

Panel 1: Clarifying the challenges in the Pennine region, past and present

Charles Clarke

- There is a need to investigate and consider the relationship between faith and society in the Pennine region and to consider the impact – both positive and negative – of the riots in 2001 on community cohesion.
- “Public opinion, including leading politicians and the media highlight difficulties and problems in ways that make it very difficult to make positive and constructive progress in certain circumstances.”

Dr Paul Bagguley

- The 2001 riots cast a shadow over Northern communities and shaped popular and political opinion of the Pennine towns and the South Asian population.
- The community cohesion policy introduced after the riots “missed the point” for it assumes that the riots occurred because of segregation rather than a rise in the far-right.
- Each riot was unique and were not “South Asian riots”.
- Global and national events have local manifestations that contribute further to the popular perception of the Pennine region.
- “Lack of cohesion [was]...not the cause of the riots.”
- “The community/social cohesion type of argument kind of missed the point. It’s the wrong kind of diagnosis...the wrong challenge. The wrong solution.”
- Much good work has been done in the name of community cohesion. Community policing has been particularly helpful and effective.
- Economic, educational and housing inequalities in the North of England affect the Pennine town communities.
- Universities and schools must give necessary support to enable minority women to progress to and succeed in university.
- While the situation in the UK may be bad, it is worse elsewhere in Europe.

Dr Philip Lewis

- White working class underachievement in the Pennine region has not been successfully addressed and there exist commonalities with the Muslim community.
- The Muslim community in inner city Bradford has grown in the last 50 years from 30,000 to 130,000. The community is primarily in nine wards of the city that have seen a rise in the number of Muslim councillors representing the population.
- Educational underachievement is a significant issue. In 2011 of 40 primary schools and 10 secondary schools in Bradford, more than 85% of students were of Pakistani heritage. By the time students begin school, they are already roughly 18 months behind target levels.
- In addressing educational underachievement of the Muslim community in Bradford three contributing factors include:
 - High levels of trans-continental marriage with roots in impoverished, rural regions of Kashmir.
 - Madrassa attendance that requires a time-heavy commitment and rote memorisation of the Qur’an without understanding.
 - Working knowledge of four languages.
- “We do not have any systematic research on the cumulative impact on possible educational underachievement of these factors.”

Nadeem Mir

- Prior to retirement served as head of the Partnership Cohesion Unit in Rochdale.

- The biggest challenge was trying to understand and address community needs and how to police by consent.
- National and global events and processes impact local communities.
- The rise of the far-right across Europe had effects in Rochdale.
- Far-right groups seek to cause disruption and to raise their own profile through demonstrations and marches.
- How do you manage freedom of speech and England's history of freedom to demonstrate with the needs of a community?
- Initially the Unit was "not very good" at engaging with communities.
- Communities accused the police of allowing far-right protests and the police needed to provide an explanation of the legality of cancelling protests.

Charles Clarke

- Resolving an issue by banning it is not the way forward; dialogue is needed.

Andrew Pratt

- These are "very dangerous and difficult times".
- His role is to try to get Christians to talk to Muslims and to ask churches "what are we doing to love Muslims in this parish?" This is frequently met with a negative response.
- There is a lack of willingness by Christian parents to engage and to allow their children to engage with Muslims.
- Media influences opinions and perceptions.
- "The faith communities, the Christian church that I'm a member of – the Church of England – we have a responsibility to be part of the whole engagement and to engage our congregations...and I'm just a little bit pessimistic at the moment."

Questions and discussion

Dr Séan McLoughlin

- Why don't you think lack of cohesion was a cause of the riots? (addressed to Dr Paul Bagguley)
- What are the current dynamics of cohesion?

Azam Ali

- Young South Asian women are often performing better educationally than their male counterparts.

Dr Janet Eccles

- Regarding transcontinental marriages: is that a trend that is likely to continue or will immigration measures affect their prevalence?

Dr Paul Bagguley

- The social conditions such as lack of integration exist all over the country so why did the riots occur in Pennine towns? One answer appears to be the presence of the far-right.
- Social/community cohesion is difficult to define. Early definitions saw it as a rural, idyllic community but this does not fit with modern life where face-to-face interaction does not always occur. Perhaps it is economic life that holds together societies rather than community cohesion.

Dr Philip Lewis

- Genuine hyper-diversity where no one group is the majority is more favourable than a bi-cultural reality, such as is seen in the Pennine towns, where there is spatial separation and competing communities.

Nadeem Mir

- No one issue was the cause of the riots.
- People need a sense of belonging, a voice and participation.
- There is a need for agency engagement.
- There is a need for agencies to understand the role of social media on groups rather than reacting too hastily.
- Cohesion gives a voice.

Andrew Pratt

- Cohesion requires trust, an acceptance of what others say and an understanding that we're all in this together.
- Cohesion takes time.
- There is a need to invest in faith communities because they are "here for the long haul".

Charles Clarke

- Cohesion is "a slippery concept". It requires trust and there is a role for various institutions, like the police.
- The cohesion debate has moved on significantly, especially with regards to the white working class, since the Brixton riots.
- Community dynamics vary by place.

Dr Philip Lewis

- Muslim single-parent families have an impact on the Muslim community.

Professor Linda Woodhead

- We are becoming a country where moderate religion is lost; there is a "hollowing out" of the middle leaving either extreme/conservative religion or no religion. The former as a representation of religion is not appealing to young people.

Mohammad Shabir

- Many of the reflections given have been dated and Euro-centric – blaming a community for its ills. We must look to the larger national and political issues at play.

Carlo Schröder

- Social cohesion is linked with the image of the village, which does not match modern life, yet we crave this simplicity.
- Near Neighbours programme shows that people want to know their neighbours.
- What is cohesion? How do we form the cohesion discussion better?
- Schools are often where the community comes together but parents need to be involved, too.

Andrew Pratt

- Many congregations are in "maintenance mode" where members want to "keep their heads down".

Nadeem Mir

- There is a reluctance from the mosque's older generation to interact because of a fear of the unknown and of change.

- The younger generation wants to open up and to dispel myths.
- In Rochdale dialogue has often been justification-based, seeking to explain one point of view; however, there are always two sides and it is important to incorporate both sides and opinions into dialogue.

Dr Philip Lewis

- The Christian evangelical community has increased in confidence and programmes such as Near Neighbours and Feast work with young Muslims.

Dr Paul Bagguley

- Is discord between faiths or between faiths and society? Many people of faiths are realising that they have more in common with each other than the the rest of society.
- A lot more South Asian women are going to university but there remain pockets where they are not getting the necessary support and encouragement.
- Multi-lingual communities are often seen as problematic but should be seen as an opportunity in mono-lingual Britain.

Panel 2: Strengthening cohesion – what has worked?

Professor Mike Hardy

- There is enormous power in non-state actors.
- “Just getting our head around it [cohesion] and understanding it” is as important as solving issues of cohesion.
- The issue of cohesion represents society’s struggle with modernity.
- “We’ve not done badly. There’s been a lot of success in spite of the complexity and not understanding what’s going on. We’ve generated a lot of positive things in this area of work.”
- The cohesion debate has run concurrently with the counterterrorism debate.
- Three key concerns:
 - Top-down policy based on an urgency to do something following the riots.
 - Disconnected set of authority implementing policy.
 - Would we know cohesion when we saw it or felt it?

- “We’re seeking to deal with modernity rather than to hold on to the past.”

Lisa Cumming

- “The heart of this work is how we think of each other as humans and how we also be mindful of the context.”
- Two tasks for peace-building:
 - Transform unpeaceful into peaceful relations.
 - Work for conditions favourable to peace and unfavourable to violence
- In the 2001 riots “we all messed up” once the far-right had provided the spark. This was in sharp contrast to the collective responsibility to respond to future far-right visits.
- There remain issues of trust.
- Dialogue and creating and nurturing connections work but it is difficult to prove the value of the work. Yet, the bonds created have held strong at difficult times.
- There is a need for spaces for dialogue and for listening networks.
- Work in schools allows young people to explore and to express.
- People need spaces where they can interact.
- There is a danger of “single stories” that paint only one image of a place or population.

Professor Mike Hardy

- Cohesion should be seen as a process. It is not just a destination. Picturing cohesion as the village model makes it a destination.

Meg Henry

- “There is no one thing that is going to be an answer.”
- The Schools Linking Network began in 2001 in response to the riots in the Pennine region. It permits 3,000 children in Bradford each year to meet others that they would not have the opportunity otherwise to meet.
- It is underpinned by practice, theory and reflection. If not carefully planned and age appropriate, such interaction can cause damage, reinforce stereotypes and generalisations.
- It is underpinned by an understanding that:
 - It intends to do no harm.
 - One group does not serve as a resource for another.
 - Groups must feel equitable.
 - Groups must understand their counterparts’ reasons for linking.
 - Children are meeting and playing together.
 - It is supported by the head teacher.
 - It is rooted in the curriculum.
 - Adults involved need support and training.
- There is a task to create a sense of belonging for a child.

Raja Miah

- Feeling of frustration that well-intended policies were having negative consequences.
- There was often weak leadership or an absence of leadership.
- Cohesion is “a voice for the voiceless” and requires people to listen even to those whose “views might border on the ridiculous.”
- Initially, following the riots, people wanted dialogue with power rather than across communities.
- Media stirred things up but eventually media, police and community leaders saw that they had a wider role to play and transitioned from “gatekeepers to gateways”.
- Transition to an emergence of young leadership and the realisation that “you don’t have to look like me or be from the same background to speak for me”.

- Implicit relationships arise naturally when working on something together.
- Post-2001 there has been a strong counternarrative that focuses on resilience. “Championing multiple identities...is really powerful.”
- People need hope, which is a challenge now seen in white working class communities.
- There is a need to focus on equality and nurturing a sense of belonging.

Father Philip Sumner

- Identity and a sense of belonging form a major part of cohesion.
- You need to be sure of who you are or your relationships can collapse.
- 90% of media coverage of Muslims is negative according to Cardiff University research, creating a feeling of an ‘other’, which was furthered by the War on Terror.
- Lead practitioners have worked to nurture identity through 13 principles in Oldham and even more needs to be done where particular identities are stigmatised.
- A web of cohesion is created via anchor points. When people from every section of society, who have influence (not necessarily power) gather to listen respectfully to each other’s stories, the web naturally forms. Many young people who have gathered in this way have gone on to become leaders for cohesion.
- If you create an ethos in which people believe that mixing across communities of difference is normal, you actually enable those relationships to develop.
- There is a need for infrastructure where people can go with problems and through which people can address problems together.

Questions and discussion

Liz Carnelley

- Near Neighbours allows people to join together through friendship and trust. “Building friendship and trust and relationships is really important.”
- What is being done to help Eastern Europeans arriving with few resources and little knowledge of English, both of which are barriers to cohesion?

Dr Joel Busher

- How do you demonstrate the value of this work in order to continue obtaining necessary funding?

Fazal Rahim

- How do you protect in far-right protests?

Lisa Cumming

- Projects such as community cafés, farms and gardens, and council-led programmes are helping Eastern Europeans.
- Do not ignore tensions. There is a need for dialogue.
- For people doing connecting work it is difficult to prove value. Dialogue is a risk and if you focus solely on outcomes, as funders often require, this loses the essence of dialogue.
- Some state and local workers are not on the front-lines during protests so there is a need for non-state actors to be there and to offer a way of mediating between protestors and police, for example.

Meg Henry

- Schools are concerned about guidance, support and funding for Eastern Europeans.
- Concerns include:

- How to support schools to sustain efforts.
- How teachers and educationalists are to report extremism when trying to create safe spaces for discussion.
- High-stakes testing environment is focused on results.

Raja Miah

- With regards to the Eastern European migrants, “we need to avoid in 10 to 15 years time the same mistakes we have had with the South Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities.”
- There are “some obvious lessons that we’ve failed to implement”:
 - Foster identity and belonging.
 - Deliver services to community rather than have parallel services.
 - Engage with host communities.
 - Nurture leadership within communities and with host communities for dialogue.

Father Philip Sumner

- Language of gangs shows a need to belong.
- ‘You and Your Community’ survey in Oldham has shown a willingness to interact with other communities has increased and support for the BNP has decreased.
- There is a need to create new leaders/champions from the Eastern European community to avoid the same mistakes being made.

Panel 3: What still needs to be done?

Anjum Anwar

- “We at Blackburn Cathedral are now renowned for opening up some very difficult conversations.”
- “We need to create relationships to have some very difficult conversations.”
- There is a need to address global questions at a local level because foreign policy has local impact.
- “The way forward is to have those [difficult] conversations but it’s how and when” – the conversations need to take place at the right time and in the right place.
- Religious buildings prove an excellent environment for challenging discussions.
- Religious leadership has failed; it addresses and responds to questions that nobody is asking.
- Addressing “who we are” is important.
- The present government is “bent” on moving certain organisations underground but “you cannot criminalise people simply because they’re saying things that are different. It’s not what you say but how you say it.”

Dr Joyce Miller

- Three major concerns regarding what needs to be done regarding religion and education.
 - There is a need amongst children, teachers and the public for increased religious literacy.
 - There is a need for media literacy
 - “We have a very serious set of misinformation and negative impressions circulating that are very, very influential indeed.”
 - There is a need for increased political literacy.

- “Now, religion and politics and media are inextricably bound up.”
- “We need a massive programme of enabling teachers to think and to learn and to reflect on all of those areas and somehow in schools we’ve got to bring them together.”
- The images taught in schools regarding religion are very different to those seen in the media.
- Government has not served RE well.
- Language, too, must be addressed with regards to how we use words and what words mean.
 - For example, “extremism [has become] anything you or I don’t agree with.”
 - How should terrorism be addressed in schools?
- Community cohesion has been elided with Prevent and prevent “is somehow elided with British values”.
- Social inequality was once central in cohesion policy but “we’ve lost a real focus on race inequality and...social equality”.
- By focusing on a single identity, there is a danger of dividing and separating.
- We need “to be very, very skeptical of public discourse and not to fall into the trap of believing the way politicians analyse the current situation is the only way of analysing it or the right way of analysing it.” Children, too, need to be encouraged to ask questions.

Professor Paul Thomas

- There is a need for frontline professionals to “play a much stronger role in actually doing cohesion.”
- “We need move towards reprioritising cohesion as the challenges haven’t gone away.”
- Funding for cohesion is not likely to increase and, often, other professionals think that cohesion projects and workers will take care of issues.
- Research into marginalised white communities shows a level of pessimism at the possibility of “engineered” cohesion and involvement.
- Often the most challenging conversations are happening in ordinary settings so frontline workers need to be empowered to deal with them.
- Work undertaken with Kirklees Council has seen support being given to frontline workers through action research.
- Professionals need to be allowed to take risks but need support for this.
- “We can’t just rely on funded community cohesion projects no matter how good they are. If we’re going to really have an impact on this, mainstream organisations both in the public and in the third sector have got to see it as part of everything they do and have got to take personal and collective responsibility and we’ve got to help people do that.”

Mike Waite

- How and why did the riots happen? Various factors including:
 - Socio-economic deprivation
 - Decline of traditional industries
 - Parallel lives
 - Lack of interaction between people
 - Resentment getting racialized around area-based grant initiatives
 - Political leadership creating a space into which the far-right could move
 - And then a single spark
- “We all saw it coming afterwards...we need hindsight now.”
- There is a need to “identify the difficult issues” and to explore and to talk about them.
 - Impact and experience of Eastern Europeans moving in
 - Forced marriages
 - Prevent
 - Defensive barriers and stereotypes
 - Immigration impact on services and demographics

- “We hold our citizenship in common and we need to achieve a good common citizenship.”
- Identifying problems and issues is always too early or too late.
- There is a need for safe spaces but if the space “stays too safe, it isn’t very much use”.
- There is a trend of “awkwardness” when engaging with the far-right whom we tend to “other”. The “othering” shows a level of frustration and discomfort.
- The political system silences what has been a mainstreaming of some far-right politics.
- “Some of the most difficult conversations we have aren’t with the ‘other’ but with the people who are most like us and who are uncomfortable with what we’re saying.”

Questions and discussion

Tariq Bashir

- When do you resist and when do you have a conversation?

Dr Séan McLoughlin

- What sorts of spaces are required for long-term reflection?

Jo Malone

- What sort of teacher training and CPD are required to prepare teachers for dealing with certain challenging issues?

Anjum Anwar

- There is a need to identify leadership in order to decide when to resist and when to converse.

Dr Joyce Miller

- Funding would be required for CPD etc.
- There is a current emphasis on delivery, attainment and discipline. This needs to be shifted to a love of learning, open hearts and open minds.
- The teacher needs to be a facilitator and a joint learner not simply a deliverer.

Professor Paul Thomas

- The work with Kirklees Council has been to try and “get ahead” and to understand the situation better. It also meant that people saw that the Council was interested and willing to listen.
- There is a lack of sociology and social policy in teacher training.
- Lots of money is spent on Prevent in schools, which could be spent also on cohesion. Spending on Prevent gives a mixed message that surveillance is more important than cohesion.