderdale lies along the valley of the River Calder in West Yorkshire. The main towns are Halifax, Hebden Bridge, Brighouse, Elland and Todmorden. The borough occupies a strategic position between the conurbations of Greater Manchester to the west and Leeds-Bradford to the east; the M62 motorway linking the two forms its southern boundary. The population of just over 200,000 is projected to grow significantly over the next 20 years. The largest increase will be in older people, with a slight decrease in the teenage population. The ethnic minority population of nine per cent is younger than the Calderdale average.

NI 1 % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

65.6% in the worst 10%

NI 2 % of people who feel they belong to their local neighbourhood

61.5% in best 25%

NI 3 % of residents involved in civic participation in the local area

14.9% average

NI 4 % of residents who agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area

26.4% in the worst 20%

NI 5 overall/general satisfaction with local area

78.4% average

NI 6 % of residents participating in regular volunteering

26.4% in the best 20%

NI 7 environment for a thriving third sector

15.1% average

How well do priorities for Calderdale express community needs and aspirations?

Calderdale Forward is developing its understanding of the big issues affecting people in Calderdale. A wide range of people and groups were involved in agreeing the vision and priorities in the sustainable community strategy, 'Everyone Different, Everyone Matters'. Local public services have used the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to help them decide which things most need improving. The 'Story of Place' sets out partners' ambitions and the opportunities and challenges the area faces. Some of the things that people have identified as important have seen recent improvements, such as waste collection and street cleaning. Others, such as congestion, have not.

The Place Survey showed that overall satisfaction with Calderdale as a place to live has increased by 4.4 per cent to 78.4 per cent in 2009, compared to 2007. Local public services have also analysed the results at local level and have carried out face to face surveys in some areas. This will help them to understand how people in different parts of Calderdale view their quality of life and how satisfaction levels vary.

NHS Calderdale has used postcode profiling to target smoking cessation services. This will be used to decide where resources are spent. Household profiling like this is increasingly being used to help build understanding of local communities. Local public services will not make progress with their priority to 'narrow the gap' until they have a full understanding of inequalities across Calderdale.

Local organisations consult people on a range of issues. For example, NHS Calderdale asked local people for their views on where new health centres should be built. The Council asked people about how they should improve swimming pools. People have also been consulted on recycling and new housing developments. Local public services recognise that they could do more consultation together and that there can be duplication and lack of coordination on the ground.

Calderdale Forward is still developing some of the things it needs to in order to be a fully effective partnership. The partnership does not always manage its own performance effectively, actions are not always carried out within the timescales set at partnership meetings or followed up effectively at subsequent meetings. Not all areas of partnership working are supported by robust action plans, resources, milestones and targets. There are some examples of strong jointworking. These include the Council working with health partners to address the needs of older and vulnerable people. However, other areas are less well developed, such as developing the voluntary and community sector. This means that partners are not always working well together to provide value for money for the local community.

Calderdale is a partner in the Leeds City Region. This involves 11 local authorities from North, South and West Yorkshire working together on big shared issues like regeneration, skills and housing. The City Region has been given special status by the government to make changes to the way that councils work with partners to minimise the impact of the downturn and speed up recovery. The challenge for the City Region will be to make sure that these changes have an impact on people's lives.

Ensure that people stay in control of their lives and play a full and active role in society

People who use services and carers can get involved in decisions about services through a range of boards and groups. There are some examples of users' views being taken into account such as in the design of care plans. But it is often not easy to see whether these

groups have actually changed the way that services are delivered. In particular, local public services recognise the need to improve communication with the South Asian community. The voluntary and community sector is involved in delivering some services, for example the Women Centre and all aspects of the Partnership for Older People Programme (POPPs).

Prosper as a place where people can feel safe and are encouraged to get involved in shaping their future

Fewer people in Calderdale than elsewhere feel that people of different backgrounds get on well together. This has not changed since 2007 and compares poorly with similar areas. More encouragingly, a higher proportion of residents than in similar areas feel that they belong to their immediate neighbourhood.

Many groups and networks try to help communities to get on better together, such as the Interfaith Council and Black and Minority Ethnic Forum. The Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender network has successfully developed its membership. But some of these groups have only been recently set up. The Calderdale Equality Forum was established in 2009 and a Women's Network is still to be introduced. Partners have recognised that how communities get on is an important issue. Following consultation with local people, they have changed their Community Cohesion Plan. One element of their approach to cohesion is to reduce inequalities, but progress on this has been slow. Local public services carry out regular 'tension monitoring' to check how well communities are getting on. We will monitor progress as part of next year's assessment.

Local public services do not work as effectively as they could with the voluntary and community sectors (VCS). This is important because these organisations represent and provide services to many vulnerable people in Calderdale, such as women at risk of domestic violence, ethnic minorities and newly arrived communities. Recently, the Council and its partners have helped the VCS to provide better support and advice to people who have suffered mental health and financial problems as a result of the recession. Some partners are proactive in involving the sector and responding to their needs, such as the Council's Community Services directorate, but this is not consistent across the Council and other partners, such as health services.

Partners are trying to improve the way that they work with the VCS. NHS Calderdale has asked Voluntary Action Calderdale to find out how the public and voluntary sectors can improve how they plan and deliver services. People in Calderdale are more involved in their local communities than average. More people in Calderdale than other similar areas participate in civic activities and volunteering. But local public services want to increase the number of people who feel that they can influence decisions in their local area. They plan to improve things through the Going Local programme which includes forums in each of the 17 wards in Calderdale. But plans for locality working are still at an early stage.

The Big Picture in West Yorkshire: Extracts from the 2009 Area Assessment for Kirklees

Kirklees lies on the eastern slopes of the Pennines. It is made up of both urban and rural communities within towns and valleys, each with their own strong and distinct identities that set them apart from other areas of Kirklees. Economic growth also brought workers from South Asia to the mills. Since then, they have been joined by residents from a wide range of countries, including Iraq and people of Afro-Caribbean origin. One in eight residents - a quarter of young people under 16 - is now from a non-white ethnic group. The diversity of talents and the youthfulness of the university population make for a vibrant cultural scene.

NI 1 % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
66% in the worst third

NI 2 % of people who feel they belong to their local neighbourhood
59.7% in the best third

NI 3 % of residents involved in civic participation in the local area
14.4% average

NI 4 % of residents who agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area
24.6% in the worst 20%

NI 5 overall/general satisfaction with local area
77.4% average

NI 6 % of residents participating in regular volunteering
25.6% in the best 20%

NI 7 environment for a thriving third sector
17.8% in the best third

How well do priorities for Kirklees express community needs and aspirations?

Partners have a good understanding of local communities. They work together, share information and analyse conditions in detail. This knowledge feeds into an assessment of community needs, which in turn decides policies and priorities. Partners are also starting to move staff and funding towards those priorities. But this process does not always take into account residents' own aspirations for their areas.

Setting the right priorities for Kirklees depends on accurate information. In Kirklees there is a wealth of statistics, and there is a detailed picture of each of the borough's seven localities. Statistics are generally wide ranging and up to date, with a few exceptions such as housing condition. During 2008/09 partners carried out a survey of employers, an assessment of flood risk across the borough, a survey of residents' health and lifestyles and of children.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and social marketing have been used to decide priorities for health and other services.

The annual 'Picture of Kirklees' event draws together these statistics into an analysis of how the borough is progressing and what still needs to be done. The picture is debated with public sector staff, local organisations and communities, to arrive at a consensus on the way forward.

The partnership revised its priorities in the spring of 2009. The biggest challenge for the borough is eliminating segregation and inequalities, and partners intend to do that by tackling poverty, deprivation and crime. So there is more focus on the needs of vulnerable people and the gap between their lives and the average. Targets – such as those for educational attainment – are often ambitious, designed to make a significant change to people's lives.

A new community strategy incorporating these priorities is being finalised; the measures of progress and performance are built into the local area agreement. More emphasis on tackling deprivation means shifting staff time and money to support the most deprived parts of the borough. Partners are beginning to direct more resources towards priority areas. As public resources become tighter, it will become increasingly important for partners to have a clear, shared view of the highest priorities.

Kirklees is a partner in the Leeds City Region. This involves 11 local authorities from North, South and West Yorkshire working together on big shared issues like regeneration, skills and housing. The City Region has been given special status by the government to make changes to the way that councils work with partners to minimise the impact of the downturn and speed up recovery. The challenge for the City Region will be to make sure that these changes have an impact on people's lives.

A secure future for all our towns

Partners want to make sure that all towns in Kirklees have a bright future. They are investing in a range of things to improve the quality of life in Dewsbury in particular. Housing has been improved, NHS Kirklees has opened up a new walk-in service and two new children's centres have been opened. Other work is underway to increase the aspirations of local people and improve the image of Dewsbury. A new secondary school planned for the area will play a big part in this. Work on other neighbourhoods is set to follow. With public finances set to reduce, deciding on priority areas in which to invest will be challenging.

Partners have agreed to divide the borough into seven 'localities', and many statistics are now available at locality level. There is a neighbourhood manager for each locality. Good progress is being made in Dewsbury, where partners have concentrated their efforts so far. Work on other neighbourhoods will follow. With public finances set to reduce, deciding on priority areas in which to invest will be challenging.

It is important that local people actively participate in decisions that affect their localities. They tend to be involved in the wards and neighbourhoods that make up the larger localities. Partners have yet to find an effective way of bringing services, elected members and local people together in shaping the future of local towns. Even in Dewsbury, although there has been some consultation of local residents about plans to regenerate the area, communities there are not part of the Dewsbury regeneration board. Community centres are owned by the Council rather than the communities they serve, and an asset transfer programme has been drawn up but has not got off the ground.

This low level of involvement was reflected in the response to the 'place survey' of Kirklees residents in 2008. More than half of respondents felt they belonged to their immediate neighbourhood, but only a quarter said they could influence decisions about it, below the national average and a decrease since the previous survey in 2007. The same proportion would like to be more involved.

Improved community relations

People from different backgrounds get on less well in Kirklees than in other parts of the country. And there are big differences within communities in Kirklees.

Local public services are committed to improving community relations. They have a good understanding of Kirklees' diverse communities and are working hard to bring people together. Reducing inequalities is vital. Partners realise that if people from different backgrounds have the same opportunities, access to services and treatment it will help bring communities together.

There are some positive signs of improvement. A range of activities is helping to bring together people of different ages and faiths and from different black and minority ethnic groups. More people in Kirklees take part in voluntary activities than average, and more take part in civic activities. But partners know that they need to do more to understand whether the things that they are doing are working.

The Big Picture in West Yorkshire: Extracts from the 2009 Area Assessment for Leeds

Over 750,000 people live in Leeds. The economy has grown quickly over the past ten years. The city has changed from being mainly industrial into an important business, finance and legal centre. The population has been increasing quickly. It is very diverse, with over 130 nationalities including a black and minority ethnic population of just under 11 per cent. It is an area of great contrasts. It includes rural areas like Harewood and Wetherby, where most people are relatively well-off. It also includes densely populated, inner city areas where people are poorer and housing quality is a big problem. Although improving, the health of people in Leeds is generally worse than the national average, with big differences across the city.

 People in deprived communities benefiting from Leeds' economic growth - Leeds Ahead

NI 1 % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

73.8% average

NI 2 % of people who feel they belong to their local neighbourhood

54.7% average

NI 3 % of residents involved in civic participation in the local area

11.1% in worst 20%

NI 4 % of residents who agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area

30.7% in best third

NI 5 overall/general satisfaction with local area

78.5% average

NI 6 % of residents participating in regular volunteering

19.6% in worst third

NI 7 environment for a thriving third sector

17.2% average

People in deprived communities benefiting from Leeds' economic growth - Leeds Ahead

People in more deprived communities have benefited from Leeds' economic growth through 'Leeds Ahead'. It has encouraged enterprise, improved skills and attainment and raised the aspirations of people in disadvantaged communities. Businesses have become valued members of local communities.

Leeds Ahead is a social enterprise that works with the Leeds Initiative to involve Leeds' businesses in innovative joint work between public, community and business sectors. Before 2007, businesses helped support local communities in an uncoordinated way. The Leeds Ahead approach has ensured that support is better directed to what is important for local people. Relationships with local communities are long-term, rather than one-off. Businesses have better ownership and understanding of local needs. Employees stay in their jobs for longer, businesses are financially stronger and have better links with local partners. As a result, businesses enjoy better goodwill and reputation benefiting local people and the places in which they live.

This has improved the prospects, community cohesion and confidence of many people in the most disadvantaged communities in Leeds. Marginalised groups have been re-integrated. Families in poverty have gained the opportunity to become more independent and financially secure. People now have greater pride, sense of belonging and achievement in their local communities.

Leeds Ahead has engaged with nearly 200 local businesses. These businesses have invested more than £500,000 and donated 13,000 hours of voluntary support, through 460 separate projects. The work has benefited 147 different community partners and helped more than 12,000 of the 75,000 most deprived people in the city.

How well do priorities for Leeds express community needs and aspirations?

The Leeds Initiative has a good understanding of the big issues affecting people in Leeds. A wide range of people and groups were involved in establishing the Vision for Leeds and in agreeing priorities for the city. Many of the things that people have identified as important in the past have seen big improvements. Most types of crime have fallen and roads and pavements have got better. People in Leeds feel safer than they did two years ago.

One of Leeds' big ambitions is to go up a league economically and in quality of life. Its prospects for doing so are promising. The other big ambition is narrowing the gap between the richer and poorer parts of the city. Over the last three years, there has been some progress in narrowing this gap. But the Place Survey showed big differences in satisfaction between the most and least deprived parts of Leeds. Development of a Leeds 'Neighbourhood Index' will help local public services understand what is needed to narrow gaps more effectively.

Public sector organisations in Leeds carry out a lot of consultation with people. They also collect a lot of detailed statistical information about Leeds. At the moment, they tend to do this as individual organisations rather than together. This means that information is not always used as effectively as it might be. It also means that people might be asked about the same issues by different organisations. Local public services have recognised the need to work together more closely to improve how they consult people in Leeds. Partnership working is well established. Partners are looking to improve it further by being clearer about roles and responsibilities.

The pace of improvement would also be improved by more effective performance management challenging quickly where things are not going well and putting them right. The partnership recognises the need to improve its approach to ensuring value for money. It has set up the Public Sector Resources Partnership Group to try and make sure that it spends money in the best way possible. The Group provides public service partners with the opportunity to ensure that their work is subject to detailed evaluation to ensure that it provides good value for money.

Leeds is at the centre of the Leeds City Region. This involves 11 local authorities from across North, South and West Yorkshire working together on big issues like regeneration, skills and housing. The City Region has been given special status by the government to make changes to the way that councils and their partners minimise the impact of the downturn and speed up recovery. The challenge for the City Region will be to make sure that these changes have an impact on people's lives.

HARMONIOUS COMMUNITIES: increased local engagement and empowerment to establish increased sense of belonging and enable vibrant communities.

Fewer people in Leeds feel that people from different backgrounds get on well than in 2006/07. There are big differences within Leeds, with people in East, South and West much less positive than those in the North of the City. Local public services have a programme of work to improve relations between different groups. This includes the Safer Schools Partnership, which places safer schools officers in high schools to work with young people on issues like racial tolerance.

Community Cohesion pilots are being carried out in three areas where there are particular tensions between different communities - Armley, Chapeltown/Harehills and Middleton. Work in these areas focuses on trying to help people to get on better together, rather than addressing some of the underlying inequalities that create tensions between communities. It is not clear how 'narrowing the gap' work to reduce inequalities is integrated with partners' ambitions to build more harmonious communities. A Leeds 'Neighbourhood Index' is being developed to help local public services understand the specific issues facing different communities, how best to tackle them and how to measure if they have made a difference.

The most recent Place Survey showed that satisfaction levels in Leeds compare well with similar cities. Older people in particular are more satisfied than elsewhere, with over 80 per cent saying that they are satisfied or very satisfied. But there are big differences depending on where you live in Leeds. People in the North East of the city, are much more likely to be satisfied with their area than people in the South or West. It is likely that this hides even bigger differences within these fairly large parts of the city. The recent place survey shows a mixed picture on how well people in Leeds are involved in their local communities. Fewer people in Leeds than other big cities participate in civic activities, and there has been a big fall in the number of people who know how they can get involved in local decision making. On the other hand, the number of people who felt that they could influence decisions has increased. Local public services are carrying out a much more detailed residents' survey to try and understand better the differences within the city.

The Big Picture in West Yorkshire: Extracts from the 2009 Area Assessment for Wakefield

Over 322,000 people live in Wakefield district. Over two thirds of the district is open countryside. Wakefield City is the largest urban centre. There are smaller concentrations of population in the north, west and the south-east. The district has a long history of coal mining, particularly around Castleford, Featherstone and South Elmsall. The decline of the mining industry in the 1980s and 1990s meant not only job losses but greater demands on public services in these areas. It left a skills mismatch in the workforce and some long-term health problems. Almost a third of people live in some of the most deprived areas in England, many in the former mining districts.

Bringing communities closer together - developing Local Nature Reserves

NI 1 % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

67.2% in the worst 20%

NI 2 % of people who feel they belong to their local neighbourhood

58.6% average

NI 3 % of residents involved in civic participation in the local area

10.9% in the worst 20%

NI 4 % of residents who agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area

23.2% in the worst 10%

NI 5 overall/general satisfaction with local area

71.9% in the worst third

NI 6 % of residents participating in regular volunteering

18.1% in the worst 20%

NI 7 environment for a thriving third sector

15.9% average

Bringing communities closer together - developing Local Nature Reserves

A major programme of nature reserves have been developed in ex industrial areas. These have increased voluntary and community participation and given local people access to a better environment, promoting bio-diversity.

The six new sites are the result of ambitious targets which aimed to more than double the amount of volunteer time spent working on green spaces to 25,200 hours. By the end of 2008/09 this target had been exceeded by a fifth.

Physical improvements have both increased access to the wildlife areas and directly benefited biodiversity. This has included wildflower planting by volunteers to diversify grassland; thinning out tree canopies to encourage ground flora and bracken and scrub clearance.

Local communities have benefited in other ways. The health benefits from increased opportunities for access and physical activity were actively promoted, through involving local Volunteer Health Walk leaders in training sessions that encouraged them to use the LNR network. This was both innovative and effective.

The project also encouraged stronger more cohesive communities through active engagement of local groups in the management of their local environment. Council designers engaged with community groups over projects such as the design of LNRs, biodiversity surveys, design of interpretation boards and grounds work.

How well do priorities for Kirklees express community needs and aspirations?

'Wakefield Together' has a good understanding of the big issues affecting people in Wakefield. Many of the things people have identified as important have seen big improvements. For example crime has fallen, streets and public spaces are cleaner, more people are able to live independently and educational attainment is better than other areas. Public satisfaction with the local area has improved over the last two years but people are less satisfied than elsewhere in England.

Public services are committed to listening to resident's views, for example through 'Wakefield Speaks' and neighbourhood meetings run by the police. They are working well with vulnerable groups and take account of the views of people such as those with learning disabilities, family carers and children who are looked after away from their natural families. Despite this the 2008 Place Survey showed that fewer people feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area than elsewhere. Public services need to better understand how residents want to do this. They have agreed to develop a new approach to area working which will succeed the neighbourhood management pilots and provide new forums for active community engagement across the district. We will monitor progress on implementing this.

Public services have tended to provide the same services across the district and have not reflected the different needs of people. There is lots of information available about communities. But it does not provide a detailed understanding of what families living in deprived communities actually want. For example, public services are not fully aware of what services people think they need or the problems they face when trying to get them. They have demonstrated they can overcome this; recent work in Eastmoor has shown they can better understand the needs and wishes of families. This needs to be extended to other priority neighbourhoods.

Wakefield is a partner in the Leeds City Region. This involves 11 local authorities from North, South and West Yorkshire working together on big shared issues like regeneration, skills and housing. The City Region has been given special status by the government to make changes to the way that councils work with partners to minimise the impact of the downturn and speed up recovery. The challenge for the City Region will be to make sure that these changes have an impact on people's lives

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES: Developing sustainable communities through tackling issues around crime and community safety and improving the cleanliness of neighbourhoods and quality public spaces.

Almost a third of people in Wakefield live in neighbourhoods that are among the most deprived 20 per cent in England. Life for many in these areas is very different from that in more affluent areas. Public services have used central government funding to improve the quality of life in some of these areas. As a result fewer neighbourhoods are now amongst the least well off in England. But at the same time the gap in quality of life has widened between the least well off neighbourhoods and the rest of the district.

Public services have now made a clear commitment to give better support to the most deprived communities. Plans are being made to focus on the 10 per cent worst off, to work more closely with the community and voluntary sector and to join up services more effectively. But these plans are at an early stage of development. Public services have yet to agree the funding or working arrangements or put in place the people that will be needed if they are to succeed. It is too early to determine whether these plans will make the necessary difference. We will monitor progress over the coming months.

More people are satisfied with their local area than in 2006. But fewer residents are satisfied with their local area than the average for England and fewer feel able to influence local decisions. Local public services already have good ways of listening to individual people who use services and community groups. They are doing work to try and better understand the reasons for low levels of satisfaction amongst residents. They are now making plans to work together to provide services which closely meet the needs of local residents and opportunities for local people to have their say. For example focus groups in 2009 identified cleanliness of local areas as major concern. As a result the Council has invested more and Wakefield District Housing has reviewed the services they provide for their tenants. Public services will need to better understand how residents want to influence their local area and continue to test out whether these new approaches are making a difference. We will monitor progress over the coming months.

Although two-thirds of residents feel that people from different backgrounds get on well, this compares poorly with similar areas. More residents than the average for England feel that people don't treat one another with enough respect and consideration. Public services have worked hard to try and make sure all communities can have their say. But some aren't represented on local forums, so they may not be fully involved in decision-making. For example, the Interfaith Group brings together different faiths to promote what they have in common and understand what is different, but current membership is almost entirely Christian. The BME forum aims to meet the needs of people from black and ethnic minority communities, and to get their views. It has not met for about two years and it has not been represented at Partnership Board meetings for some time. To make up for this the Council and its partners have found other ways of working with these communities - helping them have a say in updating the Community Cohesion Strategy. The Council has met with community leaders and several other groups provide small communities with an opportunity to share their needs and aspirations for example, an Asian women's network

and Polish community association. Public services should continue to try and find ways to get minority communities better represented at partnership forums.

Public services have done good work to help local people better understand asylum seekers and refugees and challenge some of the misconceptions that can sometimes lead to tension. They have also responded to the needs of migrant workers coming to Wakefield from the EU by providing a welcome pack - helping them understand British culture and to settle into local communities.

To help build strong local communities partners, have identified a wide range of things that need to improve. These form part of the updated Community Cohesion Strategy. But, as yet, there is no action plan to make it clear to everyone what work is already underway and how additional work will be done. Nor is it clear how the public services and local people will know what improvements have been made. We will monitor progress on this.

Wakefield has fewer voluntary and community (VCS) organisations per head of population than the national average and most are small. Two out of five have fewer than 10 paid staff and a further two out of five have no paid staff at all. This raises concerns about their sustainability. The Council and the PCT have until recently tended to provide services themselves, thereby limiting the chances for the sector to develop locally. Where VCS organisations have received funding the value of continuing the service, when the funding ends, has not always been made clear. This has meant potentially worthwhile services being stopped. Nowadays the public sector contract a diverse range of services from VCS organisations for children and families, people with mental health problems, older people and people with learning or physical disabilities. There are also examples of the VCS working well with the public sector to attract funding from outside district, for example a £400,000 Inter Generational Grant - to support projects for older people and inter-generational activity.

The voluntary and community sector also provide ways of gathering the views of local communities - 'VOX' is the main local organisation that does this. With support from the public sector they have set up 16 neighbourhood networks that have provided communities with an opportunity to influence local decisions. Some of these have been successful in making changes to local services and plans - for example to play areas and footpaths. Public services are working to improve how the VCS can best contribute to local priorities and what support it requires. A thriving voluntary and community sector could help public services make services more relevant to the needs of local people. This will be particularly important if they are to work more closely with the public and improve satisfaction levels. We will monitor progress on this during the coming year.